geneva13

a zine of the local

#16

Details, Details

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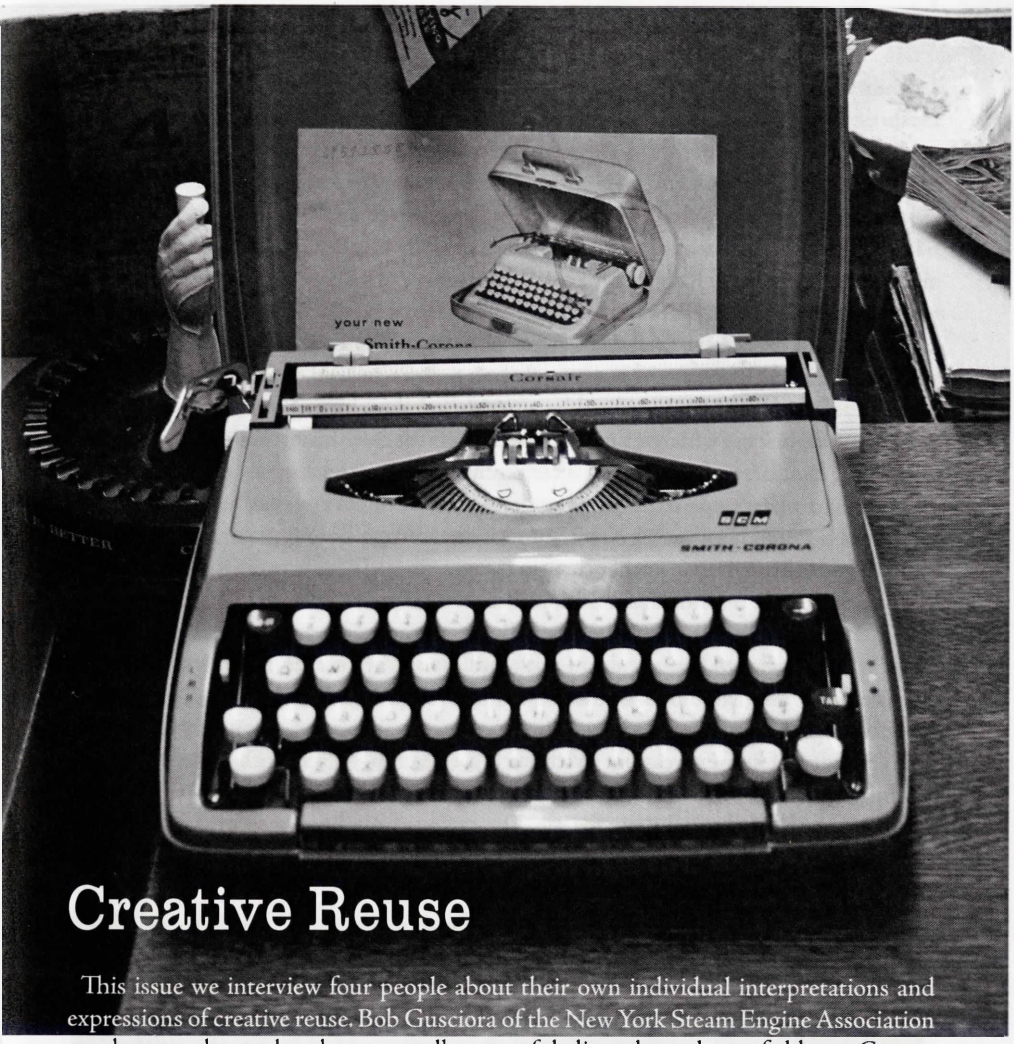


Creative Reuse

This issue we interview four people about their own individual interpretations and expressions of creative reuse. Bob Gusciora of the New York Steam Engine Association speaks to us about what draws a small group of dedicated people to a field near Canandaigua (but still within our 13-mile radius) to restore and nurse giant boilers and steam engines from a bygone era. Mark Olivieri, erstwhile a music instructor at HWS, tells us about constructing, composing and playing on musical instruments made out of... trash. And lastly Brandon and Amy Phillips, creators and residents of the Cracker Factory, tell us about how they built their furniture company, Miles and May, out of wood they found in a dumpster. The common thread tying these four together is an acknowledgement that the future is built on the past, no matter how much we might cherish the idea of a clean slate and innovations as bolts from the blue. All four draw creative insight from their understanding of what came before (or how what came before litters our present) and how it might inspire. Their present work seems all the more relevant for it, and particularly applicable to our little rust-belt burg as we struggle to redefine our own future. Sometimes it seems like all we have is our past and its litter (physical, intellectual and spiritual)...is creative reuse the way forward?

As the intern who chose the creative reuse theme for Geneva13's Fall Issue, I thought

Photo by Caroline Lui

I would share my own expression of creative reuse. I am a thrifter. I buy second hand clothing and whatever other used objects strike my interest. I take the dresses, coats, and jewelry that have been discarded by the masses, and showcase them in a new way. I started in high school, and ever since then the number of second hand items in my closet has grown, and with it so has my own sense of self.

I used to be obsessed with belts. Big, chunky, cowboy meets pirate-style belts. I guess I thought they made me look tough, which I see now was a lofty goal for my 5'2", fifteen-year-old self. Thrift stores were the Meccas of my rough-rider belts. I would embark on weekly pilgrimages to the local Salvation Army and immediately make a b-line for the accessories, by-passing the homemade knit scarves and old church lady hats to find a wall filled with oversized buckled beauties. I ended up having quite the stockpile of near identical belts at which my parents would scratch their heads. Eventually I also admitted my fixation on the belts was a tad strange and chalked it up as but the first stage of many in my thrifting evolution. That doesn't mean, of course, that I don't throw on a oversized belt and boots every so often to get some Anne Bonny toughness in my step.

I have gone through many other thrifting stages since. There was the time when I was really broke in high school, and I refused to buy anything over $3. There were also a few months at the start of college when I was fascinated by army trunks and vintage luggage, and began to line my dorm with endless storage pieces. I even experimented with ruffle, 70s-style blouses. Luckily that stage was pretty short-lived.

My Meccas, from tiny vintage boutiques to massive Salvation Army stores, fostered this diversity of self-expression. With such a selection, spiced with so many eras of clothing and trinkets, I had the freedom to adopt any sort of clothing palette. That ultimately became the real draw for me. The savings from buying second hand clothes is a definite perk, but I have grown to appreciate how distinct I feel when I thrift. That distinctness is not my desire to stand out or go against the grain with my eclectic style. I feel distinct from having a real hand in the creativity of my clothing and the knowledge that I can make them beautiful to others. Who would appreciate these items from the 50s and 80s, if I did not give them a new perspective?

Creating this new perspective is not easy. I can easily spend two hours going through the Linden Exchange or the Antique Co-op, scouring the aisles for the perfect 50s-inspired dress. I may not find it, or I may stumble upon some killer kicks instead, but the search is what keeps drawing me back. Putting some work into my clothes gives me the satisfaction I imagine is akin to a Do-It-Yourself project. The clothes are special because I found them. They were not marketed or put on display, legitimated by billion dollar corporations. No ad insisted that the 90s floral shrug I picked up at the Linden was the must-have sweater of the year, or that the fake gold necklaces I own have any value. I feel like the choice of what I buy is my own when I thrift. I decide what is legitimate and beautiful, and through that decision the thrifted wares become a part of me. The work is mine.

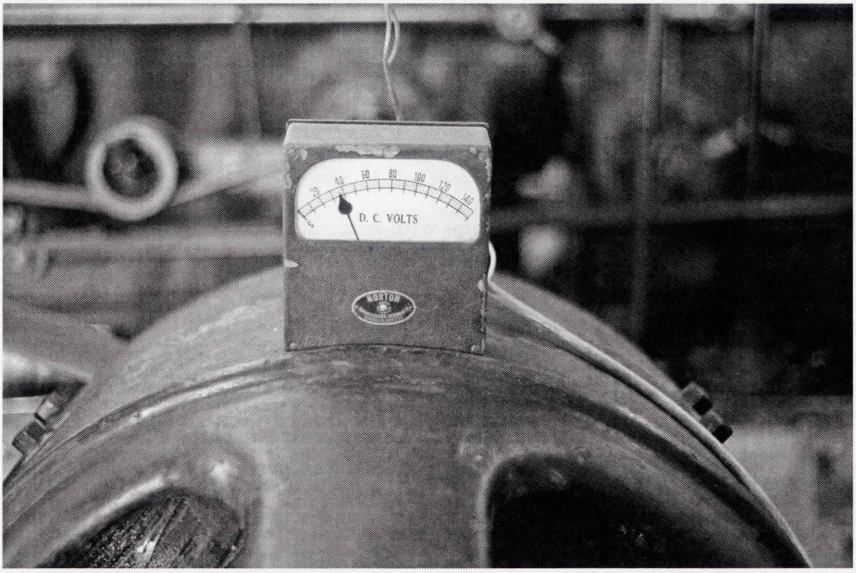
Aside from the ability to bypass what is marketed and create my own value system for objects, there is innate beauty in the creations of past generations. This is part of my thrifting philosophy that has developed over the course of my journey as a second hand fashionista. When I thrift, I tend to get clothes that are around twenty years old, sometimes even older. I immediately noticed that these clothes are nothing like

those manufactured today. Vintage clothes, even though their previous owners gave them plenty of use, still seem to last longer than clothes I buy from the big box stores. The same applies to old machines and household items. I think perhaps mindsets have changed. I may sound nostalgic for a time that I never knew, but I'm convinced that the quality of clothing construction had greater value, even a mere twenty years ago. Consumers wanted their wares to last, and when they did finally wear an outfit thin, they could have it repaired. Today I don't have that option. I can't get my cell phone repaired, shoes get thrown out on a bi-yearly basis, and I don't think I have ever had my old clothes mended. Disposability is the latest convenience.

Tailors, cobblers, and other skilled maintenance positions have fallen to the wayside. I think it is part of a prevailing attitude that spending more, consuming at higher rates keeps our economy afloat. Perhaps this is the case. I admit that my English major has given no insights into how our economy functions. Still from an environmental standpoint, a resources standpoint, it seems obvious to me that the consumer lifestyle is wasteful. It wastes energy, wastes resources, and leads to oversized landfills like the one that currently towers over Geneva.

I know that I am grandstanding a bit, but I suppose we all get a little preachy when we really care, and I care a lot about thrifting. It is so many things to me. It is an enjoyable way to spend the afternoon, it is an outlet for my own creativity, it is a way I identify myself, and it is a conscious lifestyle choice. This issue of Geneva13 is about creative reuse, and if I could say anything about it, it's that reuse is how I know myself and my values. It inspires me and empowers me.

-Ellen Harvey



repurposing the man

ethan powell

I thought I was built for broadcasting, but then I realized that maybe it wasn't for me. Then, I tried seminary in Richmond, left and returned to do a second stint at the now legendarily missed Harvest Hill Gardens, Inc. For those of you unfamiliar with Harvest Hill, it was a greenhouse and plant nursery, with quite possibly the best quality plants that this town has ever seen. I left that job to pursue a career in education, and then, for as hard as I had worked, Master's degree and all, that too came to an end. I thought all had been lost, and that I was destined to do something basically useless and horrible for quite some time. Meanwhile I would slowly build up debt, which would eventually and effectively swallow me whole. I was truly baffled. What was I to do? Where was I to go?

Happily, I had forged some relationships with small-business people in the area and had picked up some skills in the process. Jeff Ritter and Dave Harvey, owners of Ports Café, found me a place in their kitchen again, where I worked for many nights. I was taught to make salads, desserts and to cut fish and meats along with all of the other essential skills of the line cook. While I have never done it full time, nor am I as fast or as good as most of the seventeen year-olds doing the job in kitchens in and around the Finger Lakes, I was and remain excessively proud to be a part of that world.

I love the life of a cook, coming in and doing prep, cleaning up my station and making every salad, dessert and appetizer exactly like the one before. I like hassling waitrons

Above: ca. 1952, 70 year old Fred Smith of Border City built a little vehicle for odd jobs out of a garden tractor and a homemade wagon. The station was Johnny's Gulf Station at the corner of North and Pre-Emption Streets, just past Momberger's. Photo by P.B. Oakley (Geneva Historical Society Collection)

and swapping ugly tales with the guys in the kitchen. I enjoy decorating plates with raspberry sauce and whipped cream. I truly love coming up with new platings, and asking Dave or Josh, the Sous(Chef) to "check me" before passing a plate down that long maple counter top. I like that I carry two knives in a knife roll of my own making, and that I can make them, and keep them razor sharp.

Interestingly enough, what I learned "on the line" has made me more of who I am, and how I operate in a business environment more than anything else. I do my mise. That's mise en place, or everything in place. It's the kitchen equivalent of doing the background work before meeting with a client in an office, or a student actually doing their homework before going to class. As several chefs have said, prior planning prevents piss-poor performance. But that isn't the only job I've had since leaving public school life.

I needed a day job too. So, just after teaching and I broke up, when Dustin Cutler, Master Baker and owner of Normal Bread asked me if I wanted to do a quasi-apprenticeship in the shop, I took the opportunity. The work was great, and went hand-in-glove with what I was doing at night. Many of the readers of this fine collection of stories have purchased bread from Normal while I was on duty. I learned from Dustin how to manage a small store, looking after inventory, cleaning up and making sure the store got closed properly. I learned how to make bread, and cookies. He let me play in the shop as though it were my own, and play I did. For those of you that have seen me making pasta, or roasting vegetables in the big oven, or have tasted the Squirrel Butter, you know he was living it, and so was I. As a "boss" and a friend, he discussed the nature of yeasty things and also the nature of owning a small business. Ultimately, I have him to thank for my current employment.

This past summer, Kim and Vinny Aliperti took a serious risk and made me an offer to come and work for them at Billsboro Winery, just within the 13 mile range of G13. Now, I have some wine knowledge, having grown up here in the Finger Lakes, but in no way was I prepared for the tasks I have come to enjoy as part of my daily routines. I had never looked after a staff of 12, nor made critical business decisions, nor been given the opportunity to help grow one of the most popular small wineries in the Finger Lakes. But, I was prepared to figure out what I had to, learn what I could and do the best that I could to help their dream grow and prosper. I make Kim and the staff lunch sometimes. I think this is probably the best I can do for them. It's like mom says, it may not be much, but it fills the holes.

So what does this all have to do with recycling and repurposing of things? Well, this: I thought that teaching seventh graders was going to be my career. I figured I'd probably eventually earn a Ph.D and then move up to teaching college, maybe even at HWS. I figured that was just going to be what I was going to do. Well, when the rug got pulled out from under that idea, I had to do the best I could in a bad situation. I came to rely on people that cared about me, and what I was worth to them and their businesses. It made me slowly come to realize that I was more than just a job. It gave me the breathing room to figure some things out.

So do I have a "career" in the old-fashioned sense of the word? No. I don't. Do I have medical insurance and an exponentially increasing 401K, no, I don't. It doesn't mean that I'm irresponsible, or unreliable. It certainly doesn't mean that I'm not planning for my future. I don't want anyone to have to care for me because I'm out of resources, ever. What it does mean is that I have been repurposed. It means that I'm dealing with life in the same way as half a million other people in my age bracket in the United States. I've had to learn new skills and a new way of life in order to make it work. So I got some new tools and I work through the summer now. It's the way it goes. I'm not the same man I was a few years ago. Instead, I'm getting better every day. I owe much of it to those mentioned here. So, thanks guys. And thanks Geneva for getting repurposed for a whole lot of people, each and every day. ☆

where I have failed

Talent they say is what a man needs
To succeed in a world knee deep in greed
But a talent means nothing
In the Depths of the Sea

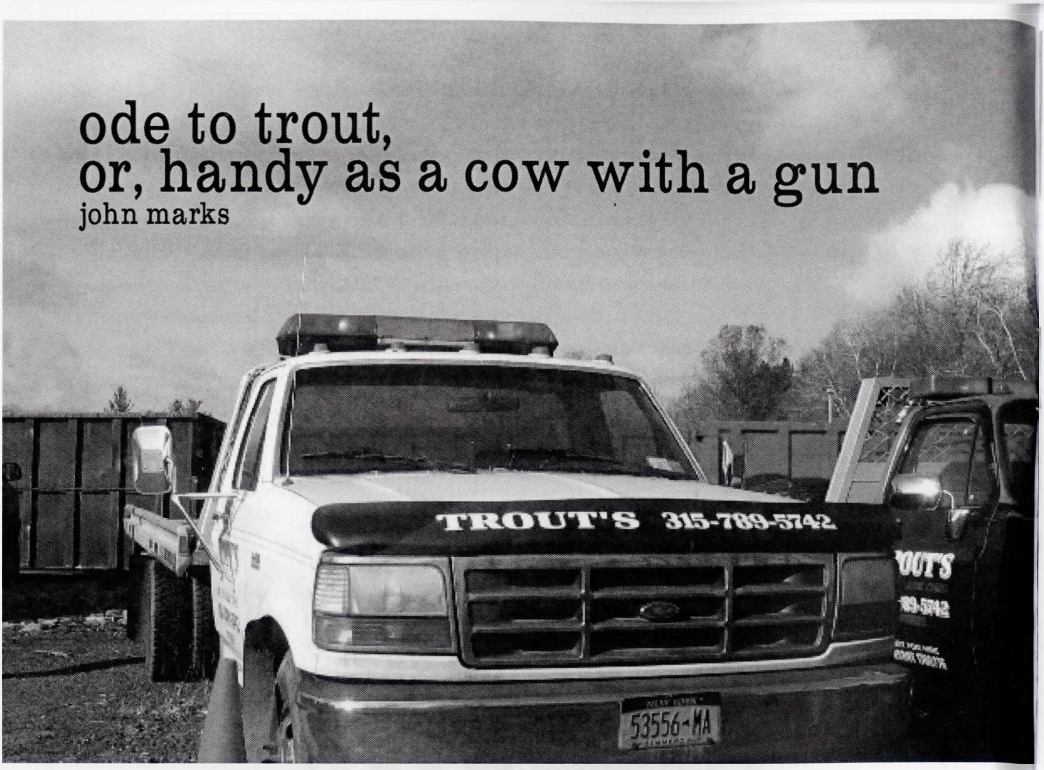
The longing we feel to make it all worth
While the time we put in is never returned
But time means nothing
In the Depths of the Sea

And I see the friends I thought I knew
Continue on, Pursue, Pursue
Spilling guts on a stranger's shoe
In the Depths of the Sea

(zachary schoonover)

ode to trout, or, handy as a cow with a gun

john marks



I don't fix things because I can't. I'm as handy as a cow with a gun. I have post-traumatic stress from middle school shop class. And I'm lazy. I won't tell you where I live – enough people go by as it is – but my lack of skills is obvious when you drive past my house.

Now that I've whined sufficiently, I'll back up two steps. I'm not handy but I do have modest problem-solving skills and I'm persistent. And I'm cheap. So when A (seriously broken crap which can no longer be ignored) + B (cost of buying new or calling a professional) is greater than C (the meager amount we have available for A-related emergencies), I will attempt repairs. Oh, and "not getting killed in the process" factors in there somewhere, too.

I have a free pickup truck that was my late father-in-law's. I won't bore you with the equation for when a "free" truck becomes no longer free – you've been there—but this has reached that point. When I got it, I noticed the driver's side mirror was held on with two sheet metal screws through the plastic mount. This summer I slammed my door shut in the Wegman's parking lot and 'clink' the mirror fell off. So I promptly went home and got out the Gorilla Glue ™ and duct tape. Life was good and full of backward reflection for a few days until I drove north on Route 14 and, out of the corner of my eye, saw my mirror gracefully give way and 'ka-pow' shatter on the road.

I'm cheap and lazy but I'm no scofflaw. I knew I needed to replace the mirror sooner rather than later or get a ticket. Take it to my mechanic? He's a good man, bless his heart, but he has overhead and I suspected this might be a few hundred bucks. The

above equation pointed to doing it myself. Order the part online? Twenty bucks plus shipping and handling and questionable date of arrival. Go to the local parts store? Sixty bucks for a chrome replacement that didn't match the passenger mirror. (I know I'm driving a 16 year old free truck, but I still have my pride.) But wait—I live a few miles from Trout's Auto Recycling (what we used to call a junkyard). In addition to other services, they have "pick 'n pull" parts—you find the item you want, you do the work, and a modest fee later it's yours.

A few online tutorials on "how to replace a side mirror" later, I got my socket wrench set (okay, so I exaggerated the un-handiness) and went to Trout's. In my manliest voice, I told a polite young man what I needed and he gave me directions to the Chevy truck section. It's a very obsessive-compulsive junkyard, what a post-apocalyptic landscape would look like if only accountants and librarians survived. I found a truck with an intact mirror that matched mine, took off the door liner, and unscrewed the mirror. I felt a little less proud of myself as I watched a guy walk out with a complete power steering assembly, but I still felt pretty good about my ten dollar mirror.

Installing the mirror took longer than I care to admit, or than you want to read about, but I did it. It's still on the truck, so I count it as a win. I'd like to say this inspired me to fix everything in my house that needed attention, but it didn't. And when our boiler stopped working, I had no interest in mastering plumbing, electrical work, and natural gas lines (see "not getting killed" above). But I have realized I can fix stuff, I can save a pantload of money doing it myself, and there are repositories of perfectly good materials out there. ☆

thrifter's guide to geneva

The Second Hand Shop*
19 E Castle Street Geneva, NY (315) 789-7504

Furniture, housewares, clothes, old postcars, a massive jar of buttons, three stories of thrifting fun and the creepiest old evelator in town...

The Antique Co-op
475 Exchange Street Geneva, NY (315) 789-5100

Represents antique dealers and collectors from around the region, a massive selection of diverse items, from 50's Poodle Skirts to 80's lunchboxes to stacks of Fire King casserole dishes.

Linden Exchange*
519 Exchange Street Geneva, NY (315) 789-6162

Clothes and remarkably stylish, seasonal displays in the front windows.

Center of Concern*
30 Canal Street Geneva, NY (315) 789-6077

Clothes, baked goods, shoes, furniture, trinkets, old crutches and suitcases, one of the most active food pantries in the area. Treasure lies here.

Salvation Army*
Hamilton Street Geneva, NY (315) 789-1055

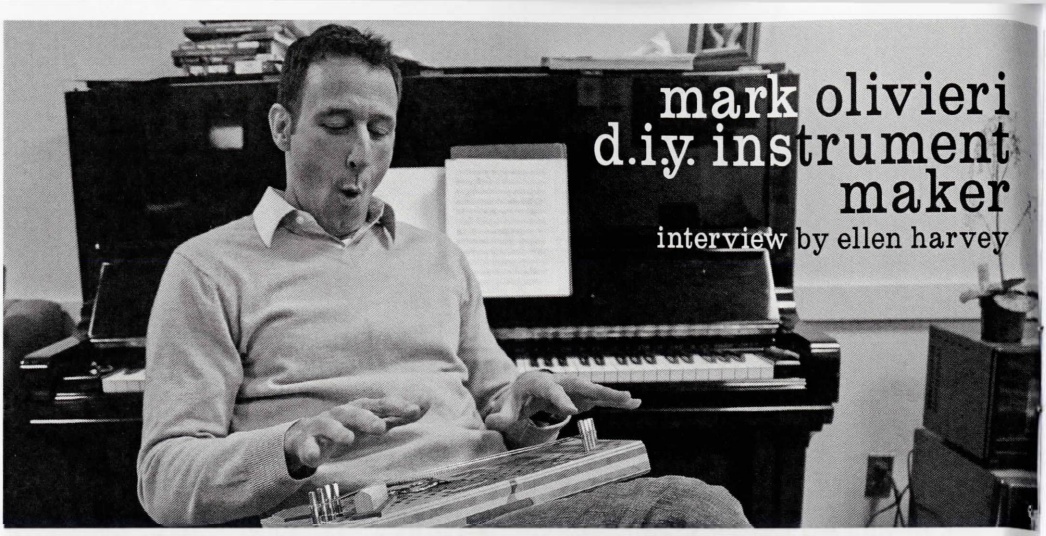
Not sure about salvation (or amries) , but you can find lots of clothes here, as well as some furniture and shoes.

Universal Appliance
402 Exchange Street Geneva, NY (315) 789-2788

Sells used and refurbished appliances. We have a Kenmore washer that has been running for the past 7 years, until I typed this sentence out, that is.

*Accepts Donations

Geneva13 intern Ellen Harvey explores the lower level of the Antique Coop...unarmed. Photo by Caroline Lui



mark olivieri d.i.y. instrument maker

interview by ellen harvey

Dance Professor Cadence Whittier kept going past my office dragging giant bags of trash behind her. My nose smelled a story. Whittier cheerfully explained that she was doing a dance piece for the Finger Lakes Dance Concert at the Cracker Factory that featured garbage. Coincidentally, Ellen started to hear rumors on campus that music professor Mark Olivieri was making musical instruments out of trash. Turns out it was for Cadence's trash dance. I sent Ellen to find out about the Frankensteinway from the doctor himself. –d.r.

Ellen: Could you explain what you're doing with the instruments or what you're making from the materials? The process I guess.

Mark: Yeah, well, when Cadence said "Hey do you want to make some instruments out of junk I was like "Yeah, of course", you know. What I did was, I contacted a couple of friends of mine. One is a piano technician at the Eastman School of Music, and I wanted some piano wire to hang on, to mount to pieces of wood, but he had something better. He actually had an old tuning block. And so, what I did was I cut the tuning block with a saw into pieces and I'm putting tuning pegs in the holes and running piano and electric base wire. I ordered some pick-ups and I'll have a jack, a quarter inch jack running to a PA and having these instruments amplified. I have like five gallon buckets, both metal and plastic buckets that were going to be recycled, so I took those, and you know if you're familiar with street drummers, they use those all the time. Bottles, lots of bottles, both glass and plastic bottles because they're slightly different timbres. Some I'll fill up with water and have definite pitches and some you know indefinite pitches. Just be like this crunchy sound. So its just found objects. I mean anything is an instrument really.

Ellen: So do you have any wind instruments?

Mark: No, but I haven't told anyone yet. What I might do is make some clarinets out of cucumbers and carrots. You can drill a hole, put a mouthpiece at the end, and just play it.

Ellen: Where have you gotten your ideas for these things? Have you been going

online? Are there forums for how to make your own instruments or are you just experimenting on your own?

Mark: No, the idea of doing the piano wire thing was an idea I've had for a few years, that I've always wanted to do, and just haven't had the set right circumstances to do it, you know. But if someone says "Hey can you write a piece or make these instruments for a piece that I'm doing", in this case Cadence...but you know this is certainly nothing new. There is a composer by the name of Harry Parch who used to build his own instruments and perform music that he composed on them. So he has this instrument called, you can check it out on Wikipedia or something, called the Gourd Tree and they're just these wooden gourds and he has them mounted on this homemade bracket system and he plays them. And he has a whole system of tuning for these that is non-western, so when we play piano or if you've played an instrument, you know do re mi so fa la ti do, these are the, what they call temperament, is different than western temperament. (*pause*) Do you want to play in the concert?

Ellen: Hah, that would be awesome. I don't really have that much musical skill to be honest. I don't really sing in tune. My brothers got all the musical talent. So, for the process itself, is there anything unexpected that came up? Did you have anticipations going in and it was completely different? What was the experience of actually making these?

Mark: Well I worked with a couple of colleagues, one Mitch Moore, Eastman School of Music, and this instrument builder in Rochester. His name is Bo Leopard. Great rock'n'roll name. And, you know we sat down and I said hey this is my idea and this is what I want to build because I've never done it before, and Bo builds custom electric-based guitars, that's what he does, part-time. He sells like five or six a year or something, but they're very expensive. When I told them what I wanted to do, neither one of them flinched. They're just like, "Yeah, okay we can do this." But there were problems deciding how we were going to, for instance, amplify the sound, what kind of pickups we were going to use. And we had some disagreements over things, but you know that turbulence, right that minor turbulence always leads to productivity. So you need that, you have that in any group.

Ellen: So have you played them, have you tested them out?

Mark: Yeah, yeah. They're cool. I don't think it's going be a new family in an orchestra or a band any time soon, but it's—oh, and one thing I did was I fabricated a piece of aluminum that's six feet by two feet, you know, it's kind of like this big thunder sheet that if you shake it it's like whuuhhhuuhhuuh, so the idea is since I'm working with dance to hang from the girders in the Cracker Factory right? So it has this amazing physical presence too. It's silver. It's shiny. And it's big and long and intimidating. So the dancer can just go over and like tap it with her foot, right? And whuuhhuuhh. And then, you know, some things were kind of found objects. For instance I have this basin that I fill up with water and I just go (moves hand back and forth) sh-sh-sh-shhhh. And what's really interesting is if you don't know what that sound is, if you can't see it, people have trouble identifying what it is. They go, "What instrument is that, is it some sort of percussion instrument?", and

I like that. You know that visual component certainly helps identifying where the sound is coming from. So I have played them. Then we're going to hang these instruments. Some are this big (brings hands close together) and others are, this big (stretches hands out) made from the soundboard. So the idea is they hang in different heights, so I'll play one and there is this sort of—

Ellen: A flow to it?

Mark: Right, and also a visual component. The sounds aren't like earth shattering, but it's cool. We're making instruments out of found objects.

Ellen: Is the experience different playing these instruments instead of instruments you haven't made or instruments you can get in a store?

Mark: Yeah, well the big difference is we're doing something that's experimental and when you're creating experimental instruments, you don't know what the outcome is going be. Right? You don't know how they're going to be tuned. You don't know what their pitches are going to be. You don't know what the relationship of one pitch to the other necessarily in some cases—in the case of these that I'm using the tuning pegs for, they can be tuned. I can tune them a certain way, but they don't hold as long as a piano is going to hold for instance. You know the cool thing is they're very nontraditional instruments and that experimental component, you just kind of have to go with it. The instruments kind of tell you what they want to be. When Tom last night was talking about the characters will tell you how they want develop, and you can't go into it with too much of a narrative, well, those instruments they do the same thing. They kind of tell you where you should go with it next.

Ellen: So it's sort of like an adventure?

Mark: Yeah, it's an adventure. It's a really organic process.

Ellen: So would you say a family or some kids, if they just wanted to make instruments, do you think it would be possible to emulate what you've done?

Mark: Psh, my kids do it all the time. They'll put together pieces of plastic, put holes in stuff and play. I mean, kids pick up bottles and go fvhuuuu, right? You know obviously I'm a musician and my wife's a dancer so the kids are always creating stuff because they see us creating all the time. You remember when you're five, everything is a instrument.

Ellen: Yeah, I remember the shoebox guitar thingy with the rubber bands. I made a lot of those. I never knew where they ended up, (laughs) but I remember making them.

Mark: Right, you know and that's kind of the beauty of it. The idea that you can just pick up anything and play it and you don't need any really formal sort of training. All the experience I have as a composer, as a pianist, are not going to help me play these instruments that I made. I have to develop a new way of playing these things, invent a way of playing these invented instruments.
This is probably the worst. I'm probably giving the worst interview ever.

Ellen: No! I don't think so! I think it's really interesting. I'm fascinated by it

because you think if you make an instrument it would more or less work like the other ones, but I didn't expect it to be a whole new world, even for someone as trained as you are.

Mark: I think that the attractive thing about it is going some place where you don't know what the outcome is going to be, some place unfamiliar is the attraction of doing it. You know if I write pieces for traditional western instruments in a traditional sort of way more or less, I know what the outcome is going to be. I have no idea what the outcome is going to be. It could be great. It could be some things that are really great about it, could be some things that are not so great about it. But that's cool.

Ellen: Yeah, our whole issue that we're doing for Geneva13 is on resuse. So we're sort of stumbling across a lot these types of things—people going to thrift stores or antique shops and things like that. You never really know what you're going to come out with and you never really you know how your going use it or what's going to come in handy in certain places.

Mark: (laughs) This kinda goes with this.

Ellen: Yeah, it's the interesting part of resuse that it's not something that has been marketed to you and you're expected to use it in this way. It's something that you're taking and doing whatever you want with, and it makes it more your own and your ownership I guess.

Mark: Right. Perfect example is one of my friends was throwing out his bike rack for his car, and I said "What are you going to throw that out?" and he said, "Yeah, what are you going to do. It's broken." "Well those might make great instruments." So I'm using part of that broken bike rack for percussion instruments.

Ellen: That's great!

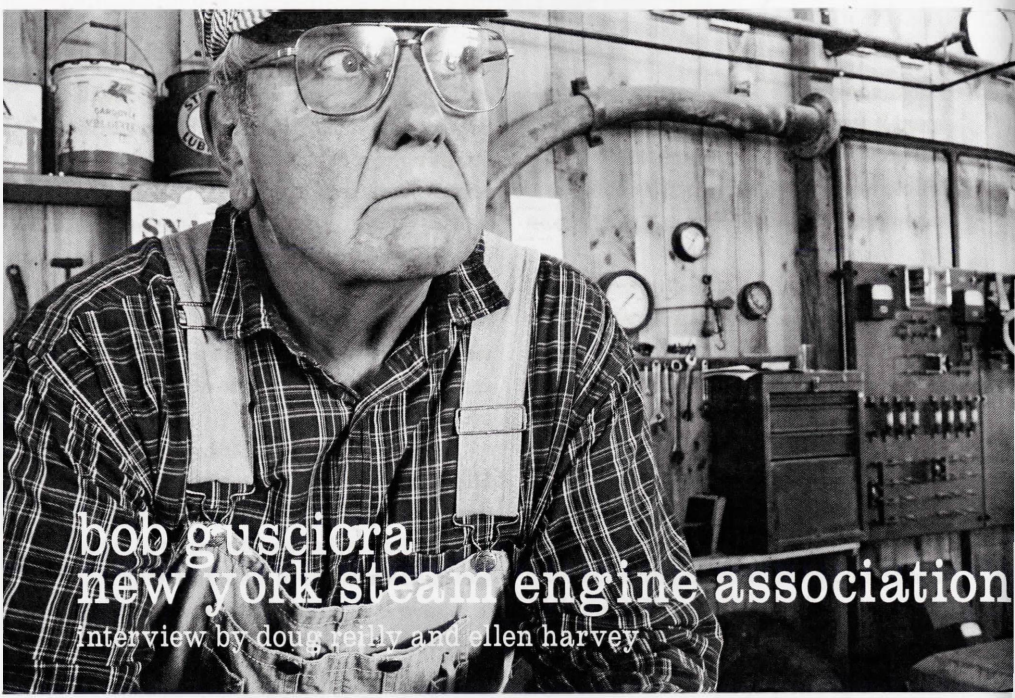
Mark: No I hear you, and you know that wasn't the use it was intended for but you can get some more life out of those puppies.

Ellen: Yeah, I'm from Pennsylvania and there's a lot of the Germans who have been in Pennsylvania forever, and I feel like I have that in me where they just save everything. They never throw anything out. If you go to my grandma's house there are these old spinning wheels and things like that that have been in the family forever. I think there is someone's World War I uniform, his boots or something like that. You just don't throw things out. You find a way to use it. I don't know. The mindset is different now. Shoes don't last that long. You throw out shoes pretty easily. You don't repair them. You know it's just not a good mindset in terms of the environment really.

Mark: Yeah, absolutely. Well now you know there are some eco-friendly shoe companies like Newton. I don't know if you know this company they have a completely biodegradable mid-sole, and they make high-end running shoes for athletes, for marathoners and triathletes. I mean running people think of it as a green sport, right? But your shoes—

Ellen: You throw them out every year if not sooner.

Mark: I know. ☆



bob gusciora
new york steam engine association

interview by doug reilly and ellen harvey

The Festival of Steam was long on my list of "Geneva13 stories that take place just off routes 5 & 20 between here and Canandaigua." (The other being the livestock exchange, Issue 4.) I went years ago and found it frightening and fascinating and ever since I wanted to ask these dudes about steampunk, so I dragged Ellen and we tried to interview Bob next to these giant hissing steam engines. The interview was great, but when we got home, all we heard on the recorder was the machines. We asked Bob to meet us on neutral, non-steam-powered ground, the Geneva Wegman's cafe, for a do-over. We never brought up steampunk, however.Seemed pretty clear the pacific northwest steampunks and our local steam gentleman do not yet know one another. Yet.—d.r.

D: What is your name?

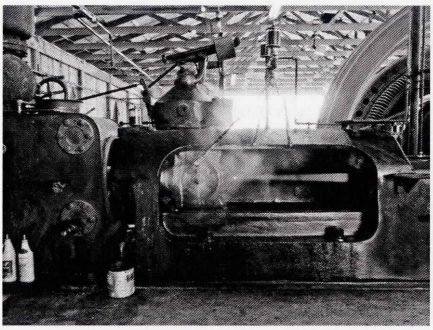
B: Well I guess officially it's Robert Gusciora. I get called Robert by my mother and my wife when I'm in trouble, serious trouble. I prefer Bob, and Gusciora has a special pronunciation (Gush'-oar'-ra). I've belonged to the New York State Steam Engine Association since 2005 and I've been going to the Steam Pageant for 30 years, and I became a member because in 2005 one of my colleagues said why don't you join them, and I said "What for? I don't own any engines. I don't own any tractors." He said, "Do it anyway." So I did, and I'm glad I did. But it raises the question you asked back in August when I talked to you: "Why do you do this,"

D: And you've been thinking about it since August.

B: Well, not really. The short answer is that maybe that I and my friends over there are a little crazy, but the more common sense answer is that there are a bunch of us trying to preserve history. You see these documentaries where people have

gone into Egypt or some foreign country, and they have discovered dinosaur bones or discovered traces of human skeletons or they found a woolly mammoth or something, and here we have machines (and of course, being an engineer I have an affinity toward machines and how to make things work) but here we have some machines that basically helped this country a hundred years ago do things in industry that would not have been possible without some of the machines that they had. One of the things that I think is very unique about the Canandaigua location of the New York State Steam Engine Association is that it is like a secret. There's a lot of people that live in Canandaigua that have lived there all their lives and they don't even know about it. The other thing is that, and this is the thing that I've been thinking about since August since you asked me that question 'Why do you do this,' those of us in the Steam Engine Association have visited other steam organizations and they're not like this one, plain and simple. Some of them are bigger, but they're bigger from the standpoint that they have more steam engines, bigger steam machines, prairie tractors—I'm talking about in Oklahoma. A bunch of us went to Pawnee, Oklahoma for their steam pageant in May one year, and we actually did that because we were in search of information about how to set up the Allis Chalmers Machine that you people originally interviewed me next to. That was the great big generator that came from Mackinac Island, Michigan. It turns out that we didn't learn what we thought we would learn. They have a sister machine to the machine that we have, but it's older so it doesn't have all the bells and whistles that we have, so it really didn't teach us anything, but we made a lot of friends and saw a lot of different things we didn't expect to see. We also learned that we are unique because those people are somewhat hampered: some of their members have to drive 150 miles one way to participate in the Wednesday work crew like we have; and for me, it's a five mile drive from my house to go work every Wednesday night. And yes, some people have to come from the 1000 Islands region, but that's not 150 miles away. There are other people that come from Springwater or the Dansville area or Geneva. But we're somewhat blessed because we're more compact. When you go out West to Oklahoma, people do 100, 200 miles, so they don't get together that often. They're disadvantaged. Then you go to the other end of the spectrum, we went to Rhode Island to a show over there, and it's much smaller. They're entire property is probably no bigger than this Wegman's property and its building. The Wegman's store is probably bigger than all of the buildings combined, and yet it was a good show, a different show. There's one in Western Connecticut. There's a museum in Canada up by the 1000 Islands. That one is a pretty museum and has a lot of machinery, but they don't run. The day that we went, there was absolutely nobody you could talk to

Watch the steam engine go! Place your hand in the centerfold and flip from this page to the middle. Turn up your themostat to about 120. Make a chu-chu noise and spit on yourself. Virtual reality!



that knew anything. There was a young lady who was basically guarding the place. She didn't have a uniform or anything. She was just basically there to open the door. Our show is very interactive, and if you are interested, you can talk to people who can tell you how the machines work. If you have a machine like it at home or similar to it, you can ask tips on how to get it running.

D: How often does that happen? How often does someone contact the club and say 'Hey I got this thing in my barn and I want to try to fix it up?'

B: It's not as common as it used to be because the problem is, particularly among the younger generation, they're more interested in playing with the iPad or the computers, and they're really not interested in this stuff. I have a dentist whose son wants to be a mechanical engineer, he's a high school senior, and his father, while working on my teeth said, 'Boy you're really into this steam business, maybe my son would be interested in coming to the Steam Pageant.' So I gave him a DVD, because we've been filmed by Channel 13, and I told him, 'Show your son this.' And the son said, 'Thank you, I'm not interested.' The fact remains that farms could not have been run 100 years ago or have become as efficient as they have become without those machines. Yes, they're massive and yes they have quirks that have to be tended to, but when you really get down to it, they're very, very simple. They're not that complex. They're big, they're heavy, and they take a lot of care in order to keep them running, but it's part of our heritage. To answer your question directly, not that many people come up and ask, but you'll be surprised by how many people will come up and say 'I have this machine, where can I go to get some help?' I hear this all the time because I am usually in the building with the machines. I will say, 'I think so and so will help you, or go to this part of the pageant and someone will help you.'

D: How big is the membership of the Steam Association?

B: Active members, in the summer months, probably about 80. This time of year, 20. Get a little colder, 5. Those buildings are not heated. We will work in the Stationary Steam Building on a very cold day, because it's a Wednesday and we're just programmed to go after a while. We'll work until the fingers start getting cold.

D: Could you put a wood stove in there to heat it up?

B: We would have to insulate it. It's just such a massive, massive building. As long as we can stay out of the wind and the rain (the wind is a killer), we make do. Some of the time, you can't get in there because the snow drifts are so big. There's 1600 to 1700 members, but they're not active, they're just members. To be fair, some of these folks become members when they go through the gate because they say 'I want a membership, even though I live in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, or Toronto, Canada, or Vermont.' It's typically 80 members, though. We're hoping to get younger people, but it's like every other organization, the young people just don't seem to be interested, and yet, as I said before, it's part of our history, and the unfortunate thing is that some of these machines, once they go, they're gone. That's why some of these machines are so rare to this day because during the Second World War there was

this drive to get metal. My understanding is that because of the war effort people would drive down various roads, and if they saw in a farmer's field an old tractor they would say 'Can you help the war effort and get rid of it for scrap so that we can build ships?'

D: That's fascinating because that's something I have always wondered is what happened to all the old cars and where does all this stuff go? And it's interesting to hear that story because it partially explains where things go. I know you've said you've been going to the Pageant of Steam for 30 years, but what is your earliest memory of Steam Power?

B: I grew up across the street from the main line of the New Haven RR that ran between Boston and New York City. There were trains that were going 24 hours a day, and they were the big, coal-fired steam engines that would pull the freight cars or passenger cars to Boston. I lived in the suburbs of Boston, and they were right across the street. In fact I think there were a half dozen tracks across the street down the hill, and that number had been cut back. I guess during the early part of the War it was like 12 to 15 tracks in front of that area. That's my earliest memory.

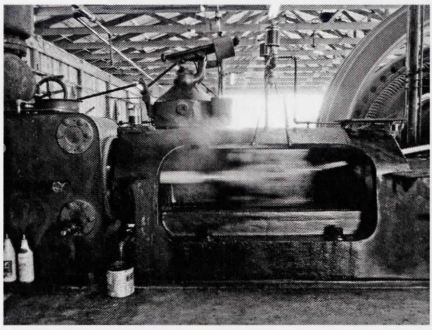
D: In your career you were an electrical engineer?

B: Yes.

D: I was just curious with your work with steam over the last few years, do you ever think that electrical engineering was the wrong choice for you, that maybe you should have done something that was more related to steam when it comes to something like turbines or something more current?

B: I come from an engineering family. My father was a mechanical engineer. My two brothers are younger than me, they're chemical, and I'm electrical. I almost became a mechanical engineer. I changed at the end of my freshman year, I guess because in all honesty, electrical engineering is a glorified math course, and I was very, very good in math. In fact I tutored Calculus in college to people that were having a tough time. I don't think I made the wrong choice. I got into steam late in life, but it's more because of the history and because I'm fascinated about how these things work. When I think about the efforts that were necessary in order to build these massive machines and to be as true as they are. True from the standpoint that they are very tightly toleranced, and even though they are metal castings. That is a massive trick. A comparison is, if you have your tires changed on your car, you have to have them balanced, otherwise you'll be vibrating down the road. You look at some of these massive cast iron wheels, there are no weights. They were cast that way and they run true.

D: The ones that we saw, the ones in the building, those were huge. How tall were those?



"I learn a lot, and that's what life is all about."

B: 10 feet in diameter, 9 tons. The new one that is still in pieces and not yet ready to be assembled, that is a 16 feet high and 18 tons. Massive numbers, massive numbers, and it is all cast. It's just fascinating to me that these things were assembled so many years ago. They were first designed, they were built, and assembled, and they were even mass-produced. Yes, they were done at a time when wages were not as much as they are today, but they were also done without computers, without numerical control equipment like today, without cranes like we have today. People just used their wits.

D: And they built the machines to last.

B: They were built to last with more maintenance than we're used to. Behind the scenes, there is an awful lot of maintenance that goes on. The big machines in the Stationary Steam Building have to be oiled, and it's a mechanical, manual operation. You don't have automatic oilers like you do on your car. When was the last time a wheel bearing failed on your car? If we don't oil those bearings on those big wheels, they're going to fail. They have to be maintained regularly; otherwise, they're just going to go south.

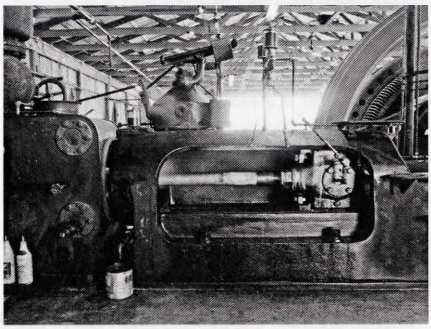
E: Is that what you do at most of your meetings, maintain those machines. What do you spend most of your time doing at the meetings?

B: We spend time with maintenance or with advance work. One of the things we're trying to do is to restore the Fishkill Corliss Machine, the one that is in pieces, the one that came from the outlet down in Penn Yan. We're trying to figure out how to set up the building, what we need to do in order to get things in place and have that running. The objective is to have that running. So yes, there's maintenance, but there is also planning, and if something is broken, we've got to fix it. It's like if you have an old car and it breaks. It's not like a new car, I can't do what I was going to do. I've got to fix it, and I've got to fix it now; otherwise, I'm not going to go anywhere. It's like the other day, we fixed the back hoe that was broken. One of the hydraulic lines broke, and we had to fix it. Now you're playing with components that are 200, 300 pounds a piece, but it's part of our operation, and when it fails on us, we've got to fix it. There's all kinds of stuff, broken water pipes, electrical lamps that have to be installed because we're trying to upgrade things. There's all types of stuff we have to do. Cutting grass, for example. There are two guys that until a couple of weeks ago, they spent fully six and eight hours on big tractors, cutting grass to get the entire grounds cut.

D: On steam tractors? (laughter)

B: No, on gasoline powered tractors, but all kinds of maintenance goes on.

D: Does working with steam and these giant engines, does that give you a kind of satisfaction that you did not get as an electrical engineer. Is there something different in the work that really appeals to you now?



B: The thing that appeals to me is that I'm surrounded by experts of a different type than what I saw in my career. Some of the people that I work with are expert machinists, expert lawn mower repair people, and expert contractors. They can make concrete look like a finished cabinet, and I can't do it. It never fails: every single day I volunteer, I learn something new that I can actually apply to my house when I'm doing something on the house. It's simple things like a special lid for a gallon of paint so that you can pour it easier. I didn't even know they existed. This guy pulls it out and I say, 'Where did you get that from?' He said, 'Well, they have them.' I didn't know that. Unless you're with it, it's hard to know all these things. And yet, the next time I needed to do some painting at my house I bought one of those lids because I thought it was a really neat idea. So I learn a lot, and that's what life is all about.

D: One of the things I do is I'm an amateur astronomer. I'm part of the Astronomy Club, and they have an observatory out in Ionia, past Bloomfield. Some of the things you're saying sound very familiar. We have a crew that mows the lawn and they take care of the building, fix broken water pipes. It's really in some ways similar, and we're also renovating old machines. We recently had a team that was renovating I think a 75 year old telescope and the mount that it goes on. So there are some similarities there. One of the nice things about the Astronomy Club is that it's also a way to organize people's social lives. The members of the club are also friends with each other. So over the summer my friend Peter from Canandaigua had a party at his house and it was all Astronomy Club members. We didn't do anything related to Astronomy; we played lawn darts and went hiking down a nearby glen. Is the Steam Association like that? Is it something where you just get together around steam or does it also have a social function for you?

B: It's a family oriented organization. Some people have actually been married there. In fact the guy who is now in charge of the steam building, he met his future wife there. His father was a member when he was a kid and he was brought there when he was young, and now he's in his forties. About fifteen, twenty years ago he met one of the daughters of one of the members, and they started dating. They ended up having the ceremony during the steam pageant. People socialize together, and they go on trips together, even to the Caribbean.

D: We often call the wives of the Astronomy Club members, and the rare husbands, the Astronomy Widows or Widowers because we're always out at late night. So, what does your wife think about steam, and is she interested in it at all, or does she think it's the crazy thing that you do? Is she supportive?

B: We have what we call a family membership. I don't have an individual membership. It's under Robert and Dianne. My wife's name is Dianne so she is a member, but these days in name only because the organization no longer does the cooking by themselves. Because of a lack of enough volunteer helpers, they have decided to farm out, contract out, the cooking to various organizations like the Rotary Club...

D: These are the people that would cook for the pageant?

B: Yes, the buildings we own and the equipment we own, but the organizations

come in, and for those four days they do the cooking. It used to be that the Women's Organization (and my wife was one of them) would work the kitchens, but we just got too big to maintain. I myself would not only work in the steam building, but sling burgers or pass out hotdogs for whatever shack I was in, helping. After a while you get pretty worn out because you have devoted time to the steam stuff and then to the kitchen. The women generally are not interested in steam engines. It's sort of a guy thing. There are some women who will do certain things, but generally it's a guy thing.

E: The theme of this issue is reuse, and obviously with the steam engines you're preserving this source of power, but how does creative resuse play into restoring these machines? Do you have to think of something on the fly sometimes when they break down unexpectedly?

B: If it happens on an emergency basis, it's sort of like 'All hands on deck' and who has the best expertise to fix this problem? Sometimes, though, we have to go outside and contract with someone or hire someone to handle a specialized skill that we don't have. Generally we try to minimize those occurrences, particularly during the show. The whole focus of our existence is the four days of the show, all year long. You would not believe how much it costs to put on that show!

D: How many people go to the pageant of steam?

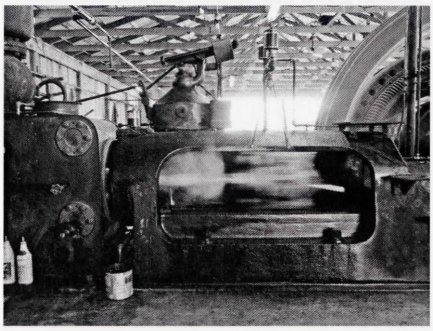
B: This year we had just over 11,000. It was less than last year. Last year was a peak year. We think because of the economy because we had perfect weather.

D: How do you advertise? How do people know about this? I know about it because I drove by and said 'What is that?' But how do people know about it because they must come from all over.

B: They come from as far as California. I talk to people from California, again because I stand in that building all day long, from 8 to 8 and sometimes longer. Sometimes it's more like 7 to 10. Because I'm there to explain things, I also take in information from people who say, 'What do you know about this, what do you know about that?', and I try to help them. We have our own website, we buy ads on radio and in newspapers, and we also have flyers printed, and they get posted. Members are asked to carry them and give them to places that they normally do business with. Then there are people that know it's there, and they come all the time from long distances. Some folks drive from Illinois or Oklahoma.

E: So it really seems like there is a national community interested in steam powered engines.

B: Oh, there is. There is actually a directory. We don't publish it. Like everything else, in the Astronomy business there is probably a directory of Astronomy meetings that go on, and similarly there



is a directory of steam-powered, tractor-powered meetings. That is how we ended up with those trips to the various places we've been to.

E: Does the Steam Association do any outreach to educate local school groups to get the youth more involved?

B: No. We have talked about that, but we haven't. I think it's an opportunity that we have not yet taken.

E: There must be something really therapeutic or satisfying working on these machines.

B: Well, it's the people they know and that they've gathered together. The Association offers camping, and a lot of people haul in these beautiful large trailers and they party. They have a system. I don't have a camper because I live 5 miles away, but some people who do that, that's part of their social life.

D: I have a sort of difficult question for you. I understand the desire to preserve the past because it's an important part of the past in explaining who we are and how we got to where we are now. What else is this technology good for, though? What other future use is there for it? Other than the fact that it was at one point important, are there other reasons why it is really important to preserve it or potentially useful to preserve it for the future?

B: Steam power is used today. Every time a jet fighter is launched from an aircraft carrier there is a steam piston that is behind it. That's what gives it the get up and go, the instantaneous acceleration.

D: So that's steam power, that's not hydraulics?

B: That's steam.

D: I did not know that.

B: You have nuclear submarines that are using steam. We burn wood, but the nuclear submarines use nuclear fuel rods to produce heat, which produces steam that runs the subs. All nuclear power plants do. They generate steam to run a turbine. Instead of using coal or wood, they're using uranium.

D: There must still be people who train to be steam engineers. What do you call that?

B: There are some associations that actually run courses on how to run a steam engine. We don't do it, but there are other organizations, spread across the country—again there is a network of these similar associations—and they offer courses. We ourselves, what we do in order to teach people how to run the steam engines you saw, we have on-the-job training. I don't consider myself competent enough to run one myself. I know what to do, but I don't want to break it. I'm not yet ready to fly solo, so to speak. (laughter)

D: One of the things we noticed when we were at the Pageant of Steam, when you're in the building, is that one of the unique things about these machines is that when you look at them you understand them. You can see what's happening. When I pop open this Macbook, I don't know what the pieces are. They have little numbers on them they're very tiny, there are millions of them. It doesn't

look like anything. I can't watch it and figure it out. With the steam engine, I can see the piston. I can see oil coming out of one place and steam out somewhere else, and something spinning. Even though I can't really explain it or the physics of it I can at least see what's happening. Is that something that is attractive to you about steam is that it's very physical it's very real. It is very...

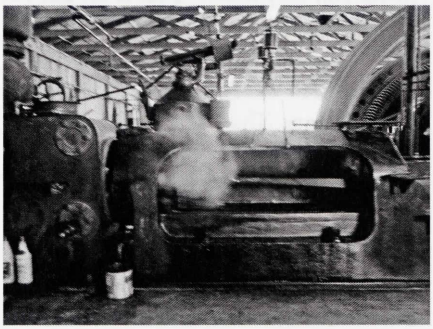
B: Visual. It's very visual. First of all, don't feel bad about not being able to tear one of these computers apart. Even as an electrical engineer, I don't know—even if I had the circuit in front of me—I don't know what the design engineer did because there are tricks. You really have to have been there, over the person's shoulder to watch every step. Otherwise it's a big mystery. With the high scale integrated circuits that you have today, it's virtually impossible to know what the guy or the gal was thinking when they designed it, but you're right in terms of the steam engine: it is very visual. It's moving. You see the wheel turn. You see things happen. It's just the way it is. I don't feel any particular attraction toward it. It's just there, and I know it's there. My prime interest is on the historical aspect. This machine, as big as it is, is a part of who we are, and it needs preservation.

D: As you learn more about the history of steam, what is the most remarkable thing that you've learned or what sort of blew you away in terms of thinking about the past?

B: A lot of things don't change. Despite the elegance of an automobile and its reliability, it basically has—I tell people this all the time when I explain what a Corliss valve is, that's the kind of valve system that is in the Stationary Steam Building for the majority of the machines—two input valves and two output valves which are always in the Corliss System. For every cylinder in your automobile there are two inputs and two outputs, for every single cylinder. Then, the advertisers, if you have an eight-cylinder car, they tell you that you have 32 valves. Two inputs, two outputs, times eight, that's 32 valves. You have a six-cylinder, that's four times six, twenty-four valves.

D: What was the advantage of that system, the two in, two out?

B: It separated the input temperature from the exhaust temperature, and that is the more thermally efficient way. That is why George Corliss made so much money on the system because in those days they were trying to squeeze every half a percentage point of work out of the steam that they were producing, and the steam cost money, so it was an economic thing. This system was perfected by George Corliss in the middle 1800s. This system: it's called differently now, gasoline driven automobile, but it's the same basic principal. Two inputs and two outputs and you're thermally efficient. The long and short of it is, things don't really change that much. The laws of physic don't change. We just change things, as



engineers, as progress is being made in products. The reason for it is that people have learned how to do things differently, design things differently.

D: Is it dangerous, all that steam under pressure? I know in the Industrial Revolution boilers exploded and things like that. Has there ever been any accidents in any of the steam clubs?

B: I don't know about the steam clubs, but there have been accidents. Usually those accidents are caused by failure to take the proper precautions. In New York State we are blessed because we have, I'll call it a vigorous approval program, an inspection program. Every year, all of our equipment is inspected by a boiler inspector from New York State. Without his signature, and his signature doesn't happen until there are certain tests to guarantee that the machines are safe, like the blow-off valves—these are when the pressure gets too high, and there is a relief valve so that it doesn't explode and the valve lets off steam—without his signature that machine does not run. We actually own a tractor that does not run. It's one of the bigger ones. This year it was a decoration on 5 & 20, you saw it as you approached the Pageant. It does not run because it is not safe, and it is not safe because it needs a brand new boiler for $50,000, thank you very much. That is on our list of things to do, but $50,000 is $50,000. Basically, the machine is not capable of being run, so we're not running it because it's dangerous. That's all.

D: One of the things I noticed, and I've been to the Pageant of Steam twice now, is that you have some Mennonites or Amish that go as well, and they're generally interested in old technology. Are they interested in steam? I mean are they using it? I was in an Amish sawmill where they were running the saws in the mill off of a truck engine on blocks. Are people using steam for actual production purposes anywhere?

B: There are places in this country where steam is used to power buildings still. There is a university in New York City whose name I forget, and they have steam. They have steam engines. I haven't seen them, but it's on our list of things to go see. It's a famous university, and I can't remember it. In terms of the Amish, the Baker Steam Engine that we run around the grounds (the blue and black with silver engine) that needed a new boiler and an Amish gentlemen in Ohio is the one who did it. That's all he does. He rebuilds boilers. I guess the waiting list is a couple of years. If you decide today that you want your boiler redone you have to wait a couple of years for it.

D: Is that for clubs or farmers' tractors?

B: I don't know the extent of his business, but there are niche craftsmen that do these kinds of things, and this Amish man would probably be the person to at least bid on the job for our steam tractor that needs a new boiler. It's still a need. There are people that have to have boilers.

D: 50,000 dollars a pop, we're in the wrong business.

B: And you're talking about steel that's an inch or more thick, you don't pick it up with your hand truck.

E: It sounds like from your job and what you take away from being involved in the Association of Steam is that you learn

how to do a lot of things yourself. You learn how to fix these things, how to better paint your house, build cabinets, etc. Do you think it is empowering to have this knowledge to just know how to do things on your own and not have to call someone for help? Is that a value that you have taken away from being involved in the Steam Association?

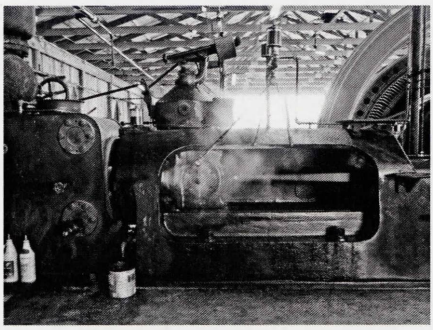
B: I was brought up to know how to do everything, to learn how to do everything. This is just an extension. I have some very good friends who don't do anything except their job and then call someone. I don't call very many people, and there are some people like me, and there are some people like my neighbors. I just enjoy the fact that I can be with people that know how to do things, and I can learn from that. That's a kick, if you will. Is it necessary? Eh, probably not. Does it really drive me? I was born and bred that way many, many years ago. I ended up being a jack-of-all-trades. There's not much I can't do, whether it's gardening or concrete work, plumbing, take engines out of cars, transmissions out of cars, whatever.

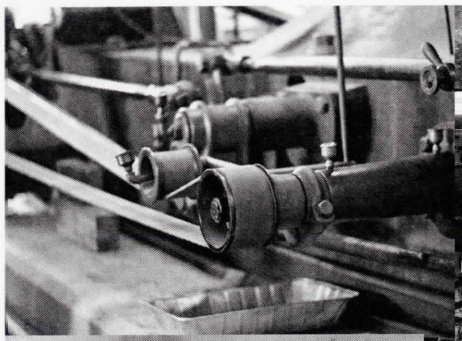
E: But it keeps you going. You always have something to do, if you have someone else doing all your work for you, what are you good for?

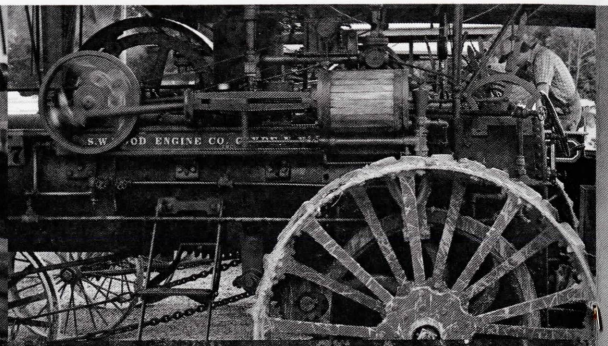
B: Well, then you get two incomes. My dad always said you either get two jobs to earn money or you have a real steady job and all these other things you do for yourself, instead of getting a second or third job to pay for all those things. Whether that's right or wrong, I don't know. I guess I'm unique from the standpoint that I like learning how to do things, and I just feel good when I'm surrounded by experts that are smarter than me and can do things that I never developed the skills for. You can always develop the skills, but it's hard when you don't have a teacher. You can look at a book and not see everything there is. There is always that special trick, to twist it this way or that way.

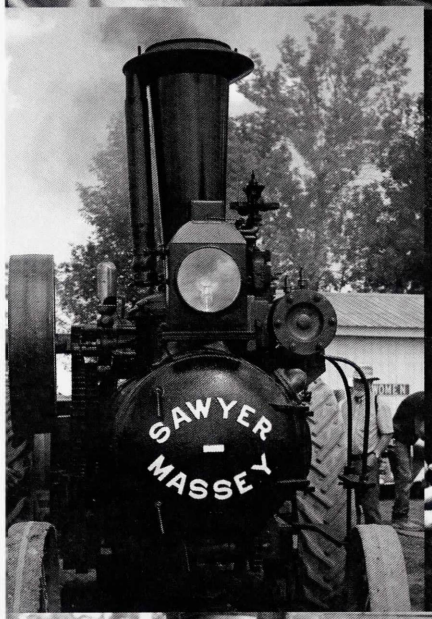
D: Is there anything else you want to tell our readers about the Pageant of Steam and the New York State Steam Engine Association or yourself?

B: As I said before, I think the Pageant of Steam is basically a secret. Its existence is almost a secret for people that even live in the town where it's located. They've gone by the sign and say 'Eh. . .' but then they get there and they're like, 'Wow!' Even if they didn't think they were interested in steam engines, when they see what is there, it's an untold secret in this region. People are blessed that it's so close by. In Canandaigua, our show has gasoline, it has steam, and it has just about everything for everybody. There's one in Alexander, NY. It's much smaller than ours, but they're also trying doing their thing, which is to preserve steam. ☆





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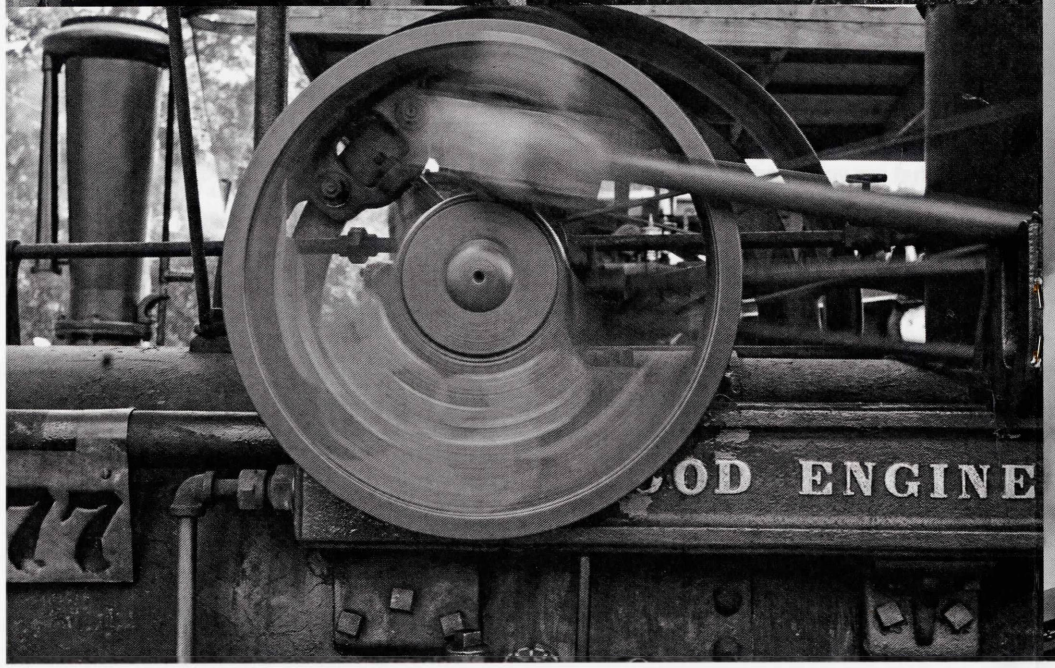
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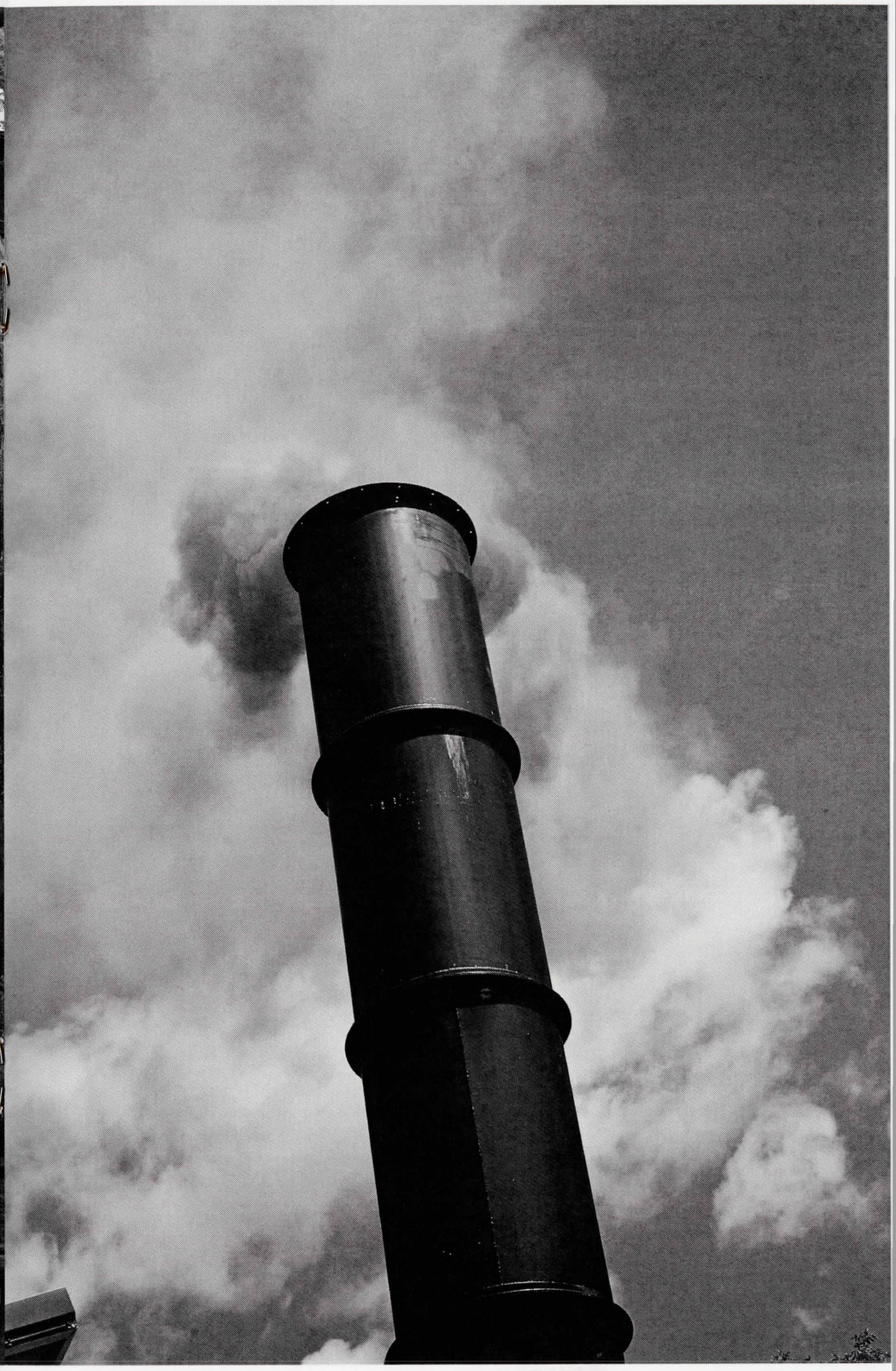
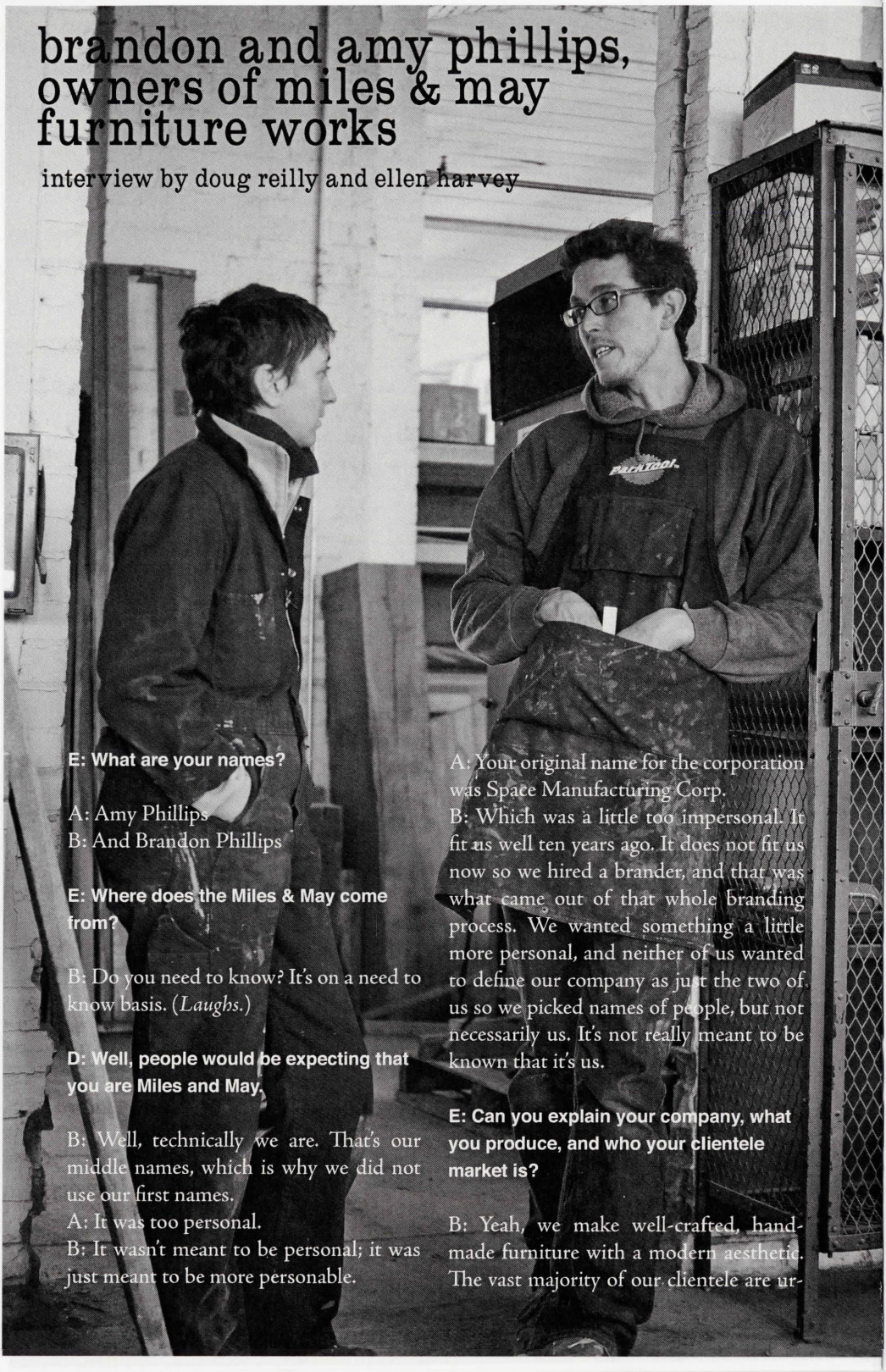


brandon and amy phillips, owners of miles & may furniture works

interview by doug reilly and ellen harvey



E: What are your names?

A: Amy Phillips
B: And Brandon Phillips

E: Where does the Miles & May come from?

B: Do you need to know? It's on a need to know basis. (*Laughs.*)

D: Well, people would be expecting that you are Miles and May.

B: Well, technically we are. That's our middle names, which is why we did not use our first names.
A: It was too personal.
B: It wasn't meant to be personal; it was just meant to be more personable.

A: Your original name for the corporation was Space Manufacturing Corp.
B: Which was a little too impersonal. It fit us well ten years ago. It does not fit us now so we hired a brander, and that was what came out of that whole branding process. We wanted something a little more personal, and neither of us wanted to define our company as just the two of us so we picked names of people, but not necessarily us. It's not really meant to be known that it's us.

E: Can you explain your company, what you produce, and who your clientele market is?

B: Yeah, we make well-crafted, handmade furniture with a modern aesthetic. The vast majority of our clientele are ur-

ban dwellers, 30-50 years old. As far as the range, they are in the middle upper to lower upper income bracket.
A: Then we also sell to hotels.
B: Our private clientele is that range. Then the rest of our clientele is called contract commercial furniture, so hotels, restaurants, that sort of thing.

E: How did you start your business?

B: We started in college—
A: Brandon started it. I wasn't—
B: She wasn't there in the beginning. She is here for all this glory now. (laughs) Yeah, so it was myself and two other students who started it our first year of college, which is why we picked a really giant name. When you're trying to get people to give you money, it's better to have them think you're overly professional instead of under.
A: So it was his classmates from the Art Institute of Chicago that started the company with him.
B: We started doing spaces.

D: What do you mean?

B: We started designing interiors. It would be start to finish, design and build, all the way through with just our firm. Then we grew more and more into doing furniture, things that we could build offsite and deliver. Furniture was a lot more rewarding. We always wanted to do furniture right from the beginning, but it is not an easy thing to just start. You need a lot of equipment, a lot of inventory, a lot of capital.
A: Especially if you make furniture out of—
B: Out of really anything. You can do interiors with far less, and it was a good time. It was the mid-90s. People were spending money, especially on housing. Up until 2007 or so, people were still really spending money on housing.
A: So your company started in Chicago. Then you started to get a lot of jobs in New York City, so they moved to the city to be near all of the jobs.

D: Amy, how did you get into the picture?

A: Brandon and I met in Brooklyn and—
B: That was it. (*Laughs.*)
A: I went to school at Cornell for Ag, and then I ended up working in New York City at the farmers markets for Red Jacket. Then I stopped doing that and started bartending a bit, which is how Brandon met me. He met me at the worst bartending job ever. (*Laughs.*) I've always liked working with my hands, and I also had a couple of jobs as a studio manager for a few artists, so there has always been an interest for me. Actually when we started dating, I really wanted to make furniture.
B: I remember that. I bought you books and everything.

E: What brought you to Geneva? There isn't a lot of industry coming to Geneva so what was the thought behind that move?

B: We actually had a stop between Brooklyn and here. We originally moved to Penn Yan, which is so bucolic. It was beautiful, lovely place. We bought a really old farm, actually, one of the first farms in the area at all, 1700s, old farm.
A: The title goes back to the Phelps Gorham land purchase.
B: So there's Indians, Phelps Gorham, and the guy who started the farm that we had. Beautiful place, though. We renovated buildings there. They had old barns

that we renovated. We lost those in a fire in 2007, which is how we ended up in Geneva. We had to find something very quickly. A big enough building that was industrial enough, had sprinklers (which our building didn't before) to be able to set back up in just a few months because we had orders. That was before the economy completely crashed, so we had a lot to produce in a very limited amount of time.

A: Yeah, we had an order that was set to go out to the Hotel Gansvoorte in Miami. It was boxed and ready to go, but then we had the fire, and we had to remake it. We had so much work to do, but this was one of the only buildings in our price range that seemed worth it.

B: There were smaller ones that were much more expensive. This was big enough that no one actually wanted it. We later found out why.

A: It's kind of like if you want to paint it, you buy out a couple of different Lowes in the area, and you're like 'Oh, that was just to paint the first floor.'

D: What motivated that move from Brooklyn to Penn Yan, besides the bucolic beauty of the place?

A: I grew up here and Brandon came up to meet my family, and I think he fell in love with how beautiful the area was.

B: And how cheap. Our company was growing very quickly, and it was at a time also where the area we were at in Brooklyn was gentrifying rapidly.

A: We were in Williamsburg.

B: When we had moved in it was workshop after workshop. It was all just little factories that were churning out. Within one block, I think there were eight or nine other shops, including three other small shops making furniture. There were people chroming, there were people doing metalwork—

A: It was manufacturing.

B: Yeah, it was all manufacturing. And within two years, three years, we were the last shop left. It was all apartments. Illegal apartments. They were all just—

A: Artists.

B: Yeah, and we were getting noise complaints because we were manufacturing in their neighborhood.

A: At nine in the morning.

D: There is an irony here that the gentry who buy your furniture are the same people who pushed you out.

B: It wasn't lost on us either.

A: And then there was also material. A lot of the timbers that we were using were not standardized, so it made sense to move closer to saw mills to have more control over our materials.

B: The biggest reasons were the cost and square footage, and a huge side perk was having control, real control over source material, like going back to it in log form, and being able to process things exactly how you want them. That was actually a really sweet thing about moving to the country.

D: Were you in the position at that time before you moved where you were starting to have to source through the middle people that were popping up to deal in this wood?

B: Luckily, right from the beginning because we were working with it when it was still just considered a building timber. Before anybody wanted reclaimed floors or reclaimed anything else, we got to know the brokers that only dealt with buildings. They would tear down the

building, or get the stuff when the building was torn down to build another building from it, and we still have kept contact with those people. We were able to circumvent the middleman pretty much always, which is still largely in our favor. Working with raw material is a whole different world. Now when we want a particular type of wood we can either call a lumber mill somewhere or we can call a logger, and 9 times out of 10 we deal with loggers. We get a log that is exactly what we want. We cut it and we don't deal with these standardized measurements.

A: Which I would say for us is very different then the majority of furniture manufacturers our size. I think we're pretty rare in that.

B: Most people, they still design and build things based off of what's available, and I think we took the extra leap and decided what we wanted to become available, or made available whatever we wanted, instead of being made to use something.

E: Was it part of the plan from the beginning to use reclaimed wood? Was that something that you always wanted to do, or did you fall into that?

B: I still really don't define us as just using reclaimed wood. It is kind of secondary, the fact that it is reclaimed. It is more the interest in the material. Probably if Heart Pine still grew, and you could buy it in 12 x 12 in the lumberyard, I would just go to the lumberyard. That material does not exist in any other way besides reclaiming it. I have much more interest in the material.

A: Also, when he first started to use it in New York City, he found it in dumpsters. It was trash.

B: Yes, that same material was in dumpsters, and we would rent storage lockers and load them with material in whatever city we found them.

A: It was just incredibly wasteful.

B: Right and it was beautiful material, incredible quality, but now that same material is worth way more than Mahogany. Heart Pine went from free to that expensive in just a few years, which we were glad we had storage lockers of it.

E: Are the majority of your pieces made out of Heart Pine?

B: It definitely started that way, but we have branched out into other designs that Heart Pine was not as appropriate for. Then we just found other sources for material. That is actually where I do have interest in less commercially available materials. There are a number of trees that grow locally that just aren't commercially harvested for one reason or another. We try to work a lot with those. One reason is we did own and manage some forest before we moved to Geneva. It was incredible when a logger would come in: he would want this tree, this tree, this tree, but the other fifty trees around it weren't worth anything. We learned a lot through that process. For example, there is something called a drop tree, where they would have a very valuable tree like a Walnut tree, and they would use the three trees to the right of it that aren't worth anything to land the Walnut tree on. That way, the Walnut tree didn't break when it fell. We started to use the drop trees as material, which were basically killed in taking the first tree out. This material was also incredibly beautiful and has its own characteristics, but it just didn't have a large commercial market. More of those species that we picked, which we also got for next to nothing, now have become popular, which is very frustrating. I keep

having to find a new material for free to work with.

A: One of the species that you started to play around with a while ago was Butternut. Butternut is kind of a mix between Walnut and Cherry, but now that species has a blight. Not only has it become more popular but it's also becoming more difficult to source because of that. You have also designed early on pieces around Poplar, which is a very popular wood, but—

B: It's a junk wood.

A: It's underappreciated. It is used on the insides of pieces of furniture, kind of the skeleton of it.

B: It is always hidden or covered up, but we try to design ways to make that beautiful and show a junk product in a fashionable way, which has actually worked well. It is neat when people really want this one material, which for the most part is always hidden or always covered or painted.

E: I guess it is also a way for you to present something new and be more creative.

B: It is definitely a good way to establish a product, but for me I think it was more a conceptual interest and a much greater design challenge to show a really crappy material in just the right way so that it's beautiful.

(*Amy gets up and grabs the Miles and May catalog to show some of the products she and Brandon have created.*)

A: This table is a Poplar that Brandon found at a construction site.

B: It's called a shoring timber. When they would build the trenches to fix whatever electrical problem in a city, they would stick these big timbers in to keep all of the sidewalk and road from falling in the hole they were working in, and this is what those tabletops were made out of. It was just ways to show junk material.

A: It also gets kind of old seeing Maple, Cherry, Mahogany, and Walnut when there are so many other species that you can work with.

B: There are around 100,000 species of trees in the world, and there are 200 that are commercially logged. A lot of them are actually grouped, like you may have ten species, and they call them all Poplar.

D: Had these species been used in the past, and they just got forgotten and discarded, or were they never utilized?

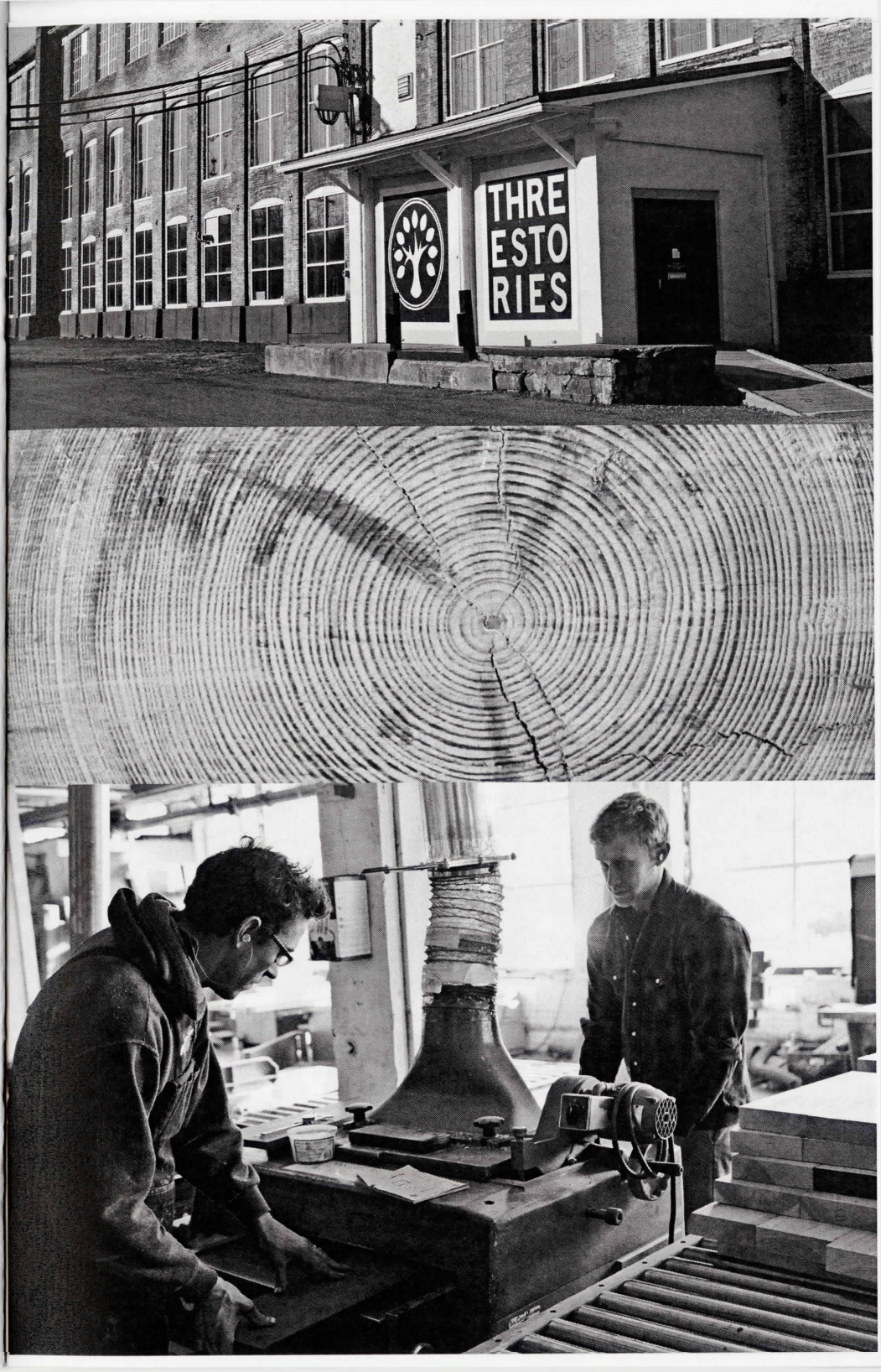
B: Some were and some weren't, like American Sycamore, which is gorgeous, beautiful wood. We couldn't convince our logger to even save the Sycamore trees he was cutting down. He would cut them down and just leave them to rot. I offered to pay him whatever he wanted. I wanted to buy them. It was a really popular park tree. It looks sort of like white camouflage.

E: I actually think, I'm not sure if it's an American Sycamore, but I know we have a huge Sycamore in our back yard.

B: If you got one, it's an American Sycamore. They are amazing beautiful trees. They used to have a utility function, which was specifically hair brushes and buttons. There aren't many wood hairbrush or button manufacturers left.

A: Woods definitely have fads. Oak used to be really popular, mission furniture, but it has kind of fallen out of style. Maple used to be really hot in the 80s, and now no one orders anything in Maple. Everyone wants Walnut.

B: And again our clientele is 90% urban clientele so it is very different from the rest of the country. Oak is still very popu-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lar everywhere else. Our customers just don't want it. I have to make it jet black, or I have to do something special to it. They revolt at the idea of having Oak, and the same with Maple. It was super popular in urban settings. People wanted very white apartments. For ten years now, no one wants to touch that again. Now it's dark apartments with dark floors and walls.
A: We're waiting for it to change.
B: We're getting little nudges of it changing, which we're excited about it because you get very sick of working with one material over and over.

E: Did you have much experience working with reclaimed wood when you were digging around the dumpsters or did you have to learn new techniques?

B: You learn as you go. Every material you work with functions differently, operates differently. It's part of our trade to memorize everything that material can and can't do, which goes hand in hand in working with reclaimed materials. It is a very different technique. It is not commercially purchased lumber.
A: Yeah, Heart Pine is really resinous so it gums up all the blades on the machines.
B: Just everything in the way you work it is very different from every other material, but it gives you certain design freedoms also. Commercially purchased lumber comes in standardized thicknesses, standardized lengths, and everything, and it has been this way for a long time. When you get into building materials, like big girders and columns, those don't abide by the same rules as going to your lumberyard, so those let us design things that other people at the time weren't or couldn't design.

D: When you're looking at a piece of wood that you know you can't get now because they don't sell that size, do you think then how do I best take advantage of this wood? Do you feel like it's a shame to cut it up into smaller pieces?

(*Brandon flips through Miles and May product catalog to show us some examples.*)
B: This is one of the earlier pieces which was a little square stool made from a Heart Pine column. We cut the minimum that we could to get the maximum yield out of something. Then through the years, doing this over and over again, we would end up with some that had broken corners. That was always the bane of our existence. You would have a beautiful column that was missing one corner because it had been hit with a forklift, besides that it was perfect. So then we took those same pieces of wood and turned them round because we didn't need corners. These are little round stools that use the same height, length, and width of the square pieces but turned round.

E: In working with materials that you just pick up and have these imperfections, does it create more waste because things are unusable or do you work with the imperfections?

B: You work with them to a point. I definitely would not say there is more or less waste between commercially available or reclaimed material. There is different waste. I bitch about this constantly. Architects now don't work with materials. They learn in a very conceptual manner. So you get a specification to build something for them—two inches now is a very popular dimension, two-inch thick shelves. You'll see it at IKEA, the wall mounted shelves are two inches thick, over and over two inches. Wood doesn't come two inches thick. To make a two-inch thick shelf we need to buy a three-inch thick board, and

plane off one edge so a third of it goes to saw dust. You end up wasting a lot that way.

With the reclaimed stuff, we've found our own standards in working with that material. There are certain things that they repeated over and over, like girders are usually 6 x 13. For some reason they are always 6 x 13, so we design pieces that can use that. Then you also have pieces that are just heavily damaged, and you can't do much with. Those we try to find other things to do with. We like to not waste that much stuff. When finally something gets to when it just can't be used anymore, or it's too much time or electricity to coax something out of it—

A: We burn it.

B: About half the heat from our building is from our waste.

E: It seems like you're working with pretty rough materials. Would you be able to use someone's furniture that they threw out?

B: It's rarely worth it. That's something we've gotten many, many requests for, like to rebuild something or refinish something. Generally if something is not in good shape, 9 times out of 10 it was never built well to begin with. My poor family always asks me to refinish furniture. If it's from Walmart, from 30 years ago, count your blessings that it lasted 30 years.

A: And also it's the way our business is structured. We sell a product line. If it isn't something that can be replicated, that's really not the best use of our time.

B: We have a furniture collection upstairs, and we slowly refinished some of the nicer pieces. For every piece we refinish, probably ten get donated to charity and one goes into the dumpster.

A: It was ironic that we ended up with a building full of furniture. (*Laughs.*)

D: [To Ellen] On the third floor they have one whole room that's full of chairs...

B: Yeah, and not just a few, like 5000 chairs.

A: Well this building is 65,000 sq feet, and pretty much everything was covered with stacked furniture. It was just insane.

D: In the process of learning about how to use this material that you were finding in dumpsters, were you doing that alone, or were there other companies and designers doing that work? Was there any cross-pollination with other people, or did you feel like you were on your own?

B: Definitely in the beginning we were on our own. Then through the years, the more we started to show, every year we would see a few more people with something similar. Our only way to combat this was to continue to try to evolve every year because I don't like being one of many, generally. We would like to try to do something original every time.

A: And also when you first are getting it out of dumpsters, no one else is really that dedicated to getting it. Then it did become commercially available and advertised as a material.

B: Now it's actually quite a big business. People don't buy buildings like this to renovate anymore. They buy them to tear it down for the wood. The other person that was looking to buy this building when we were looking at it—

A: Was going to scrap it.

B: Yeah, they were here for the timbers. Knock the brick down, take the timbers, and that's that. It is still a pretty common practice, just buying it for the raw materials that are kept inside.

D: So the popularity of reclaimed material, with this kind of green thinking, then

leads to a rash of trashing old buildings instead of reusing them. Is there any accuracy in what I'm saying there?

B: It goes way beyond that which is sad. Bamboo, for example, is not really good for the environment. Nothing about it is good. The plantations that they planted the bamboo were farmland. That was food, but bamboo brings more per acre than rice so now its bamboo, which also decimates the soil in a way that rice never did.
A: You've got to ship it half way around the world. Just buy some Cherry floor here.
B: That's one example of local that, even though it is not perceived as being green, becomes far better. The carbon footprint of a single piece of something bamboo that has been shipped halfway around the world is far greater than buying anything local. We tell this to customers all the time. When they ask about the greenness of the product, we say that if they really want to be green, then don't do the renovation or throw away their old furniture. If you really want to be green, keep your old shit. If environmental consciousness is that important, don't consume.

E: How many people do you employ under you?

B: That depends. There is always one constant full-time. There is usually a part-time. We take four or five interns from HWS—two furniture, one factory, and one extra. So we'll say four. Four's a good round number.
A: That has been a wonderful partnership with HWS.
B: We have really had to scale back our furniture company to do the rest of this. Until the building is fully occupied, and people are chipping in with that, we can't always find the money to hire another person. Hopefully that will start to change. We also moved into this when the economy was shit.

D: Is there a way that you can help us understand what that meant? We know it's bad, we know it's less people with disposable income—

B: When was the last time you bought furniture?

D: It was a couple of months ago.

A: (*Laughs.*) Yay!

D: It wasn't good furniture. It was two-inch shelving unit from IKEA.

A: Are you serious? (*Laughs.*) That's awesome. Wood or plastic?

D: Wood. Well, *woodish.*

B: Buying heirloom furniture is not on the top of most peoples list right now. It is not on my personal list either, so I understand it. Going to IKEA I think right now is more the answer people are going for. Our stuff is not cheap. It will last forever. It's unique. It's very well designed. It's well built, but if you've only got fifty bucks...We go to IKEA.
A: Furniture was one of the areas that took a big hit. We'd finally caught our breath after renovating this space and back up and running from the fire, and we're like 'Okay we're ready!'
B: We lost the other building in the summer of 2007. Then we had to get this and rebuild all the stuff we lost. Then it was like February 2008, and we were like 'Oh, shit, we really should have been watching

the news.' We just didn't really notice at all that things were going on a shitspiral, and it was like 'Oh, no! What have we done?'

D: Have the large contracts that you mentioned, the hotels and stuff, have those remained?

B: Nothing for three years. Nothing at all, and that was half of our business that completely died. Those are just now coming back around. The hotels that were being built were things like Best Westerns and—
A: People were just delaying their renovations. If it didn't have to be renovated, it wasn't.
B: Definitely this past year there has been a big uptick.
A: Yeah, there has been a lot more hotels orders, and a lot more quotes from hotels, which is good.
B: At least on the hotel side it is looking good. I know it will be a while before consumers spend.

E: Besides how large the building is and the difficulty to maintain that, what were some of the disadvantages of coming to Geneva?

A: I would say press coverage. If you're in New York City, a lot of magazines are located there. Just the proximity to the clientele too. Specifically press, because it can be fairly lazy about timing. They need a stool this afternoon to shoot for press tomorrow. In that case, I think being in new York City was very beneficial.
B: One of the biggest disadvantages that we've slowly overcome, at least for the establishment here, this was too different. The fact that two people would buy a big factory and do something with it, I think we ruffled a lot of feathers when we came. We're learning to navigate the system a little better, but there was a lot of confusion, mainly to do with city government, which we have fought. We have had many fights with them.

D: We're heard this story before, from people who come to Geneva with new ideas...they get a lot of negative attitude. People will tell you exactly why your idea won't work. But it's not just passive defeatism, like when we wanted to do the Film Festival and someone said 'That will never won't work in Geneva,' That person was pleasantly surprised and supportive when it did. There is also an aggressive defeatism: 'You will not succeed.' How as a community do we deal with that? On the one level I guess it's a difference of attitude and we just have to wait for those people to die or go away—

B: (*Laughs.*) I don't think they need to die. I think they just need to see a stream of success.
A: Yeah, success breeds success.
B: They have seen the exact opposite for most of their lifetime. There are not a lot of success stories. For every business that opened, twenty closed.
A: I mean, imagine if you lived in this neighborhood, the huge changes that have occurred.
B: I didn't mean to cut off your question, but I think there is a need for real policy changes, and along with that real personnel changes. I don't care if you change the policy if the same people are in effect. I have direct distrust for very particular people now because I have dealt with them. It doesn't matter if they send me Christmas cards now every year. I will never trust them. I will never respond positively to them. There is nothing they can do at this point. What, now four years


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of my life butting heads with a few particular people? And I don't understand why. When we were in Brooklyn or out in Chicago, there were systems in place. If it was a bribe you want, fine. If it's just money, just nepotism, I can understand those systems. I just can't understand the stalwartness of some of the people that I had to work with here. They just don't want it. There is nothing you can do or give them. They're not trying to get anything out of you. I think it is just out of their realm, their comfort zone, and they just don't want it. They are afraid of the newness of it, of something changing. I just haven't been able to understand. We really haven't been able to wrap our head around it. We have constantly fought it since we have been here. Taking an old factory and turning it into mixed use and art space—this isn't new. We did not invent this whole new structure. Just because it hasn't happened in Geneva, doesn't mean it hasn't happened countless times within an hour radius—not just in your state, but within an hour radius. There are neighborhoods after neighborhoods in most cities that have been changed over in the same way. Manufacturing abandoned buildings, changed over into multi-use, and it eventually leads to neighborhood rebound or revitalization. I don't understand why Geneva has had the difficulty of understanding that this is a progression. It doesn't have to be a set-in-stone action. I see them get stalled up on the same things. I think they have made so many decisions that have come back to bite them in the ass that they just don't want to make any decisions anymore.

A: One of the frustrating parts, specifically with renovating the building, was that it was difficult and there did not seem to be a logical reason for the difficulties. If it was something that was logical, at least you could attack it.

D: This is in terms of code?

A: Yeah.

B: And not just code, there is a lot of interpretation in that book just like in any book, and it is up to the person deciding. There are things written there that aren't written concretely. A lot of things are open and stated, 'open to interpretation.'

D: Which should build in flexibility.

B: Instead it actually built in the opposite. It built in a hyper-rigidity. 'It doesn't say you can, therefore you cannot.' There is also just a high level of toxicity between the longtime people who live here to the city government, and the city government I think to some extent back. None of them like each other. So many people, including city counselors and code advisors, told us just to break the law and see if we get caught, which was not my experience before. Either people will tell you no and what you had to do, or they tell you they want a little something on the side. I could deal with all those. I couldn't deal with just the—

A: Everybody was just negative and pointing fingers negatively in all different directions. There was no way to fix them.

B: No, general douchebaggery.

E: I know your experience is a lot more complex, but it just reminds me a lot of my experience going to Catholic school. (*Laughs.*) I tried to start a poetry club at my high school with a few friends, and it was just shot down and shot down, and I think it was because there is so much pressure when you're in a private school from parents. They have so much control over the administration that the administration just wasn't going to risk us being something terrible that the parents hated. Then when it turned out that

we were something that parents thought were awesome and complimented the administration about, they used poetry club to advertise the school. The whole time they told me everything that I was saying was completely stupid and didn't want to have anything to do with it. Thanks.

B: We've had the same experience. I mean, verbally, they all say this is wonderful. They all want to see this happen, and they want to do whatever it takes to make this happen, but when it comes to 'Okay, then just don't be difficult' well, 'I can't not be difficult.' I'm literally dumbfounded. I made my way through what I thought were much more complex systems, dealing with decisions that affected, in some cases, a few million people. I can't figure out how to negotiate with the three people in code enforcement here just because those people want to be difficult.
A: One thing that you did in college was get a student pass or discount card for all students in Chicago.
B: Right, they had never had that before, so we devised a plan and sat down with the mayor and talked with the transit authority and laid out a plan for a student transit pass and came up with a system for every university to approve it so it would be enforced, and Chicago now has student transit passes, and I can't—I still— (*Exhales*) Small town government has proved a lot more complex than big town government. Big city government was actually really easy. People had an agenda, you could fit what you were doing into that agenda, whatever it was. Even if it wasn't on the up and up, you could get it done. I can't figure out who to buy off here, threaten here. (*laughs*)
A: Or be nice to.

D: On the policy side of it, are there any things that you think could really help? Because it seems like it should be, 'Alright so you guys succeeded, that's great, but we want more things to succeed. There is more empty space.'

B: In terms of policy, the big one is they have to be a lot more willing to work with people. There is nothing ideal about the situation that we're in.
A: I think that Geneva Resource Center has been helpful.
B: That was a really good step in a right direction.

E: Aside from the local government, how was the reception by the Geneva community?

B: The community has almost no involvement with our for-profit side, which is our furniture. That is why we have the second floor, and why we do a lot of other things—we want to improve the community we live in, and not in some weird altruistic way. We missed living in Brooklyn. We missed being around art and art events. I'm not a fan of driving to Rochester so we decided it was easier—We could either move back to Brooklyn or Chicago or we could just do it ourselves, and it was easier to just do it ourselves. We had the space. So we started Three Stories as a not-for-profit. We could build a space and build a venue, but to make it a successful venture we needed a lot of other community support, and the best way to give people some equity in it was to give them some control. With a not-for-profit you can give a lot of other people control of what happens in a space, and they could come up with events that they wanted to see not just things that we want to see.

D: What is the relationship between the Cracker Factory, Miles and May, and Three Stories?

B: Well the Cracker Factory, Amy and I own, the factory. That's the name of the building. Miles and May is our furniture company, and we donate space and material and whatever else we can to Three Stories, which administers a lot of the art events. It allows us both to rent the space for private events which helps pays for the space, obviously, but it also allows for other people to be a lot more involved. For instance, someone else you might know who has a lot of involvement here, Kevin Dunn [*Geneva13's editor in absentia.*]
A: He puts on all the poetry or literature readings. That is not really an area where we have a lot of expertise.

D: It has been really nice to see that the colleges have moved events here.
E: And they have been a lot more popular, to be honest, than some of the art events that happen on campus. People want to come into this space.
D: Which is a tremendous difference from ten years ago, just the attitude among the faculty and students. That's something we've seen with Geneva13. Students used to not have a very positive view of Geneva. Ellen is a good example. You wanted to be a Geneva13 intern and are already doing locally based journalism through the Herald, which had really never done anything local that I could see since 2001 when I came here. It has totally changed and we'll have students that say 'Yeah, I came to HWS because Geneva is really cool.'

A: That's great! Well, I mean it's such a small town.

E: Which has a lot going on, despite that.

A: Which is also nice after you've lived in a city. When you live in a small town you really feel a sense of ownership.
B: That was exciting for us when we came here. It was a side perk that Geneva was small enough that you could actually make a difference. You could develop a community. It was neat to be in a town that had no real visual arts which was my bigger interest, but hey, we'll be the only private gallery besides the colleges. What they show and how they show it is part of their mission, and they show things that are relevant to the college, which gives us the opportunity to show things that other people can't show. It is not a community art center, we're not bound to just show community stuff. We try to run it largely with an eye toward the community, and we want to have events that people want to come to. We don't run it as a for-profit space. It is just to expose people to a level of stuff that they would not be exposed to otherwise.
A: Also that room kind of calls for it. As we got into renovating the second floor and tearing out all the really crappy drywall walls and shag carpeting and drop ceiling, you got to see how pretty the structure was. It was really hard to imagine putting any of that back in, dividing the space, or something like that. It just felt like a gallery space was the right thing.

D: How do you assess the success of that space so far?

A: I feel like after each event we feel very rejuvenated and excited. When we have an event in there it is not our building. That space really takes on a life of its own, and that's fun to be a part of. Probably

the times in between events it feels a little overwhelming.

B: It has big drawbacks.

A: It is a very big project.

B: It took very little time to develop into its own thing and its own brand. People know it. They know the name. They come to events, but it comes at a toll for both of us.

A: We have personally invested a lot of time, energy, and capital.

B: It also draws a huge amount of energy away from our furniture company, which is really what pays for that space, but I don't think we regret it. We're learning as we go. I think all in all, it's been very, very well received.

A: Very warm reception from the public, which has been great. Had reception not been good, I think we just would have stopped.

E: Our issue is about creative reuse, and I was wondering what does it mean to you, how does it affect your business? Is it something that affects your day to day dealings?

A: I think you always find some kind of fulfillment out of sourcing something that is undervalued and re-presenting it in a way that is more refined.

B: I certainly get a big kick out of it. It is more of a conceptual base reasoning for it. It is just fun to try to re-present. It is very fulfilling when you can showcase junk into an object people cherish.

A: And then you have to build a business around that. (*Laughs.*)

B: Especially the simpler the refinement is, for instance the light bulbs. I have always loved those. I just thought they were beautiful objects, and there are a whole slew of objects like these that I have collections of, that I just like just as objects.

[*Amy grabs a nearby antique light bulb which is fixed to a small, square wooden mount.*]

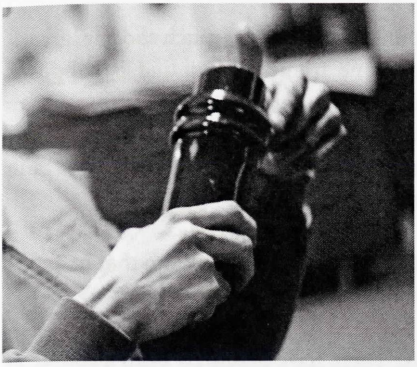
B: The success of that product was huge.

A: This light bulb is no longer useful. You could use it, but it draws a huge amount of electricity for the lumens.

B: Those are carried by *Anthropologie*. They have been sold in 1000+ stores across the country. They were really successful, and I get a great fulfillment out of it, that the majority of light bulbs that we use literally were in the dumpster or they were going to a dumpster. We have now circumvented that as a supply chain. We are going to take that broken light bulb and resell it, which is amazing to me, and still amazing to most people, that there is a market for non-functioning light bulbs. It is one of those objects that you know what it looks like, you know what it is, but you don't really ever touch it, or ever really get to appreciate it as an object because you are always so tied to its function. When you can misappropriate things in presentation or scale or anyway that you can change the paradigm of its use—if you can divorce it from its use and just show it as a thing, it's gorgeous. I have all these weird things. With this, (*Brandon picks up a black cylindrical object*) I have a whole collection of these things.

E: What is that?

B: This is on the top of a telephone pole or power line. This is the insulator, the cap to keep the electricity that is running from the big wires from grounding to the pole. That is just beautiful. It is a beautiful object, and we have tons of these things that we find. I'm waiting to pick out the exact right thing to make out of it. I would never have designed that, and I definitely would never have paid to have



it manufactured, but looking at it as an object, I appreciate everything about it. I also appreciate that it is eighty feet in the air, it is quasi-familiar to everybody, but it doesn't stand out as something totally alien. Everybody is like 'Oh wow! That is really pretty.' Have you ever held a bowling pin, like a real pin from a bowling alley? Everybody knows about it like the stripe, the shape, the color, but when you actually hold it, it is entirely different. So we have a bunch of those objects that you know, you see, you feel like you recognize it. They're not weird, and you actually can touch it and interact with it. It is a completely different experience.

D: You say you're misappropriating, but are you re-appropriating? Obviously the primary motive wasn't beauty, but do you think the people that designed that had a sense of its beauty as well?

B: I don't think so. I think everything in that object is 100% a result of its function, everything—the size of the glass, the shape of the glass, everything about it.
A: Yeah, like this little bubble at the top is there to hold the—
B: The clip. Everything in it is just functional, but there is that point where function becomes aesthetic. You've seen or been to our apartment. It is the same thing in there, just all of these objects that are gorgeous because they were never meant to be gorgeous, and I'm just smitten with them.

E: Is that something that has been with you you're whole life, that you've always been interested discarded things and giving them new meaning?

B: I've always liked trash. What kid doesn't like going to the dump? The dump is—well, I guess you really can't go to the dump anymore, but the dump used to be the most fascinating place ever.
A: I used to get that feeling actually when I would come to this area when I was in college. I would come back and go to the Center for Concern to get some new awesome clothes for three bucks a bag, which was great, but this area of town has that feeling of kind of being forgotten and discarded. There is so much richness in the architecture.

E: I think I fell in love with Geneva the first time I went to the Antique Co-op and saw all of this stuff that you can tell is just from this area and from old houses that had estate sales. There are postcards from Geneva that they are selling in there.

A: Yeah, there is definitely a sense of the life that used to be here and the grandeur, or just that it was vibrant. It feels sleepy. It feels like it needs some fresh air put back into it. (*Laughs.*)
B: In some level, I was always interested in discarded things. I think largely that too was because it was within my means. I don't know if I would have had the same interest in it if money hadn't been an object, but I would just take all that weird shit and play with it because it was free.

D: Some of this stuff is interesting just from a historical, archeology of industry and building point of view, like looking at these light bulbs that we never consider, or thinking that this whole thing is built from wood, probably most people would say it's brick or steel. What are some of the things that are the fascinating things that you've learned in search of these materials? What sense of the past has that given you?

B: That's a big question.
A: Well, I definitely have a respect for Heart Pine.
B: We gained tremendous respect for certain materials.
A: Our barn in Penn Yan was mostly built of Oak—
B: No, mostly built out of Pine. It was like almost all Heart Pine except for four really giant timbers of Oak. All of the Heart Pine was straight, perfectly straight, and this barn was over two hundred years old. All the Oak ones were just like spaghetti straps, and we're talking about giant, giant timbers. The shit that I get a kick out is that all of this was built by hand. Now when you see people put up buildings it's just so disturbing. It still takes them a while. They worked on this factory constantly for almost forty years. It started very small, and they just kept building on, building more stories and kept building out.
A: I think that was one of the reasons that we bought this building was the realization that you just couldn't build this now. There is no way you could afford the materials in here.
B: I definitely have a huge appreciation for the craftsmanship that people used to have and the dedication to building something that would outlive them, where now things are built on a much shorter historical time frame. A building is supposed to last 50 years because they're going to tear it down anyway. It was never pretty enough to keep. They definitely built things differently.

D: Well, hence the furniture that goes inside it, similarly built to last.

A: There have definitely been a couple of pieces that we have come across, where we just couldn't figure out how they did it with the technology that they had. The Heart Pine that was bored down the center, and they matched it from two different sides. Why did they put that in there?
B: Drilling a ten-foot long hole down the center of a beam and getting it to meet in the middle. The holes met. They wouldn't be perfectly aligned, but you find a lot of weird stuff in these things. They all have to be cleaned, de-nailed, and everything else when they come in, and the stuff that you find in them is pretty interesting. Bullets. A lot of knives. People would just stab these things with knives, I guess. (Laughs.) We pull out a lot of knives. I mean not little knives. Someone was really going at it. But definitely we have an appreciation for the material and an appreciation for the mindset of building something that would last hundreds and hundreds of years instead of tens of years.☆

Oh, noble idols
Eerie in their stillness
The Zotos windmills

(heather marks)


I DID IT! I COMPLETED THE MUSSELMAN TRIATHLON!
THAT'S LIFE
IN THE FINGER LAKES
I RAN 13 MILES
I SWAM OVER A MILE
I BIKED 56 MILES
I REALLY DESERVE THIS...
BUT I'M TOO DAMN TIRED TO TURN THE CORKSCREW.
RIES
RIES
©HARWOOD

the forest holds its breath/ ditch that place & have a snack.

matt werts

So for this issue I finally did something I probably should've done a long time ago: I made a mixtape! Just go to geneva13.com and click on the link that says "g13 fall/winter mixtape" or "mailman matt's power jamz" or whatever it says, and download away. It's not too terrible, you might like it. Here are some notes on some of the songs you will hear, which also kind of doubles as my best of 2011 list,, although I didn't mention Container's self-titled LP, or Prurient, or Soccer Team, or lots of other things:

Margo Guryan - "Sunday Morning" from *Take A Picture*

My understanding of Margo Guryan is that she was a jazz-obsessed, gifted compositional scholar blissfully uninterested in pop music, until a friend played her The Beach Boys' "God Only Knows", at which point her mind was blown. *Take A Picture*, her one and only album, released in 1968, somehow went nowhere at the time, despite the fact that it's dreamy and radical, full of remarkable pop structures, wispy vocals and chord changes all over the place and light jazz touches. Guryan goes for something beyond the epic teen drama and strict sugar rush of a good girl group single. She's not afraid to freak people out with exceptionally weird moments ("Love"), or use proto-King Crimson off-time rhythms and crazed violin ("Don't Go Away"). And on "Sunday Morning", she exalts the relaxed and grounded (but not *lesser*) pleasures of waking up with the one you love, drinking coffee, easing into the day. Have you ever heard someone so pumped about having a day to just hang? Raw, booming drums and domestic normalcy sound really good together.

Gray - "Dan Asher (I Saw You Liking Everything?)" from *Shades Of...*

The thing about Gray is that the artist Jean-Michel Basquiat was in the band, along with Michael Holman, Nicholas Taylor, and Justin Thyme, and a bunch of other people, including Vincent Gallo (he doesn't appear on any of the recorings on *Shades Of...*; you can listen to his 2001 album, *When*, to fill in the gap). Maybe the bigger thing about Gray is that their jazz/drone/hip-hop/experimental/whatever music was actually great. They prank-call a suicide hotline, make dumb art world jokes, and on "Dan Asher" sound like an early '80s NYC version of Men's Recovery Project. The open-air

drums, repeated mangled guitar chord, and woozy synth break make me all warm & fuzzy for reasons I can't explain. It's like they made a song out of trying not to make a song. Some tracks are more anti-music than others, but there's a liberating secret beginner genius feeling to everything, something fresh in the grime and decay, something gnarly even in the light vibes.

Crazy Band - "Drop Out" from **** *You*
Well, here it is. One of the best songs from one of the best albums of the year. Crazy Band is a bunch of LA weirdos wailing out inside jokes and internet-speak over raw sax punk, almost like all those '80s Raincoats-style bands but with a much better sense of humor and shorter songs. This song in particular has a little bit of rough language, so get your parents' blessing if that's something you need to get. I also hope this song encourages kindergarten drop-out rates to sky-rocket. A perfect back-to-school jam for those of us living in the real world. ps: WELCOME BACK HWS STUDENTS, THANKS FOR ORDERING A MILLION STUPID THINGS THROUGH THE MAILSTREAM.

Jesus - "Songe Mortuaire" from *Midnight Massiera*
Neil Young - "I've Been Waiting For You" from *Neil Young*
First, let's talk about Jesus. I have some pamphlets I want to show you real quick. Actually, the Jesus that sings "Songe Mortuaire" is a guy named Jean-Pierre Massiera, composer/song-writer/freak-a-leak who's sometimes referred to as "the French Joe Meek", which I think is code for "pretty out-there '60s producer who liked electronics and maybe spent every waking minute in the studio working out music fantasies". Midnight Massiera collects 18 of his pop soundtrack bizarro ideas, almost all them released under pseudonyms like Human Egg, The Piranha Sounds, Chico Magnetic Band, The Starlights, Jesus, etc. I almost started the mix with "Ivresse Des Profondeurs" by S.E.M. Studios, and now I'm kind of wishing I had. Hermans Rocket's "Space Woman" is a treat, too. But "Songe Mortuaire" almost sounds like it could be Leonard Cohen, singing and staring out at the sea, or while the leaves are changing under dark clouds, or some other grim chilly weather situation. Plus those piano bits that come in halfway through! It's also fun to imagine the bible Jesus singing this. Try that out.

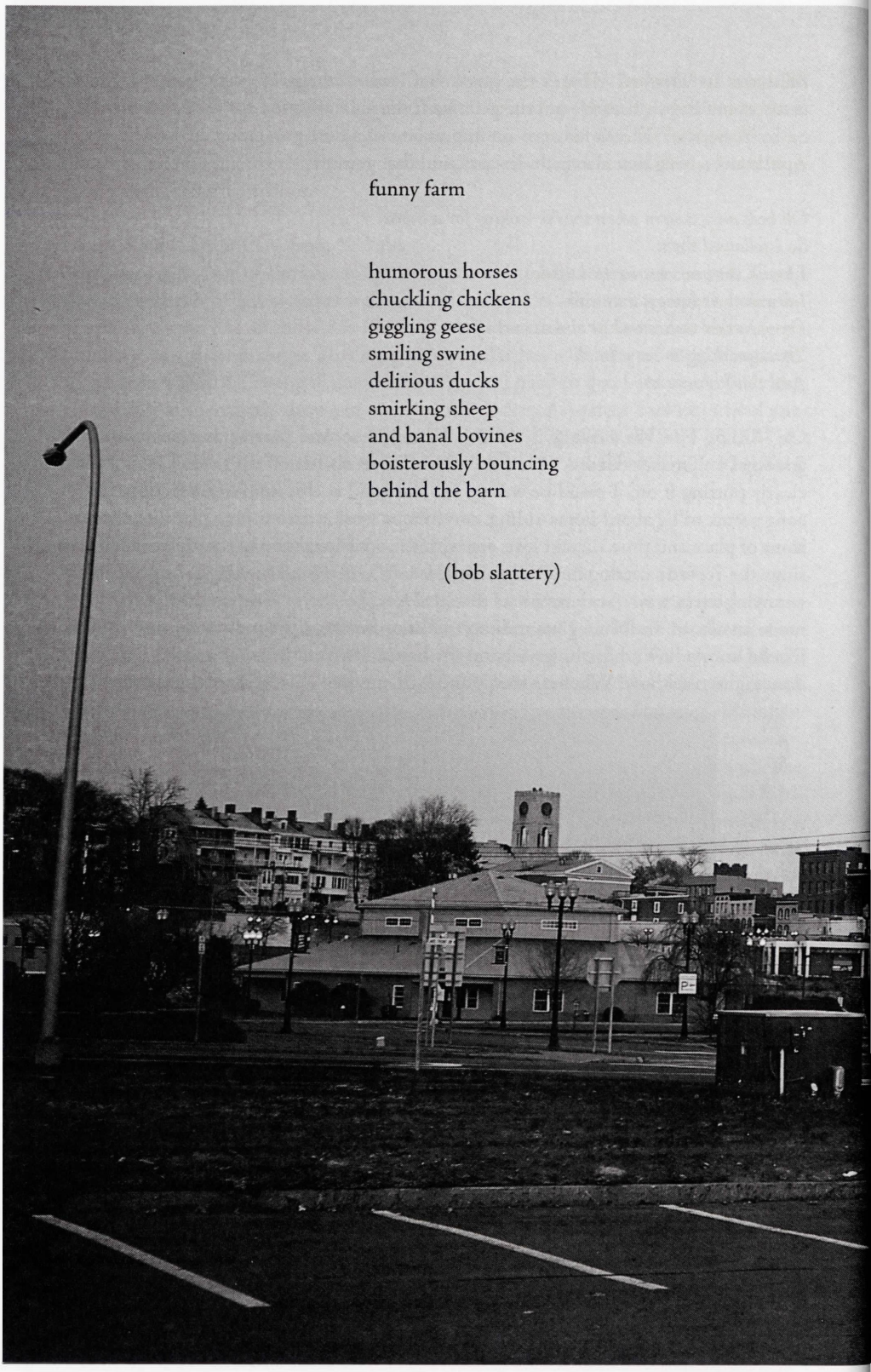
All I can say about "I've Been Waiting For You" is that it's a perfect song and you need to hear it. There are Neil records better suited to Autumn than his self-titled debut (I've been a sucker for the *Dead Man* soundtrack, *After The Gold Rush*, and *Le Noise* lately), and you're free to dive into those. But this song slays, so turn it all the way up, past the point of eventual hearing loss. I had a dream not too long ago that Neil Young was running for president. I forget who his running mate was (Pocahontas maybe?), but I'm voting for him in the 2012 presidential dream-time elections.

Bill Callahan - "Riding For The Feeling" from *Apocalypse*
I've been listening to Apocalypse regularly for the past six months, and even when I haven't listened to it in a bit, the highlights of the record come to me in flashes. There's Callahan's voice, a warm speaking-tone version of Johnny Cash's deep bellow, and the

full lyrics to "Drover". There's the quasi surf leads and spacey accompanying guitar textures on "Baby's Breath", and the genuine feelings of affection for the USA brought on by "America!". There's his spot-on impression of a flare gun going off in "Universal Applicant", a song that also includes a section that goes:

Oh bees only swarm when they're looking for a home
So I followed them
I found the bees nest in the buffalo's chest
I drank their honey, that milk
I've seen this taste cased in almost every face
That's working to see it in all
And this kidnaps me

On "Riding For The Feeling", he allows himself a second pass at an uncomfortable goodbye, and makes reference to what he's inadvertently left off the record, even as he's clearly putting it on. I could be wrong, I'm not good at this kind of dissection. Every song seems to be about horse-riding, continuous work, surrounding plantlife, discussions of place and time, distant love, etc, with the occasional nod to the album itself (he sings the record's catalog number at the close of "One Fine Morning"), but not in an annoying meta way. At times it's as though Don DeLillo or Cormac McCarthy have made an album. Callahan gives military ranks to his favorite songwriters, and sounds like he knows how to fix things around the house. It's obvious when something's been done right, you know? When it's sturdy and legit, unique. This is one of those records.☆



funny farm

humorous horses
chuckling chickens
giggling geese
smiling swine
delirious ducks
smirking sheep
and banal bovines
boisterously bouncing
behind the barn

(bob slattery)

Geneva Lentil Loaf

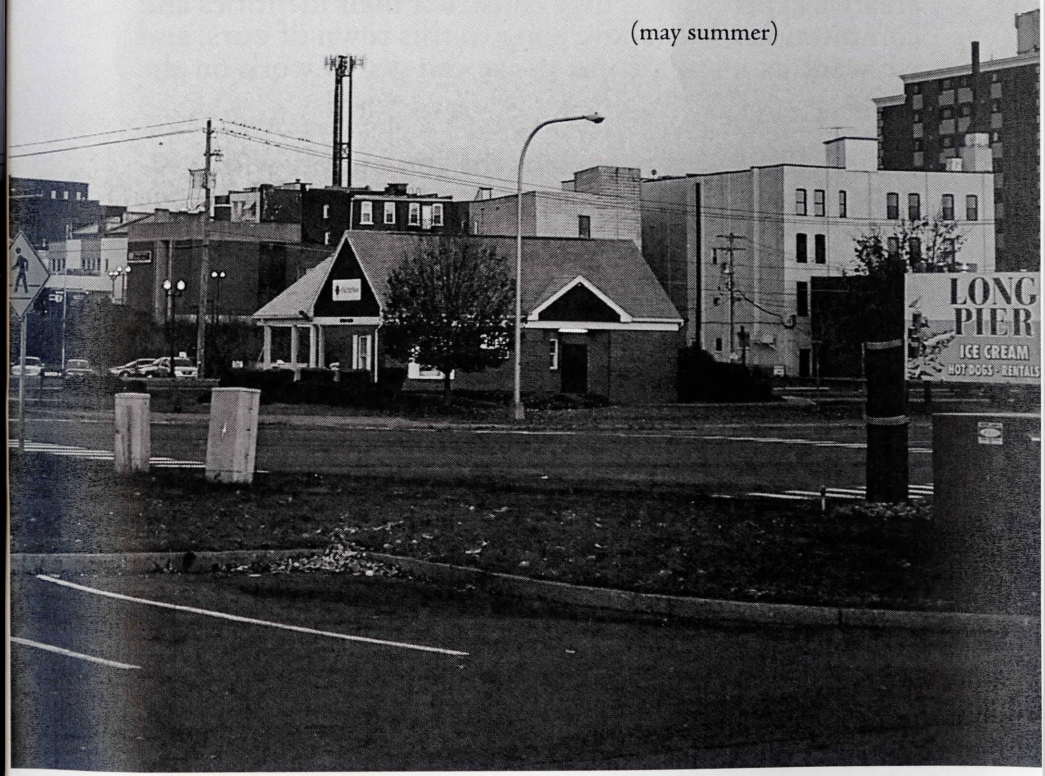
This is a great dish for any time of year. I cut it into finger food sizes and dip it in ketchup (my 4-year old likes it this way) but I think it would make an awesome burger too.

1 cup cooked lentils (save some after you make some other lentil dish, cook w/ bay leaf)
1/2 cup onions, chopped (local)
1/2 cup nuts, finely chopped (I use bulk walnuts from Mother Earth Naturals)
1 1/2 tbsp flour
1/2 cup Normal Bread crumbs
1/2 cup water (city tap)
1/2 cup tomato sauce, salsa (whatever)
1 tsp salt (or not)
1 egg (farmer's market)*

*I'm sure you could go vegan on this, check with hippie store.

Mash cooked lentils. Saute onion in 2 TBSP oil. Add remaining ingredients to letils. Put into oiled baking dish or loaf pan. 45 minutes at 375. You can double the recipe for bread loaf pan.

(may summer)



Why Geneva13?

Because 12 and 14 are on the same side of the street and are altogether too smug and cosy with one another. Because 13 doesn't mow her lawn and doesn't follow the latest fashion in campaign signs. Because we have a theory #13 is the most commonly unoccupied PO Box in the US. Because, at one time, we compiled a list of Genevas in the US, and, alphabetically speaking, ours was number 13. We've since found more, but reserve the right to not change the name of our zine.

Geneva13: End-Matter Manifesto

Geneva13 is a quarterly, do-it-yourself, not-for-profit, independent, collective venture that promotes people's creative expression as they construct their identities and communities. It is a love song to this town of ours, and we want as many people as we can get to work on the lyrics.

Geneva13's goal is to present the community with a variety of points of view. We invite submissions, but we also ask people for interviews. We transcribe those conversations, and we let the interviewees read them over to make sure they are comfortable with what they said and how they said it.

Geneva13 interviews are not short because conversations are not short. You can't learn much from soundbites or quotes taken out of context. The truth is in the details, what people say, and how they say it. Understanding is built on a commitment to really listen to one another.

"I've always liked trash."