

The Blotter

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Wendy Kowalski, pp. 8-9



Robin Fay, pp. 12-13

INSIDE: PAINTINGS BY WENDY KOWALSKI, PHOTOS BY ROBIN FAY. STORIES FROM JIM PENNY AND JERRY BUDINSKY. BAD PARENTING BY JOHNNY PENCE. POEMS BY JENNY HANIVER, E. V. NOECHEL, AND MARGOT CONSIDINE. PLUS THE DREAM JOURNAL AND MCKENZEE'S SINISTER BEDFELLOWS

The Blotter is:

Johnny Pence.....Red Dye #2

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ity by e-mail: ediot@blotterrag.com.*This magazine may contain typos or
bad words***Items Worth Mentioning**
from the desk of Johnny Pence**Am I a ... a ... Yankee?**

I know that Virginians like me are often seen as Yankees by truly deep-south types. No big problem, I know who I am. But I tell you what, a feller just can't get corned beef at the deli in Georgia. I don't see that as a North/South thing, just as human rights. I wouldn't mind if Georgia had any sense of what to do with BBQ, but the slow-cooked swine around here is triflin' too. It's a pity. I mean, I love a boiled peanut and all, but man cannot live by boiled peanuts alone. Georgia, please. Get it together. BBQ first, that's top priority. But it also wouldn't kill anybody if we Georgians could go to the Winn Dixie and buy stuff to make a Reuben. And that does NOT make me a yankee. I just like corned beef.

Def Con

The Blotter was a recent sponsor of, and I recently spoke on a panel at, Zine-a-poolooza [sic.] '05. It was a pretty good time, all about struggling and writing and publishing and how we zine people are truly keeping it real in an age of phonies. It was a convention and it was def, mos def. I had a blast, met good people, and picked up some good schwaggy comix and stuff. Y'all keep your eyes open for the Georgia 'zine scene. People like Fluke, Cute Girl Demographics, Neogate, and Terminus Media—and that's just the people from this state—are doing some good work. Don't pretend you're too old to buy comix, either.

You Suck

Not a single person sent me a picture of him- or herself in a Blotter T-shirt doing something apeshit, nor did I get a single picture of an exceptional vehicle. I asked you to send in both kinds of photos last month, but no. Fine. I don't need your pictures. I have plenty of pictures of my own to look at. See? Here's the UFO that comes out of my couch. Here's me on board the UFO. Here's me shaking hands with the couch-UFO captain....

—ediot@blotterrag.com

A Delicate Condition

by Jerry Budinski

By the time Ray arrived at the address, his gut was a bellows pumping hellish sulfides. He didn't deserve it—he had been careful what he had eaten all day long. There was only one conclusion and it was humiliating: nerves, damned schoolboy nerves. But he had looked absolutely suave, a picture of confidence in his new sports coat and turtleneck—or at least the mirror said so a half an hour earlier.

No one was on the porch, so he'd have a chance to release a good long one in the car or on his way to the door. It came out loud and especially foul. Oh God! He opened the windows and waited for the air to clear. Nerves—the trick was not to care. Sure, it was his first date in well over twenty years but it was presumptuous of his daughter, Gweny to have fixed him up. "Uh dad, I talked to someone and now she's sort of expecting a call from you."

Any disaster would be her damned fault. Probably some fat old prune anyway. This would just be practice for the important ones that'd come later.

The door opened and Laurie, his date came out. Damn, she was lovely. He cared - and his gut did too, compressing a potential dirigible's fill of foul vapors. He strode to the door to fetch her, propelled like a jet the entire way.

"Oh, sorry, I forgot the windows. I've been having trouble with odors from the catalytic thing. I'll close them."

"No, I like the windows open. The autumn air is nice."

She was too kind - the temperature was in the forties. Ray glanced over. With the pretty face came a bonus—gorgeous legs as well, and most likely a slim figure beneath her coat.

"I'm amazed that I don't remember you from Gweny's graduation party." How lame. Was he telling her she was too beautiful to forget? Or too weird. Laurie had been Gweny's mentor in Wisconsin and had just gotten a full professorship in Pittsburgh. That gave him a weak connection to talk about, other than Gweny: he had taken a couple of QA seminars at Pitt.

"You seemed to be a bit harried that day—so many guests. I don't blame you if you don't remember a thing."

Harried. Lisa was at her bitchiest after Gweny let about a dozen uninvited friends come over. It was the last time they entertained before their divorce.

They arrived at Le Provencal - the valet parking was a warning sign. God, why had he allowed Laurie to pick the place? It was a stupid "you pick, no you pick" thing. She was new to town and so he could have picked a more casual place.

"I want to talk to the valet,"

The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

*Donny and Marie's Sausages,
Angelina's Only True Friend*

I am attending a convention of sausage/hot dog/bratwurst/etc. makers. It's in a domed stadium, and features a big musical production number: dancing boys in sausage-themed outfits, elaborate sets and costumes like in a Busby Berkely movie; and starring Donny and Marie Osmond. I think to myself, Somebody has got to satirize this.

—M. S. Durham

I dreamed I was good friends with Angelina Jolie. You know how sometimes it's pretty hard to watch your friends making bad decisions in their lives, but you also have to acknowledge that it's their mistake to make? Like, when do you speak up and give advice, when do you have to intervene, and when can you just let it slide?

I was really conflicted about whether or not I should say something about her adopting all those babies and jumping from man to man. I was hanging out with her and biting my tongue the whole time. I think I resolved to say something next time we got together.

—J. P., Athens

Please send excerpts from your dream journals to Jenny at mermaid@blotterrag.com. If nothing else, we love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.



*"I got so drunk last night,
I was trying to call
Morocco!"*



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*Save money for that indie cult-
horror film you always dreamed
of making!!*



Ray said, sending his date ahead. checking on the foursome that had
How stupid - he only had a cheap just been served.
Nissan—she probably thought he “Actually, I believe the salmon
was a compulsive nut. But it was a is a bit off tonight,” said a paunchy
chance to deflate a bit. banker type.

Some people might complain haps aged too much,” complained
about a table along the wall, but the woman who was also sitting
with only a party of four in the cor- near Ray.

ner behind them and an elderly “I will take them back and
couple adjacent, any collateral bring you the house speciali-TEE.
damage from Ray’s affliction would No charge of course,” said Len-
be minimized. A waiter in elegant Ard.
livery appeared.

Ray raised a slightly trembling glass to Laurie. “Let’s drink to
“I am Len-ARD and will be Gweny. For good intentions.” Oh
supervising your service tonight. God, how would she take that?

May I start you with a cocktail?” The couple behind Laurie must
Supervising, good God. A place have heard the complaints because
where you had to impress the the elderly lady grabbed Leonard’s
waiter as much as one’s date. Screw arm and said, “Everything is superb
him. “Thank you Leonard, I think tonight, Len-Ard. The Fra Diavolo
we will.” is especially piquant, just the way I
like it.”

“Len-ARD.”

That got a smile from Laurie. “And the pheasant gamey, as it
Maybe he was doing OK. But, should be,” added her companion.
ohmygod, decision time. What for- Ray squirmed with the menu.
mulation of caustic fluids would do Well, damn the price. Let’s just get
the least damage? through this. Leonard was
approaching with his note pad,
stoking Ray’s blast furnace once
again - frighteningly assertive, but
mercifully silent. Pssst. Brrt- brrt. .

“Scotch and ... water.” No bub- Laurie touched his arm and
bly soda, thank you. Laurie ordered leaned over. There was a hint of a
a vodka martini. smile on her face.

They sat reading menus in “Are you having a sort of deli-
awkward silence till Ray ventured, cate ... health issue?”
“So, how do you like Pittsburgh. I Ray felt as if he must have
see you found a good neighbor- turned a vivid shade of scarlet. His
hood to live in.” very first try at dating was ending
in disaster. But Laurie’s smile
expanded to its full loveliness.

“Oh, I grew up here. Gweny “Don’t worry. You may be off
probably didn’t tell you that.” and over-aged, but I’m the one
that’s piquant and gamey. I say we
ditch this stuffy joint.”

Damn, she did, of course she Drinks arrived, delivered by a
did. His bellows was now a grand pompous drink-steward and Ray
pipe-organ, threatening a Bach took advantage of the distraction to
cantata. sneak a mild puffer.

Drinks arrived, delivered by a Len-ARD was hovering about

The Tipperary was a loud mix of junk-sport viewers, girls' night-out, and dysfunctional families. Pizza and wing sauce competed for attention. Laurie sighed and stretched with relief when they got a table in the noisy center of the room. She suggested they start with a pitcher of Yuenglings. "Caution to the wind, then," said Ray.

"Bad choice of words," said Laurie, choking on the free popcorn. She confessed that this was her first date in many years as well. During dinner they had a fabulous time laughing over whose ex was worse. Later they found a dusky

bar with a blues band and even danced a couple of upbeat tunes. And all that time, the couple's delicate conditions seemed to have been cured, if not forgotten.

But too soon the time came round to deliver Laurie home. She had been trusting her teenage daughter watch her nine-year-old son. Ray thought it was a good sign when Laurie suggested he meet the kids.

The door opened to the boy in pajamas, staring wide-eyed in silence. After introductions, the fifteen year-old strutted around Ray like a drill sergeant at inspection.

"Hmm. Not nearly as handsome as Dad. I really don't see much future for him."

"Braaaaack-fffft!" The chicken wings were taking vengeance.

"Wow—awesome!" said the grinning nine-year-old.

Mr. Budinski is a retired engineer who now writes non-technical things, and as often as he wants. His short fiction has been published in *Paumanok Review*, *Bygone Days*, *Story Garden*, and is the current issue of *Deathlings*. He lives high on a hill in Western New York with his wife of thirty years, in the home of a West Highland Terrier named Hildy.

Buck

by Jim Penny

"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." (*Exodus 14:21*)

Thievery

A faceless boy of ten years walked the dusty road in the dark, no moon, only stars over his head, the black, speckled sky streaked by the occasional meteor rendered to dust and vapor by the heat of its passing, reflected in the characteristic sheen of

sweat on the black face. He walked at night in the relentless summer heat of 1931 and Johnston County to avoid the riders he had learned to fear at his mother's knee, a woman unknown to history, yet etched in brilliant colors in the memory of the boy. His father was a figure

Sinister Bedfellows

by mckenzee

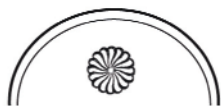


Bill was living a life of unsuffered consequences.



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of shadows and the constructed remembrance of hugs, rabbit traps, and fishing lines.

He was months and miles from home and her, driven away by the guilt of his hunger.

A yellow light down the road drew his attention, and he stepped into the shadows. The light flickered but did not move, and the boy stepped slowly forward, mindful of the danger such light could harbor. Closer, moving soundless, a manner of walking he knew but didn't know, a manner arising from a past unknown, untellable, and held in raw suspicion by the world through which he passed.

Shielded by brambles, blackberry, and poke, he saw a commissary illuminated by kerosene lamps, just a few, each one old and rusted. He stood, taking long, slow breaths, worried that his beating heart might bring unwanted and surely deadly attention. An owl swooped unseen, unheard, and exploded on a field mouse in the spot of grass that somehow found its life in the otherwise barren soil surrounding the building, soil strewn with rusting bottle caps, its dust bound by discarded

motor oil. The hound of indeterminate origin lying by the front door barked twice in transient resolution, and then lowered its head after turning to see the man looking through the half-open screen door.

The boy crouched lower on his haunches, making a smaller target for the always-suspicious eyes, and the dog lifted his head to sniff the night air, turning toward the unexpected tendrils of sweat-laden vapors threading back to the bramble. The boy's ragged cap and shirt were damp with the perspiration produced not only by the countless miles of silent walking through the heat of summer nights but also by the fear he had grown to accept as a natural state of his being and earthly existence.

The lights flickered and expired one by one, as the man lowered the greasy, charred wicks of the lanterns, save the one that illuminated his steps out of the store and toward the mare that he would ride to his home, the suspicious hound trotting by his side. The rhythmic steps of the plodding mare faded down the familiar road, leaving in short time the night sounds to fill the boy's ears.

Noon

Breakfast had long passed the woman aged beyond her twenty-five years as she labored in the kitchen, her sanctum, her domain of counters, linoleum, chairs, and table, to prepare the meal her husband would need before returning to his field with the supplies he was purchasing in

town that morning. The mixture of white flour, lard, and butter-milk, soon to become the biscuits that graced the table with every meal she prepared, streaked her arms from wrist to elbow. Ham, cured late last fall in salt from another generation, sizzled in the iron skillet atop her kerosene stove.

She was pressing the large balls of dough onto the baking tray blackened years ago from the daily use of the cook before her, each biscuit retaining the indelible impression of her first three fingers, when her husband entered the kitchen, inhaling deeply the accustomed and welcomed invitation of the noon meal. He placed a small paper bag of peppermint candy, salt, black pepper, and vanilla flavoring on the counter.

They sat together at the table, eating ham biscuits with grape jelly and hoop cheese, savoring the cool sweet tea made of the soft water drawn in a bucket from the hand-dug well just steps from the back door, the well by which she would leave this world some thirty-five years later. He told her the story of his trip to town, including a mention of a boy who had robbed a store just last night, only to be tracked down by dogs following the scent from the cap he had left with the wrappers of the candy he had eaten by the counter of the store. The sheriff's posse had found the boy hiding up a tulip poplar tree back in the woods some four miles from the store, and the people in town were calling for justice and an example.

Confrontation

Six feet of Southern womanhood in bonnet; billowing, faded farm dress, hand-stitched from chicken feed sacks; and old black lace-up shoes purchased in the Hudson-Belk across the street, strode intent of single purpose across the sparse lawn of the county courthouse. She walked with undeniable purpose towards the group of twenty hooded men standing before the sheriff at the door of the white frame building, its paint peeling from the aging pine clapboard veneer. Their shotguns, both group and sheriff, were held at the ready, the shade of the blackjack oak reaching toward them, the soft coolness of the tree's respiration fading, if not averring, long before it reached the shifting perimeter of the gathered men. The impatient dogs tugged at their leashes. Gnats swarmed from dog to man, a thin black cloud intent on sucking sweat and tears.

The sheriff was fully cognizant of his limits this day.

The woman spoke, greeting them with assurance but also with the irrefutable and undeniable voice of maternal command, and the group turned toward her. The sheriff turned as well. Why they turned, they did not know, but they knew to do so, and had known to do so since the cradle. To a one, they knew her, and she knew them, calling them each by their given name: Ezekiel, Ezra, Ulysses, Ben, Zachariah, John, Howard, Wilson, Paul, Thomas, Bill, Oleander, Joseph, Parson, Zebediah, Lorne, Young, Lonnie, Seamus, and Noah.

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One man and erstwhile leader, your mothers taught you? These stepped toward her with the false confidence of assumed authority, Ezekiel, his double-barrel shotgun resting in the crook of his tanned arm, incongruous with the white robe that not so many days before was a castoff bed sheet, and he told her there was no business here for a woman today. The men could handle this concern.

She stepped forward, toward Zeke and the assemblage of men, pulling herself upright and far beyond her physical measure, her shadow joining that of the ageless tree spreading behind her, its limbs reaching in embrace, the sun and its searing heat growing by the minute, as though in another moment it would never shine again.

"The men can handle this concern? The problem is I see no men here today. I see only cowards and fools hiding behind sheets, masking their faces lest they be seen for who and what they are, but I know you all. I know your boots. I know your families. We have all prayed together at church. You have all broken bread at my table.

"You are each a disgrace to the name your father gave you. Have you forgotten already what I know

dogs carry more honor and dignity than you do this day. Look at the gnats that blow your fetid flesh, here years before your Eternal Reward for what you seek to do this day.

"What man descended of Adam and worthy of the designation responds to a hungry boy with shotguns, dogs, and rope? Now listen to me, all of you, and listen to me well, as I will only say this once, and may God Almighty strike me mute if I do not mean every word, and may He rain lightning on your heads if you lift a hand contrary in purpose to my intent this day."

With that, the out-stretched fingers of a single dark cloud, swollen with summer rain to come, occluded the sun, chilling the unseen sweat-drenched laborers of the surrounding fields while gathering thanks from the farmers who savored the brief respite from the heat and welcomed the promise of rain. A breeze from the west rustled the leaves of the oak that stood to her flank. The robes of the men shifted in the unexpected coolness as goose bumps rose across their covered flesh.

They shivered in the Fear of That before them.



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She held her New Testament high in her left hand as she gestured with her right, a manner they had each seen countless times before on the Sunday mornings she led the congregation in prayer. Thunder rumbled in the not-so-distant west.

"That boy is now my son, he will live in my home, he will sup at my table, and he will grow into manhood as none of you has yet to do. You will not harm him this day or any day to follow, but you will step aside, and you will do so now."

She took her first step of many.

"And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them." (Exodus 14:28)

Epilog

Buck did indeed grow into manhood, just as Grandmother had said he would. He worked on my grandfather's farm for years, as all the children did. In time, he left for New York City. "Nu Yawk," he called it. He was never heard from again, though I think he might have driven my taxi once in New Orleans; I didn't have the gumption to ask.

Jim Penny is a psychometrician (you can go with the first two syllables) who haunts the darkened corners of the Raleigh Warehouse District while waiting for the sun to rise. He prefers his margaritas from a blender. If you find a kilted shadow in Marine-issue jungle boots slurring White Trash Haiku or Faulkner revised to Shakespearean standards, stand alarmed.

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The List of Occupations I Will Allow My Son to Pursue

by Johnny Pence

I'm at the time in my life when I'm a newish father and a lot of my old friends are too. I hear a lot of junk from those friends about how, "I'm not going to let my Ferdinand do this," or "As long as little Loretta Lynn doesn't do that." Man, that's no way to think about things. I think it's unwise and unfair to control my son's life—just as long as he turns out cool. I mean, I think I would have to step in and take control to some extent if he starts turning out to be a Goth or a cheerleader or something like that. But my son's future is important, and I simply want to instill the right values, prepare him for the "real world," and guide him in the right direction, not force my ideas on him.

Far be it from me to insist that my boy turn out to be a doctor or a lawyer, since I think both professions are just overpriced hacks doing things I can take care of myowndamnself with a little research and a sharp knife. But then again, I don't want to force that kind of iconoclasm on my son either. I want my boy's tattoos and fistfights to be the results of his choices, not the results of something I force on him.

So anyhow, from my own personal experience and the choice I've made to be an underemployed writer, I've seen that a child's choice of career can cause some strife in the family. To that end, here's a list I've been compiling of the occupations I will accept from my son. I am really trying to keep my mind open about this, and while this list is fairly specific (i.e., when it says "Motorcycle Cop," I only mean motorcycle cop, not fucking-pig-skullcracker-donut-eating-fatass-nazi cop. Likewise, "Allergist" does not mean any other kind of doctor.), I think it has a broad enough base to allow him to make happy choices that will lead him down a path with heart. It is by no means complete, as I add to it almost every two or three weeks, or whenever I've had a little more to drink than I was expecting.

You'll notice how the list starts off with the things that all fathers want for their sons, and I have gradually added things that reflect interests he's displayed. That's only fair.

My son, my true joy and hope for the future of America, it is my sincere wish that we can agree on at least one of these occupations for you. I love you, Dad.

Carpenter	Master Composter (not "composer," "composter")	Rises to Fame as a New-Age Guru and is Later Widely Discredited	Classics Scholar/Archaeologist, Egyptologist, or Hebrew Scholar/Archaeologist
Mason	Autistic-Savant	Percussionist in Cuban/Caribbean Jazz Outfit	Chinese Acrobat
Surveyor	Slaughterhouse Architect with a Profound Understanding of the Bovine Mind and Spirit	Balloon Salesman or Hot-Air Balloonist. Really, anything with balloons.	A Real Cowboy or Gaucho
Train Conductor	Popcorn Tycoon	Okay, a Balloon.	Dinosaur
Mississippi Riverboat Captain	Tire Tread Designer	Gourmet Ice-Cream Chef	Blue
Shaolin Monk	Underwater Welder	Owl	The Letter "L"
Rodeo Clown	Olympic Archer, Diver, and/or Equestrian	Gardener	Dog/Doggie
Blue-Collar Politically Active Rock Star Who Writes Incredible Lyrics That Go over the Heads of His Dope-Smoking Fan Base	Professional Bass Angler, Skateboarder, Jai-alai Player, and/or Vintage Motorcycle Racer	Master Brewer for an Obscure Eastern-European Brewery that's Been in Continuous Operation Since Medieval Times.	Kitty
Drifter	Harpist and/or Harpsichordist	Tractor Mechanic or Salesman	Nobel Prize-winning Physicist
Haberdasher	Motorcycle Cop	Okay, a Tractor	Cookie
Survivalist	Anthropologist Specializing in Tribal Ritual Use of Psychoactive Plants, Who	Truck	Juice and/or Milk
Motorcycle Mechanic			Horse (or is it "house"? It sounds like "haisch")
Shipbuilder			Go. <i>Fast.</i> Go. Fast! GO!
Allergist			
Traveling Chef Who Scours the World in Search of the Perfect Sausage and/or Cheese			

Greenville/Spartanburg, June by Jenny Haniver

Mama geese won't fly
when walking their kids home
not even across freeways

transitions by Margot Considine

rearranging my expressions
stealing cognizance
undoing my buttons;
it was perfect until i dissolved into stardust
blew through an open pane
in the spun sugar window of obsolescence—
i sang myself dizzy &
kissed life confused full on the lips
sparkles of prisms a mite too blinding
who will i be
when the sequins fade from my dress
falling to slivers of lost glory
in the cracks between the floorboards?
it's the end of the world as we know it and
i see a light at the end of the tunnel—
let's chase it down and stuff it in the back
pocket
of my water-logged jeans.
i'm losing my insanity
finding a neverland between worlds—
transitions are never easy

How's work, Faustus?

Marvelous. I think this is a pretty good thing, oppress
advice from someone who knows genre.

Don't be like that....

Don't miss this chance.

There is nothing as good as this boast.
Very useful. This is a legitimate way.

Exclusive.
It's scary.

Official Information: Please Respond

Now celebacy
by invitation only
feels bigger.

Don't be overwhelmed
you can watch me nude.

Allow me. Please.

Never Again

Finally here: antisemetic
elevated pricing.
Doctors use this too.

by E. V. Noechel

Low. Low. Hard
like Rock.

Risk-free.

Larry "mckenzee" Holderfield (p. 4) has traveled the world, taking photos, writing bad poetry, and falling in love. He now combines these interests in "Sinister Bedfellows," online at SinisterBedfellows.com.

E. V. Noechel is a Raleighite poet. These poems are from a new collection called *Get The Rollax Repliccas You Watned, Vermin*, a series of poems comprised entirely of spam subject lines.

Margot Considine doesn't believe in revision.

Jenny Haniver is a pseudonym who handles submissions for *The Blotter*. She is 14 feet tall and eats tires.

Johnny Pence is the editor of *The Blotter*, and author of the as-yet-unpublished novel, *Waking Up*.

18TH ANNUAL BULL DURHAM BLUES FESTIVAL

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2005

- BO DIDDLEY AND THE DEBBIE HASTINGS BAND
- BETTYE LAVETTE
- DUWAYNE BURNSIDE AND THE MISSISSIPPI MAFIA
- MATT HILL BLUES BAND

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2005

- RUTH BROWN
- JOHN LEE HOOKER, JR.
- LIL' BRIAN & THE ZYDECO TRAVELERS
- DIUNNA GREENLEAF & THE BLUE MERCY BAND

6-11 PM / HISTORIC DURHAM ATHLETIC PARK
(Gates open at 5 pm / rain or shine)



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