

geneva13

a zine of the local

#10







# geneva13.10: winter 2010

This zine is our gift to you. Odds are we don't even know you, but we want you to have it. And we want you to pass it on to someone else, as your gift to them. The theme for this issue is the gift and the concept of giving. The choice of the theme partly reflects the time of the year, as the winter holidays are generally considered a time of giving. During these months, many of us give gifts and give thanks. But with the impact of the "economic downturn" (such a benign phrase, like something a GPS system might instruct the driver of a SUV to take) the "haves" have a lot more to be thankful for and the "have-nots" have a lot more company.

In this issue, we talk with Ellen Wayne of the Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes, the group that administers Geneva's Community Lunch Program, which supplies dozens of people with a free hot meal every Monday thru Friday year-round. She talks about the Geneva community's amazing generosity and the volunteerism that keeps the program going. But she also talks about the increased demand on the program, particularly from the elderly and the working poor. She also discusses (and, by her own admission, embodies) how the corporatization of giving has made it harder for many to actually do good. We also talk with Cheryl Toor, the director of the Center of Concern, the little operation on Avenue D that is a thrift store, emergency pantry, and much, much more. In many ways, the Center of Concern offers an interesting do-it-yourself antidote to other corporatized and regulated models of giving. We also talked with Richard and Mary Ellen Darling about both of the 'trees for troops' programs they are involved in: interestingly, one is corporate-run and rather distant, while the other is a grassroots program they started to get trees to local soldiers serving abroad.

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote scathingly about gift-giving in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, suggesting that it was inherently self-serving: "Verily, such a gift-giving love must approach all values as a robber: but whole and holy I call this selfishness." To a certain extent, his argument makes sense. In the gift-giving relationship, after all, it is the giver who has the power. Can there ever be such a thing as a truly

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## details, details

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Overleaf photo of the Elks Club Orphans Christmas Dinner,  
circa 1920; courtesy of the Geneva Historical Society  
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selfless act? Maybe not. But so what? To judge the act of giving solely in terms of the intention of the gift-giver not only reinforces their power, but ignores the multitude of other forces and factors at play.

For example, any story about giving is equally a story about need; usually several stories. These are tough times. Really tough times. Over the past year, it was chilling to witness the increasing number of empty storefronts (already painfully high) and house-for-sale signs across town. Someone recently told me that mid-sized towns like Geneva were generally lucky in such “economic downturns.” The idea was that we were already struggling economically, so we didn’t have that much to lose. When you’ve got 13 empty storefronts on one downtown street, what difference does one or two more make? The fall to the bottom doesn’t hurt so much when you were just barely scraping it already. Not a comforting thought.

A friend of mine has spent the past few months living in a homeless shelter. He is a talented and motivated guy—his poems have appeared on these pages before—but he simply couldn’t make ends meet anymore. And he had a *job*. Yeah, he was employed but still couldn’t earn enough to live on. He was one of the growing numbers of working poor: people doing everything society tells them they are supposed to do in order to have a successful life—stay in school, study hard, get a job, have a career—only to find out that the system doesn’t actually work like that. Talk about having the rug pulled out from underneath you. Talk about evidence that the system isn’t working the way it is “supposed” to.

Then again, maybe it is. This “economic downturn” may be one of those historic moments when it becomes abundantly clear to anyone who cares to notice that the system, in fact, does not work for the majority of the people in society. They work for the system. In this issue you will read about people in need where, frankly, no need should exist. What do we make of a government that ships soldiers off to far-off lands to fight and die, but doesn’t supply them with the trappings of the holidays (or adequate equipment for that matter)? What do we make of a system where increasing numbers of *working* poor are stopping into the community lunch program for a meal they can’t otherwise afford? Rather than only praise the generosity of the gift (such as providing emergency funds so that a family’s heat isn’t cut off), we should also critically reflect upon the need itself—both the complexities of the need (why was the heating bill so high in the first place?) and the multiple levels of greed and injustice involved (let’s be clear: in the name of corporate profit, people were going to turn off other people’s heat knowing full-well what consequences might ensue). These are complicated issues, to be sure. But at some point we need to pause, think, and speak deeply about complicated issues. They aren’t going away, even if we try to simplify them through charity and gift-giving.

So, this is our gift to you. Nietzsche may call us selfish robbers, but to hell with him. We want you to have it anyway. And what we want in return (see, Nietzsche *was* right!) is for you to pass it on with the same set of strings attached. Oh, and one more thing: follow the instructions on the back cover.



# the 1st of november

From the moment I was born, I was walking toward that sun, with my twin  
sister four minutes behind me

Those days are spent and worn as the edges of my soul, this Fall, it never fails  
to remind me

(of)

Those times when I have cried like a child without the words to convey what  
seems the simplest of needs

These days are now spent in off-rhymes and blue rhythms, I am quite a dif-  
ferent person than I was then, indeed

For better or for worse? Too futile for the asking, like most the other ques-  
tions 'round my brain.

Though asking does feel better, my curiosity confessions, while I wonder  
what more of me shall change

The sidewalks of my memories, I long to walk upon, but they are cracked and  
needing some repair

So I sit upon the grass of life, and wished to know the story's end, and  
breathed through thoughts this cold November air

An air of ease, invigorated calm

I think I'll go back to walking in that sun

The original idea would go something like...

And even as I change for you I'm walking to that sun...repeat and mix  
around...but that isn't flowing as well as above

(Tatiana Bruno)





photo by charlotte lehman



# alternate spaces

cadence whittier

## Space.

Space is a fundamental concept in dance choreography. It is impossible for me to create dances without thinking about space. Where will the dance take place? How will the dancers move in the space? How does the use of space convey my ideas? Likewise as a professional dancer, it is impossible for me to ignore space when I move—it is a concrete, physical experience of my body. When I push my feet downward into the ground while simultaneously lengthening my body upward, I am using space to stabilize my movement. And, if I choose to move in one of those directions (upward or downward), my body will mobilize through the space. This is space; I travel in it and it travels through me, or in the words of movement analyst Rudolf Laban, “besides the motion of bodies in space there exists motion of space in bodies.”

But, enough with those abstract ramblings. Yes, this essay is about space, but it is about space in its simplest form:

space is a location, a place.

## Geneva.

This was the second year that I organized and directed the *Finger Lakes Dance!* concert (FLD!), and both years, space (or place) shaped the concerts. As director, I was responsible for finding a place that would support the work of the participating artists. My first decision was easy: the concert needed to take place in Geneva. As one of my FLD! choreographers, Donna Davenport, reflected, “so often, Geneva dancers and choreographers travel to Rochester, Brockport, and Ithaca to dance with companies, set pieces on other dancers, and showcase their choreography, so the FLD! concert is a unique shift from the norm.” This was intentional. I wanted professional artists from Geneva and the greater Finger Lakes region to come together and perform on Geneva stages and share their work with Genevans.

When one thinks of Geneva stages, it is impossible to ignore the Smith Opera House. Therefore, when I was planning the 2008 concert, my second decision was also easy: we would perform at the Smith Opera House. The Smith is grand, majestic, and formal, and not surprisingly the Smith offered the dancers and choreographers just that. To the community of Geneva, the Smith was a familiar place; one expects to see a dance concert or listen to a symphony at the Smith. A traditional and conventional space for dance, the Smith was energizing and exciting for us all—over 500 people attended the concert!

This is what characterized the first FLD! concert:

familiarity, formality, and majesty



## Cracker Factory.

This is what characterized the second FLD! concert:  
unconventional, informal, and surprising

The 2009 FLD! concert was performed at the Cracker Factory. An unconventional space for dance, the Cracker Factory is intimate, informal, and sculptural. Located at 35 Lehigh Street, the Cracker Factory is owned by artists Amy and Brandon Phillips. The first floor of the building houses SMC Furnishings, where the Phillips design and build furniture. On the second floor of the factory, the Phillips created a community space for artists to come and present their work.

Entering the second floor of the Cracker Factory, one is greeted by an immense space. Arched windows and brick walls run the length of the two outside walls and thick white columns placed in classically symmetrical rows divide the space in half. Rich refurbished wood floors warm the room. The space is architecturally interesting; it captivates one's attention. In the words of an audience member, "in a space like this, it's as if the space is a performer too."

The first time I looked at Cracker Factory, it was clear:  
it presented vast creative possibilities for dance.

Not surprisingly, I instructed the FLD! choreographers and musicians to manipulate the space and use it sculpturally in ways that highlighted the unique architecture. I also wanted them to think about where they wanted to perform in the space and where they wanted the audience to sit. My colleague Michelle Iklé thought that the "Cracker Factory was a wonderful new venue to show our work; it created possibilities that don't exist in a traditional theater setting." The fact that the space provided the seven choreographers and three musicians with such choices led to an interesting concert design.

Audience members were instructed to move around throughout the concert: at one point they sat (or stood) in front of the performers, at times they surrounded the performers on three sides, and twice I asked them to move their seats into the performance space so that they were inches away from the dancers. Reflecting on this unique aspect of audience involvement in the concert, FLD! choreographer Missy Pfohl Smith commented that her students, who were new to the live dance experience, "were amazed by the unconventionality. They felt very much a part of the event because of the power they had to make choices in terms of where and how to view the diverse works. They were thrilled to witness the work so intimately and felt that the breakdown of the fourth wall (in theatrical terms) invited them in on a very personal and moving level. I truly believe that this event helped me to reach some of those students and genuinely pique their interest and connection to dance and live arts performance. This seems like a significant and long-lasting effect."

Although I acted as director of the concert, FLD! was ultimately a collective endeavor: this year's concert involved seven choreographers, two dance companies, four compos-



ers, three live musicians, thirteen professional dancers, and nine student dancers. Each choreographer and musician contributed to the concert's success. And so, in keeping in the spirit of the collective voice, it seems only appropriate that this essay includes some of their reflections.

*The Cracker Factory is a funky artists' space; creativity is in the air. Amy and Brandon, the owners, are amazing artists themselves, and so it's no surprise that they've designed and built a performance and exhibit venue for the fine and performing arts. As a dancer and choreographer in FLD!, the experience was just plain delightful. Although informal, it wasn't at all amateurish. This combination of informality and quality is a hallmark of creative innovation in the arts. Great art often starts that way, in someone's living room or a basement, and for folks in Geneva, I think it can stay that way. Why not move your chair to get a better view, stand if you want, and mingle with the artists in the audience? There's something very satisfying about good art, good people, in a good space that is not ostentatious. (Donna Davenport, choreographer and dancer)*

*The Cracker Factory felt much more intimate, and less formal than presenting work on a concert stage. The audience was asked to move at various times throughout the performance, making them—seemingly—more engaged and invested in the outcomes of the individual pieces themselves. As a performer, I enjoyed the audience being quite literally, feet away from me. Playing in a concert hall is different. The formality sometimes gives the performer an inherited sense of protocol that is often difficult to dismiss. The Cracker Factory invited performers and the audience to lose the proverbial weight of those inhibitions together. (Mark Olivieri, FLD! musician and composer)*

*The wonderful space in the Cracker Factory, and the eclectic mix of work from local choreographers created an intimate, and memorable experience. I was pleased to see that the multi-generational audience was uniquely involved in the performance, as they shifted their seating to create new viewing spaces and even participated in some social Step Dancing with the Hip-notiQ's dance team! (Heather Roffe, choreographer)*

### **Gifts and Giving.**

This issue of G13 is also about gifts and giving. I want to acknowledge that in this essay by ending with a reflection from one of the participating artists:

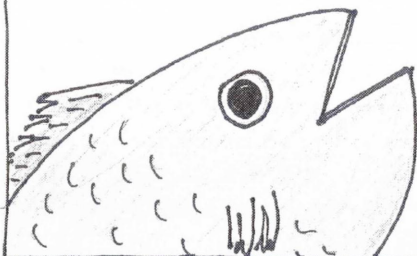
*I first want to acknowledge and express my appreciation for the innovative vision of Amy, Brandon and Cadence for this multi-arts community venue and event. I am awed by their ambitious and truly visionary labor of love that created meaningful connections between art and people of all generations through an aesthetically beautiful, welcoming and inviting space and event. Finger Lakes Dance combined so many forms of dance from improvisation to tap, contemporary, modern and step alongside live original music and amidst visual art within the Cracker Factory, which is a work of visual art in itself. (Missy Pfohl Smith, Director and Choreographer for BIODANCE)*



# Tales of Glee

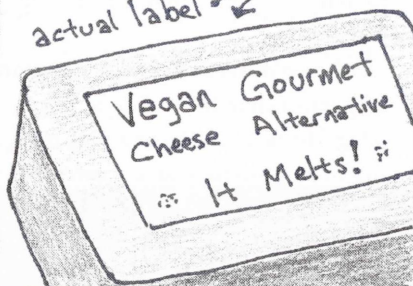
k-d- 12/09

My STEP-FATHER LOVES  
TO GO FISHING - SOMETHING  
I NEVER TOOK A LIKING TO.

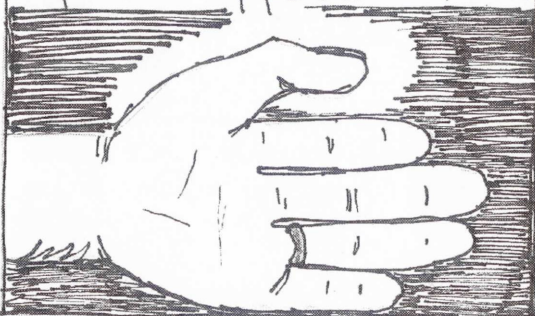


IT SEEMS UTTERLY  
POINTLESS TO ME. KIND  
OF LIKE BOWLING—  
OR VEGAN "CHEESE."

actual label ↗



SOMETIMES I THINK THESE  
ARE ALL PROOF THAT MAN  
HAS WASTED THE POTENTIAL  
OF THE OPPOSABLE THUMB.



BUT THEN I REMEMBER  
BALSAMIC VINEGAR  
IN A SPRAY BOTTLE  
AND KNOW SOME  
HUMANS ARE GENIUSES.



k-d-



# giving

lesley adams

*"For the measure you give will be the measure you receive" and vice-versa.*

Most ancient cultures seem to have realized that people need to live in the giving cycle if their communities are to function well.

The entry point into the cycle of giving is learning to live like a recipient. In my religious tradition we learn from the Hebrew scriptures which speak of God as creator and giver of every good gift. That metaphor gives us a way to look around and appreciate that what IS is beautiful, awesome, abundant, and unmerited. We get to be on this planet with sun and rain and food and good company. We have air to breathe and stars to look at. We have minds to discern and hands to work. Alleluia!

Once we discern the reality of unearned abundance, the next step is gratitude. If you step into a church, or mosque, or temple, you will notice that most liturgies begin with a big Thank You! Praise and thanksgiving, even when you are not feeling like it, turns out to be good for you and everyone else. In case you don't believe thousands of years' experience of those in religious traditions around the world, you can check out the research on gratitude done at UC-Davis several years ago. <http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/labs/emmons/>

The best part of communities practicing gratitude is not that the people are likely to be healthier, happier, and more successful, though that is great. The best part is that folks who live like recipients cheerfully respond with gifts of their own. They enter a cycle of giving. I love living in communities like that, like Geneva, where people recognize the wonderful gifts of education, and time, and land, and money that they have received, and then give back by sponsoring scholarships, and mentoring young people, and giving away food and money.

What's awful is when communities stop helping people to see abundance as the ultimate reality and fall into deficit thinking instead. Their people begin to prioritize what they don't have. They begin to act like they're owed something. They can't ever get enough. They start hoarding, taking care of me and mine. When times get tough, they say,

"I can't give much, I still don't have what I need."

"Never mind that you've lost your job, I haven't got my raise yet."



Or think about communities that preach self-reliance and independence. Their people begin to get the idea they've earned what they have. Instead of seeing blessings, they see fair remuneration.

"I deserve everything I have, why be grateful? And that other guy? Who doesn't have as much as I have? He must be a slacker."

Communities that encourage the illusion of control promote judgment rather than generosity. When times get tough, they might give a little to the "deserving", after they've locked the gates and turned on the burglar alarm.

Me personally? I give thanks every day for living in Geneva, New York. I give thanks for the lake and fields and the woods, for the birds and the animals, for the accessibility of food, and books, and art, and lectures. But mostly I give thanks for living a community where the giving cycle isn't broken. And I pray that we can keep it in good repair.





# three stories

## john marks

Religion was often a strong influence on 19th-century charity. Geneva was in the center of the "Burned Over District"; western New York was swept up in evangelism and the birth of new religious movements from about 1800 to 1850. Charles Grandison Finney, a popular revival preacher of the day, may have coined the phrase to indicate that religious fire had "burned over" the population, leaving no fuel (sinners) to catch the spark of God's word. Some philanthropists gave money to do the Lord's work; others had more secular reasons. Here, then, are three stories of Geneva philanthropists.

Robert Swan was a wealthy and prominent farmer in this area from 1850 to 1890. He lived in Seneca County at Rose Hill Farm (now a historic house museum) but his family invested their money, time, and social capital in Geneva. An active member of First Presbyterian Church, Swan held leadership positions for most of the years he attended, and contributed \$5,000—one-quarter of the total cost—to the 1878 renovation of the church. He also founded a Sunday School several miles from his home that met Sunday afternoons. Robert's brother Fred wrote, "This school was the direct means of doing an immense amount of good; it was started with but a very few scholars and grew rapidly, changing the condition of the neighborhood where it was located from intemperance to sobriety. He was the Superintendent of the Rose Hill Sunday School for twenty-one years."

Swan personified *noblesse oblige*, defined by Dictionary.com Unabridged as "the moral obligation of those of high birth, powerful social position, etc., to act with honor, kindness, generosity, etc." (This is in direct contrast to former Texas Governor Ann Richards' characterization of George H. W. Bush: "He was born on third base and thought he hit a triple.") Robert followed the example of his father Benjamin, a wealthy man who retired from business in his 30s and gave money freely both to his children, and to charities such as The American Bible Society. One account of Benjamin stated, "He was always more polite than the person he was with and it was amusing to see him sometimes, hat in hand, talking to a beggar, for he would never be outdone in civility."

A Geneva man shared a story with Swan's family after his death. "I met Robert on the street, and passed him, simply saying, 'how do you do, Mr. Swan.' Robert came after me, overtook me, slapped me on the back, and said 'you do not look happy, let us go over to the horse-shed. I want to talk with you.'" The man revealed he needed \$1,000 and had nowhere to turn. "After talking a few minutes Robert said, 'come over to the bank, I will only keep you a few minutes, after which, we can talk further.' I went with him, and he almost immediately, to my great surprise, re-appeared and handed me his check on the bank for \$1,000, at the same time asking me to sign a note that he had drawn up, of like amount, which I signed, giving him no other security whatever. The note was paid before it was due."





Robert Swan, photo courtesy of  
Geneva Historical Society

Another interpretation of Swan, however, could be of an upper class meddler. His employees who lived on the farm signed contracts that included promises not to drink at all, to come straight home after church on Sunday and not loiter around town. His journals show at least one separate temperance pledge signed by a worker on December 12; some early holiday revelry may have led to a "sober up or leave" ultimatum from Swan. A family diary of 1864 tells of Robert's wife Margaret giving bread and baked apples to "2 beggar children". The same book states, "the whole neighborhood [around Rose Hill] was infested with 200-300 gipsies (sic), who spread over the country... Some of them came to Robert's for some hay. Margaret told them to go to the village and buy some." Perhaps Swan's kindliness and generosity were as spotty as the next man's.



William Smith, perhaps the most famous Geneva philanthropist, may not have par-tied much with Robert Swan. Unlike Swan, Smith started with little and earned all of his wealth in the nursery business he founded; he was also a Spiritualist who believed that one could communicate with spirits of the deceased who were in the afterlife. When someone tried to memorialize Smith as a Christian gentleman (a 19th-century compliment), a grandniece retorted, "He wasn't Christian and he wasn't a gentleman!" She wasn't implying he was a bad person, but that Smith believed he could still be - and do - good outside of the social norm.

Smith's giving followed his interests. In 1888, he built a house and observatory for Dr. William Brooks of Phelps; Brooks came to Geneva and discovered 27 comets. The city had no large, dedicated space for cultural events in the early 1890s and leaders turned to Smith. He was actively involved in the design of the Smith Opera House, specify-



Smith Opera House, circa 1900  
courtesy Geneva Historical Society




ing that the “boys in the gallery” (the cheap seats) should have nice chairs, rather than benches, because they were as important as the wealthier patrons.

Smith pursued his largest project, a college for women, when he was in his late 80s. His first plan, a Spiritualist college on Castle Street, fell through, and friends advised him that constructing buildings would spend most of the money that he had earmarked for the college. Working with a close circle of advisers, Smith decided his college needed to be: located in Geneva; for women; more than a vocational school; and *non-denominational*. Hobart College was in one of its periodic financial crises in the early 1900s, and President Stewardson proposed that Hobart share its buildings and faculty with this new college. The agreement was approved in December 1906, with the provision from Smith and his advisers that the colleges would be coordinate, not coeducational. The Colleges still proudly bear their ampersand decades after other coordinate colleges merged their identities; I think Smith would have liked that.

Cleo Cameron lived in Geneva after Swan and Smith, but even if they had been contemporaries, the men may not have admitted to knowing her. Cameron (her name may have been an alliterative pseudonym) operated a bordello at 9 Bradford Street (behind the current Bicentennial Park) from the early 1900s to the 1930s. There's a fair amount of folklore about Cleo and not much documentation—people were probably reluctant to explain how they had extensive knowledge of the local whorehouse—but many stories center on her generosity. Apparently, business was good and she was rumored to be very wealthy. General stories tell of Cleo ensuring that poor families in Geneva had “baskets of food and buckets of coal” at Christmas time. In a specific case, the former Glenwood Cemetery superintendent said she purchased three burial plots for a family that had worked for her, and visited often with flowers until her own death.

Swan, Smith, and Cameron acquired and distributed their wealth in different ways. Who was the “good” person? I don't know, I'm just in it for the stories.





# community lunch program

## ellen wayne executive director, catholic charities of the finger lakes

**How long have you held this position?**

This is my third year.

**What did you do before this?**

I've worked for other local not-for-profits and in the county government.

**How did you get involved in Catholic Charities?**

I've worked in anti-poverty programs ever since I graduated from school. I went into the Volunteer Corps when I graduated from college, and with the exception of a brief two year period, I have worked almost exclusively in programs that have focused on poverty and poverty-related issues.

**Why? Why focus on that?**

I think I recognized that there is a certain amount of opportunity that I've had that maybe other people haven't necessarily

had – the ability to pursue my education, to recognize where there is need that I wasn't necessarily exposed to growing up. I think the more you can focus energy and attention on issues of low-income – whether it is food issues, whether it is housing issues – there is the potential to at least do a little bit to make things better.

**What does Catholic Charities encompass in terms of the programs you are involved in?**

We're a four county agency, so we provide direct programs and services in Ontario, Seneca, Yates and Cayuga counties. And the way which we provide services is based on the needs in the community. We'll identify where there is a need or a gap in service, and create programs that respond to programs and needs unique to the community. What we do in Geneva may be very different from what we do in Auburn, just based on who the other human service providers are and what



the community need is. But almost exclusively, all of our programs are generated around stabilizing families, addressing issues of poverty and advocating for social justice. We have a program focusing on individuals who are returning from incarceration, and we recognize the potential for economic impacts in a household when an adult is incarcerated, such as the potential for the children to be living in below-poverty level income household. Everything we do really does have individuals and families in need at its core.

**Is the Community Lunch Program the largest program you have in Geneva?**

In Geneva, I would say yes. And it is the biggest for a couple of reasons. The number of units that we service here is phenomenal. More than 16,000 meals are served annually. It is also big in terms of the volunteer effort that is behind it, such as the man-hours that we realize from the local businesses. For instance, today Guardian Glass is here. Guardian is one of the industries in the community that donates their staff time and energy to create a meal for us. Individuals from churches, parishes, schools, civic organizations—we'd be lost without that

in-kind support. And the energy behind that is just very large for us. But it also realizes a substantial in-kind contribution in terms of the donated product. You can see all the bread that is coming from Freihofer's, Tops, Wegmans, Tim Hortons, Normal Bread...big and small organizations that are just always giving us their contributions. And again, that makes for a large, expansive program. People come in and they might not be able to stay for the meal, but they know that they can come here and actually attain a donated product. Our goal is to turn it around as quickly as it comes in. We hate for something to be in the back and go to waste when it could be up here and made available to our patrons.

**How long has the Community Lunch Program been in existence here in Geneva?**

This is our 26th year. It really is a partnership. Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes administers the program, but the program wouldn't be what the program is without the partnership that we have from the Geneva Area Inter-Faith Council, which is an ecumenical council of churches and faith communities that not





only seek to support the program financially, but provide that volunteer muscle and support behind it. It is wonderful to say that we're administering it, but it is important to note that the program reaches the number of people that it does based on that partnership with the Inter-Faith Council.

**How did it develop? Twenty-six years ago, what was the impetus for creating the program? Was there a single person or group driving it? Did it come out of Catholic Charities?**

No, we didn't always administer it. It was administered at a certain point by a core

group of individuals and also the Inter-Faith Council, and it has kind of moved around. Its location has changed over the years. But it was really borne out of the fact that a few core individuals recognized that there were hungry people in the community, and they really wanted to do something to resolve it. If you think back to the 1980s as a time of real economic challenge, there was some high rates of unemployment, there was a lot of prevalent and really easily identifiable need in Geneva. I think that the idea was that if there could just be something that could be done, even if it was that meal once or twice a week, that way there would be a little bit of a difference being made. When





the program actually started, it wasn't a five day a week program, it was, I believe, two days a week. It has grown into the program that it is by evolving over time based on the needs in the community.

**I am interested in the whole process, from getting resources and food being donated, to the volunteer staff, to the people coming in to get services. But I'm going to take each part of that and ask a couple of questions on each. So, where do the resources come from, both in terms of the food and the financial resources? Well, I am assuming you need financial contributions to make this all operate?**

Absolutely.

**Is there a paid staff?**

There is. We have a part-time program coordinator, and that is Nancy Newland. That is about a 25-hour a week position. And then a portion of my time is attributed to the program, as well as some administrative support staff back in the office. And that is really designed to handle some of the behind-the-scenes administrative work. But the bulk of the man-power to this program is volunteer. We would be at a loss if we had to employ 7-10 people in the kitchen every single day to prep and serve a meal. It is essentially staffed by a part-time program coordinator. The responsibility of that position is basically from soup-to-nuts [*laughs*]*—*secure the scheduling, assure that the meal is presented on time. And in order to do that means making sure that there are enough volunteers. Also, balancing the donated food items with the items that we've purchased either with grant funding through Foodlink or

with general contributions that come in to the agency, etc. You know, it is a meal; it is a Department of Health licensed facility, so there are rules and regulations that that person really has to be attentive to in order to make this a safe environment for our volunteers and for our lunch guests. But our number one goal is to make this a welcoming environment, so that people feel comfortable and not judged for coming here. That they really believe that this is a program that is designed in their best interest, and not just somebody doing it because they feel good about helping the poor.

**The food that you are serving at lunch time: some of it is donated, some of it you have to go and buy through Foodlink or wherever?**

We have a grant through the Department of Health called the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) and it is essentially a line of credit. When you see things at Wegmans like Check Out Hunger and those types of campaigns, that essentially helps us establish a purchasing line at Foodlink. Donated product to this huge warehouse can be purchased by us at a fraction of the cost. There are certain staples that we would purchase through Foodlink in order to balance the things that we receive and are donated here. But, for instance, today Guardian Glass is one of our business partners and they actually bring in everything they need to make the meal that they are serving. Some days it might be pizza that has been donated by Pizza Hut, other days it might be leftover food from an event at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, or if a local firehouse has an event. Last Thursday on Thanksgiving, Geneva on the Lake prepared a Thanks-



giving meal. Everyday where the food comes from is different. No two days are the same.

**And it is coming from local businesses and the local community, by and large?**

Absolutely. There is an incredible, incredible generous giving spirit in the community. Every single Thursday throughout the year is sponsored by a local business or faith community or school, where they are actually coming in and doing the prep for us. And that allows us to take our regular weekday volunteers and give them some time off.

**That is interesting. Monday through Friday you have regular volunteers coming in to prep all of the food for lunch.**

We have teams. We have a Monday crew, a Tuesday crew and so forth.

**So people volunteer for just one day a week. And then on Thursday you get a local business or group that comes in for an entire month?**

Yes. Today is Guardian Glass. We get Hobart and William Smith, the Ag Station, Trinity Church, Our Lady of Peace. It is incredible. I don't know where you could go outside of Geneva community and find an endeavor that really does show the generosity of the community spirit. Again, it would not be anything we would be able to do if we were just absorbing the cost solely.

**That is fantastic. Has this Thursday volunteer staff program been going on for a long time?**

Several years. And businesses grow, and business come, and businesses go. But we have a core group of 12 that are doing this for us each month. For us it has been a huge opportunity. What we find is that when people come here with their school or their church or their employer, they get a little bit familiar with the program and then they are not so hesitant to come down here and volunteer for a day on their own. So it is also a great resource in terms of building our core base of volunteers.







**How many do you have in that core base of volunteers?**

We average about a hundred volunteers every year. The core. But then we have folks that come in... for instance, DeSales and St. Stephens, they send students in 10 or 20 at a time, based on the classes that they are in. And there is not a day of the week that somebody from Hobart and William Smith is not in this program doing something. The students there with their community engagement philosophy... you can not say enough about what they bring to this program. And for us, when we have days where the volunteers are a little bit older, to infuse youth who can help with deliveries or dealing with heavy pots and pans, that helps minimize the burdens on the older volunteers.

**How many people do you serve on a given day?**

We hover in the 50 to 60 to 70 range. About 16,000 meals a year. If it is a day

when school is out, we partner with the Geneva Boys and Girls Club to make sure the children who are out of school are served, so those days would obviously see a peak. Things like the weather—if it is a real frigid day it is obviously difficult. Many of our folks are walking in here. If it is earlier in the month where maybe regular benefits come in and it is bad weather, that is a double zinger for us, so we might not have the attendance we want. But listening to our volunteers, even if it is a slow day, even if it is only 50 people who come through the meal line, they are appreciative of the opportunity they've had to make a difference for those 50 people, because this might be the one and only warm nutritious meal they have that day.

**Do you see fluctuation across the year? When are your heavier times?**

Yes. As we move into the Fall when tend to pick up. Summer is a little bit slower for us. The bitter, bitter cold—February, March—it is a little bit harder for some

of our senior citizens to get here. Unfortunately, like many of the food programs across the country, we are seeing an increase in our numbers of senior citizens that are using the program. We recognize when there are challenges for them to participate.

**That was going to be my next question: the make-up of the 50-60 people you see. Does it tend to be more seniors? Is there a clear age distribution?**

The bulk is really adults between the ages 18-54, but that is just an eyeball estimation. We're not asking people to provide demographics. But if you look at our trend, where we see the greatest growth is the senior population. I think we are up about 30% in terms of the numbers of meals that we are serving to seniors across the quarter.

**And have you seen any growth in terms of people coming in over the last year or two given the economic downturn, or has it pretty much stayed the same?**

There is a little bit of an increase in terms of the numbers, but what is somewhat disturbing or unfortunate is that we have noticed an increasing number of people who are coming in in their work clothes, that they are clearly employed. People who are in some kind of health profession, people with their name tags on from their place of employment. It is saying to us that even our population of diners who are employed are not in a position to meet all of their basic needs, and that is very unfortunate. I think when we started this, the perception was probably that it was largely an unemployed or a disabled or elderly population. But we see an unfortunate trend of younger people whose

appearance tells us that they are stopping here either on their way to work or on their way home from work.

**How has your involvement in this program changed your perspective on Geneva?**

I don't know if it has changed my perspective on the community. What I would say is that it gives you the opportunity to recognize just how willing some folks are to step up and provide something that meets an individual's basic needs. There are those that help in a distant, behind-the-scenes way and that is important, that is critical. And there are others that just don't see the need for it. And no amount of my talking or your listening is going to change their mind on why people need this program. But there are folks who are willing to roll up their sleeves all the time for us, to help serve, and it spans generations. The other things I would say is that, what has changed with the position, is that before programs like the Community Lunch Program could just operate out of the kindness of their hearts. They didn't have to be run like a business. You didn't have to worry about health regulations—and I don't mean for that to sound like we would serve bad food. But you didn't have to think about whether everybody has gloves on or, if somebody wanted to donate food that they canned all summer. Well, we can't take canned food from somebody's home. Some time ago we wouldn't have to pay so much attention to that, but now we have to run it more like a business. From the coordination standpoint, we have to look at issues such as a liability, issues such as how we record our contributions and donations, issues like that. It is unfortunate because I think there is still a willingness for people



to just come in and want to do something good, and then they might get frustrated because they think 'Oh, they are too corporate' [laughs]. But we have no choice.

**It has gotten harder to do good, in other words. With legislation to make things safer, it actually makes things harder...**

Yeah. It does make it difficult. For example, a hunter coming in here and saying 'Hey, I got this deer. I'll chop it up for you.' Well, we'd love to serve the venison. But it has got to go through a licensed butcher and there is a whole process to get that food back to us so that we can ensure that it was done in a safe manner. That is good, because we don't want to serve tainted meat. And I'm sure there was no intention on the part of the hunter to taint the meat, but essentially what I have just said to him is 'You've got to go through this step and this step and this step in order to get it back to us.' And the other thing is, our funds through Foodlink—that is part of the state budget. Anytime the Department of Health's budget is slashed, our resources are slashed and that offsets costs of salary, utilities, the capital equipment. So, in a economic situation that we're in where everything is at a risk for the state, then it becomes a risk for the program as well.

**This is interesting because in addition to the safety angle there is the economic angle as well. Because there is money involved but you can't pay the individual who is doing the canning. Instead you have to pay Libby's or whichever big company.**

Yeah, it makes it hard for people who just want to be able to do something to not be able to do a simple act.

**I find it ironic that it has become totally flip-flopped. It used to be the stuff that was made by a person you knew would be the trustworthy product and whatever came out of a can would be suspect. What are the challenges from your perspective in keeping this system running?**

That would take us a year and a half [laughs]. Obviously funding is a challenge for us. Even with having a large amount of donated items, there are still costs that are associated with this: salary, staffing costs, if the stove were to go, that is a sizable burden on our program budget. Liability and insurance costs. We'd like to have more resources or revenue for training so that we can make sure we're on the cutting edge of safety practices or serving well-balanced nutritional meals. We're always looking at what could make our program better, and financial resources are generally the obstacle to what we can do to make the program better. One other challenge is keeping that steady core of volunteers. We have an aging volunteer base. They tend to be young retirees, but they sometimes go to Florida, they have their families, they've worked an entire career. So it is hard for us to say to them: 'You must be here every Monday' or whatever the case may be. We are always looking for those other volunteers who, maybe they aren't willing to commit every day for a week, but they'll fill in when necessary and that is really big for us.

**You are currently located in the First United Methodist Church. How long have you been located here?**

Sixteen years. The church is very gracious with us. We don't pay a rental fee to be here. To the extent that we have

grant funds that are available to us, we'll contribute to help offset the cost of utilities because we are running quite a bit of equipment back there to prepare a meal and we recognize that financial cost. But time and time again the church has reaffirmed with us that this is their ministry. They are responding to the needs of the community, and we can't recognize enough what they do to contribute to this program.

**Do you see trends in terms of donations and volunteers? Is it heavier during the Christmas season? And then peters off in the summer?**

Our core donors, the businesses that are sending stuff, they are right there with us all year long. They really do sustain us. At this time of the year, between Thanksgiving to Christmas, there is a greater awareness of hunger in the community, and that is when we see more food drives and more classes calling and saying 'Hey, we're interested in helping out.' We'd be lost without that, so I'm not meaning to say that that is not important to us, but gosh we're appreciative of those people that recognize it all year. We get huge amounts of donations from farmers. In the summer, what we might be lacking from those canned food donations, we're getting fresh produce. That is just fabulous for us. Hobart and William Smith gives to us all the time, from different events that they have. Red Jacket Orchard contributes each week. There are people who are right there with us all year long, and there are those who respond because this time of year really does bring need to the forefront.

**You've mentioned the businesses engagement and support for the program from donating food to providing vol-**

**unteer staff. At the individual level, are people dropping off canned goods?**

We don't have as much individuals dropping off canned goods because I think the understanding is that we are trying to serve a mass meal. A donated canned good would probably be more effective in the pantry at the Center of Concern than it might be here. But what we do see this time of year is the \$5, \$10, \$20, \$100 checks from individuals and that is critical for us. We usually see about \$7-10,000 in financial contributions just between November and December, and that goes a long way to helping us sustain the program. There are folks that give to us every single month, and their support of the program is noted and greatly appreciated. What happens this year is anybody's guess given the downturn and economic uncertainty.

**Have you seen a dip in terms of financial donations?**

Yeah, we were about 87% where we would normally be going into the holiday season, so we are kind of hoping that the holiday season is a little bit generous to us.

**What is your greatest need? Is it food being donated? Is it volunteers to fix and serve the lunch?**

I would say it is a little bit of both. It is essentially the resources needed to keep the program going and that is financial, man-power, and product. But if we had all the food in the world donated but nobody willing to be back there to helping prepare it we would be at a pretty strong disadvantage. So I guess I'd go with the volunteers.



**Any final thoughts for people who are going to read this?**

I guess what I would say, and I appreciate you doing this article at this time of year because I believe seasonally there is time and attention drawn to hunger, but the reality is that this program operates all year round and there is a reason for that because hunger is a pressing issue all year long. I guess I would encourage the readers to look around and identify where you might be able to give an hour a week or two hours a week or even an hour a month to make a difference in addressing needs.

For more information about the Community Lunch Program, contact:  
Nancy Newland  
Phone: 315-789-6550

Geneva Community Lunch Program  
340 Main Street  
Geneva, NY 14456  
Hours of Operation: Mon-Fri 11:45-12:45pm







**DARLING'S**

**TREE FARM**

*Phelps*

*"GOD BLESS OUR TROOPS"*

*N.Y.*


trees for troops

k-d, photos by doug reilly, zora reilly, k-d-



Darling's Christmas Tree Farm on County Road 23 in Phelps is actually involved in two "Trees for Troops" programs. The first one is the collaboration between the National Christmas Tree Growers Association and FedEx, which delivers over 19,000 Christmas trees to soldiers and their families in fifty-three bases both home and abroad. Richard and Mary Ellen Darling have been involved with that program for the last five years.

But three years ago, they started their own grassroots program aimed at sending Christmas trees to local soldiers stationed abroad. According to Mary Ellen, three years ago they sent five trees to local soldiers stationed in Iraq. Last year, they sent twenty-two trees to local soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. This year, at the time of our interview, they were already up to fifty trees going out to local soldiers. The trees are boxed up with lights, decorations, gifts, and cards and letters from local students and sponsoring groups—a "Christmas Party-in-a-box." The boxes are mailed out of the post offices in Oaks Corners and Seneca Castle. In the past few years, the grassroots program has blossomed as others have gotten involved, including the American Legion, local schools, such as a second grade class from Midlands, and the Blue Star Mothers. When we conducted the interview with the Darlings, members of the Blue Star Mothers were on hand to help box up the trees and the decorations.

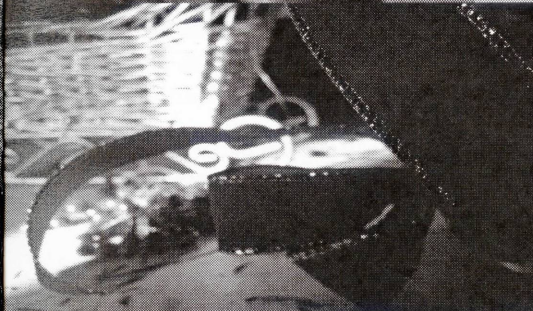


The Blue Star Mothers is a national organization formed six weeks after the bombing of Pearl Harbor made up of mothers of military personnel. The local chapter became involved in the Darling's grassroots program when Richard Darling read an article about the group sending Christmas boxes to the troops. They decided to combine their efforts. According to Joyce Mader, the president of the local chapter of the Blue Stars Mothers, the group raises money from local individuals and schools groups to help cover the cost of the trees, decorations and postage. The trees are sent to local soldiers who serve as the "secret keepers" who decide when, where, and how the tree will be set up. Joyce shared the story of an Air Force Captain from Syracuse who last year snuck into the mess hall on Christmas Eve to set up the tree while the others slept. He reported that witnessing the soldier's reactions on Christmas morning, from cheering to crying, was "the most overwhelming event of his life." When reflecting on why she and her colleagues were involved in the group, Joyce responded "because every mother's child is our child. This is how we get through having our children deployed in war zones... Who better understands than a mother going through the same thing." When asked why he is involved in the national Trees for Troops program and why he started the local direct-to-soldiers grassroots program, Richard Darling simply answers "It is giving back... and we get some beautiful letters in return."

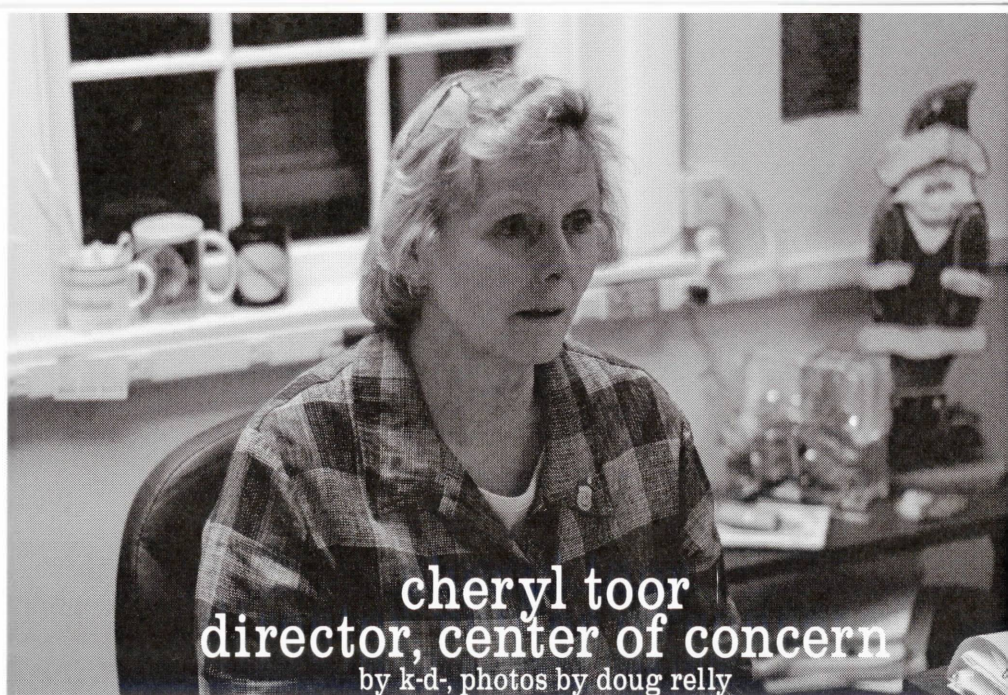












**cheryl toor**  
**director, center of concern**  
by k-d, photos by doug reilly

**How long have you been director of the Center?**

I've been director about three years. I started as their food pantry manager nine years ago this coming February. And then I worked my way up.

**How long has the Center of Concern been in existence?**

It has been in operation since 1972. It was run solely by volunteers until they hired me nine years ago. We now have me as full-time and then our store manager Lu is part-time. And everyone else is a volunteer; it is operated by 50 volunteers. Fifty volunteers plus a person and a half who are on payroll.

**So, it started in 1972. What was the impetus for creating the Center?**

Because a group of church members got together and wanted to do food baskets at Christmas. And as they were delivering

them around, they realized that there was such a need for so much more. And the Center grew from there.

**Was it originally coming out of just one church, or was it a group of churches?**

It was a community of churches. And they are still very involved. They still donate a lot of food, they donate a lot of money. Most of our volunteers here are from different churches. They donate a lot of time.

**But the actual Center of Concern is incorporated and is not affiliated with any specific church, right?**

Yes. And originally the official name was the Geneva Coalition Food Pantry. It was a coalition of churches. They eventually dropped the 'coalition' part.

**And it currently exists as a not-for-profit?**

Not-for-profit.



**You said you have fifty volunteers. Is that the core volunteer group? Are there people that kind of rotate in and out?**

That is the core. Everybody has their days that they do things. We also have five days a week that people pick up at Wegmans and Tops for bread and day-old this-and-that. So that is an additional ten people. We have volunteers who drive five days a week. But we have a core group of fifty volunteers, not to mention Hobart and William Smith students who come in for a semester, someone who might come in and do this or that. And we have people who just drop in and help too.

**They come in and they work stocking the shelves, running the register...**

They all have their days that they chose to come in and we have people sorting goods for the thrift shop—sorting and hanging goods—we have people working at the front register, two days a week we have people in what we call the Shirley Shop

[named for a past volunteer] and that is some of the newer and nicer things that go in the little shop over here. And then we have people down in the pantry, bagging, stocking, receiving, picking up. So it is a huge operation. Really, in a small space.

**Yeah, it really is a small space for everything you have going on here. So, you touched on this a little bit, but I want to spell out some of the things that the Center of Concern actually does.**

I wear a lot of hats here. Part of my job is what they call a resource coordinator: I literally help people who come off the street. They might come in looking for prescription help, clothing, household items, food, gas vouchers, bus tokens, help to pay an electric shut-off notice. We do all of that here. They come through me for that. Everything here is available for sale, but it is also available on a voucher for free to someone who needs it.





In addition to that, we have the emergency pantry. Last year we served 9,995 people and this is Geneva only. So that gives you an idea of the scope of the need here. And then, in addition to that, we have the Operation Merry Christmas. That is in progress right now upstairs. It is run by our Board, where they actually take applications and serve—this year it is about 150 families—with a complete holiday meal, a few extras, and gifts for all the kids age 0 to 18. So they come in by application. This year it looks like there is one person I actually have to turn away because they are outside our income guidelines and they are outside our service area.

**What is your service area?**

The town and city of Geneva only. We'll serve anybody who is on the border. We have people, unfortunately the working poor, who work here in Geneva and they can't get to their local pantry, say they live in Seneca Falls, while they are working. So they'll come over here on their lunch

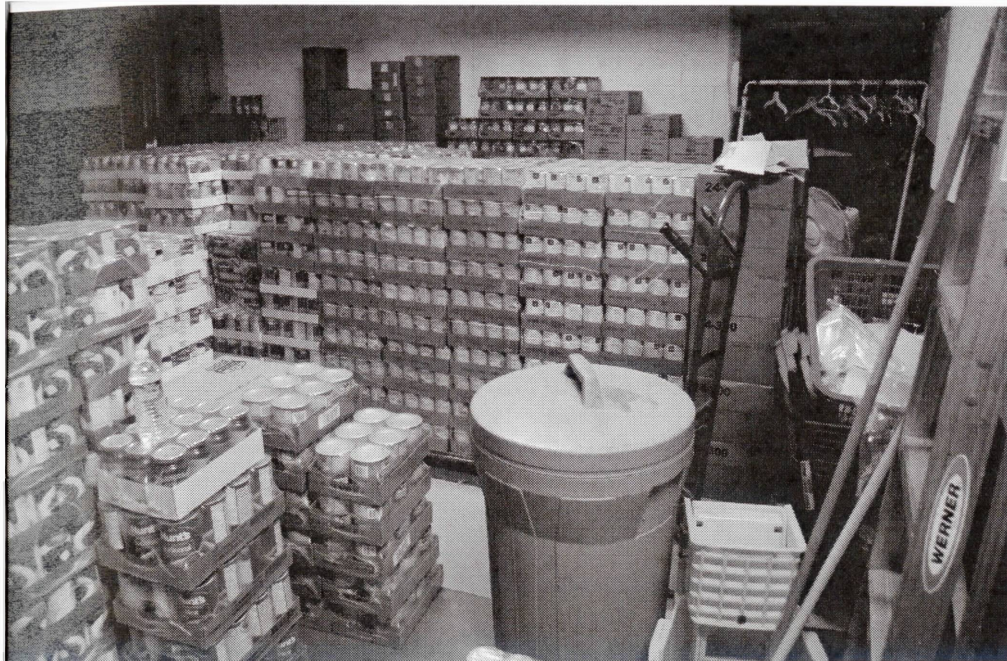
break and visit the pantry. And we allow that. But you have to limit it because we have such a big need here.

**And when they come in to use the pantry, you've got food that has been donated?**

Donated and purchased. My budget this year to actually go to a store and purchase is \$20,000. When I first started, it was \$7,000. So that gives you an idea – not only have prices gone up but our amount of people in need has gone up tremendously. But we have donated food and we also work in cooperation with Foodlink out of Rochester, where it is a grant application process. You fill out grants and then they give you grant moneys to use. We never see the funds, but it gets deducted from what we purchase. So every two weeks I turn in an order, and we purchase pennies-on-the-dollar. I might get two tons of food and it costs me grant money and \$14 cash.







**Your resources that are coming in, I guess there are multiple strands of resources. The donated goods, are those being donated from local individuals and businesses?**

Individuals, businesses, churches, Wegmans and Tops. We get things from other area stores. Say Big Lots might call and say 'We have an abundance of—whatever—cookies that came in. Can you use them?' We're always getting calls like that. And if we get an over-abundance, then we share it out with the Agri-Business School, the migrant day-care school program, with Boys and Girls Clubs. We don't want anything to go to waste.

**In addition to the donations, you are also getting financial contributions.**

We have an annual fundraiser, which is going on right now. Basically we are raising funds for a year-from-now's program, because we're now working off the last fundraiser. We do some grant funding.

Besides a little bit through United Way, we take no government funding, because the Board specifically did not want a strict regulation put on everything we do. That is the reason for that. They wanted to be able to say that we can help with this much for prescription cost and to operate the pantry this way. If you get into a lot of government funding then you have all the regulation of where you can do what with what. The Board wanted to be able to help were necessary without being restrained.

**These resources come in—whether it is food for the pantry or clothes—and then you make them available to your clients at a minimal cost.**

No, my clients are completely different. If you think of this store, it is a thrift store. Think of a Salvation Army, think of Goodwill. Anyone can come in from anywhere and purchase anything. But, if I have someone who comes in the door who says 'I need some clothes but I don't



have any money' or they'll come over with a referral form from Social Services saying 'I need some clothing, they've referred me here,' they get them for free. There is no cost.

**And you mentioned that there is a voucher system. How does that work?**

Nine times out of ten someone will come in with a voucher in hand from another agency. We work closely with Catholic Charities, Department of Social Services, Salvation Army—and they no longer have

done. And that is for reporting back to the Board.

**Functioning as a store, the money that is being made then goes right back into your programs?**

Yes. The money that is made goes right back into all of our programs. Of course we have to keep the lights on. But we get a lot of fundraising funds too. We also have money for, as I said: gas vouchers, prescription vouchers, shut-off notices, bus tokens. They give scholarships. I think



a thrift store here. So they'll refer people over either by call, e-mail or writing and say 'So-and-so is coming, I need you to give them these items.' And then I voucher them. I actually have to keep track of what I have done, put it on a voucher and submit it to the front desk so at the end of the year we can tally everything we have

they are up to four scholarships a year to Geneva high school seniors. Operation Merry Christmas, which has grown to, I believe, easily \$8,000. Which again doesn't sound like a lot, but a lot of the food that we use I am able to buy through Foodlink.



**You have a lot going on here.**

An awful lot going on [*laughs*].

**I'm trying to figure out which part I want to talk about next. Let's talk about the scholarships. Those are for Geneva high school seniors and that goes for covering college tuition?**

It is for college, to cover book and those expenses that come up. And we give them a check. They apply. This is operated by the Board. We have a Board of approximately twenty people of the Geneva community. We have a banker on the Board, we have a CPA on the Board, we have a woman who works with Geneva Housing on the Board. Will Dobbin, who owned Vance Metal, he has been on the Board forever. He got me my computer.

**I bet he gave you the metal sign out front for the rededication. That looks like a Vance Metal sign** [disclosure: Vance Metal donated a metal sign to the Finger Lakes Film Festival, which geneva13 co-sponsors].

Yes, the one outside on the wall. Yes. But the students, it goes by application. The applications go out to all the Geneva schools, the students apply, and then the Board selects four. And they are actually written checks for the students to use however.

**So, then for the prescription vouchers, how does that work?**

I have a voucher relationship with Rite-Aid downtown. We used to have one with Wal-Mart, but Wal-Mart quit doing it. You know, Wal-Mart has just gotten so big, they've got so much going on, and

they quit doing the voucher system with everybody. And Wal-Mart is way up there [on the far side of town], Rite-Aid is right down here. And so many of my clients are on foot. So we have a voucher relationship where the person comes in, shows me the prescription, we write out the voucher up to a certain amount of money, they take it down there, Rite-Aid fills it and they bill me. That works fine.

We also have formula and diapers available thanks to a group of Baptist women. I spoke with them about three years ago and even though they have disbanded, every month they bring me \$50 for formula and diapers. So we are able to keep things on hand.

**You mentioned the annual fundraising drive that is going on right now. How is that going? Are the numbers down this year, given the economic downturn's effect on our community? Ellen at Catholic Charities mentioned that their fundraising was down compared to last year.**

I don't know yet, because we're still in the midst of it. So far, so good. I can't give you a dollar amount because I just don't know. But I am finding that people are more generous this year. I don't know what it is. I don't know if it is because the Board is making more of an effort to get the word out there. Some people come in and say 'Wow, I never even knew you were here.' And that is the thing, we are so out of the way. But I think they are beginning to realize that so much is going on down here.

**Have you always been in this building?**

We came back to this building. This building, they had just escaped from [*laughs*] the year I started. There was apparently



what they call an icehouse, a brick icehouse, attached to the building, and that wall started to crumble. It became dangerous to be here. So when I started, they had just moved over—everything was in boxes—down on Canal Street.

*[Brief interruption during which I get drafted to carrying in a donated television]*

**We were taking about the space and you were mentioning that you were on Canal Street.**

Yes. We went to Canal Street and then the whole Downtown Revitalization Project started and they wanted our building. They want to demolish the building. So they purchased the building, which gave us the money to come back here, get the building back up to par, and move back in. We came back in September 2003. And now we're actually talking and trying to encourage the Board to expand the store *[laughs]*. I said, 'We just need to push out a wall.' Because all of that area right next to us is ours, that was the icehouse.

**Which I am guessing you had torn down, it didn't fall down on its own.**

They had to, the wall was crumbling. It was kind of scary. But this is a good location, the only thing is that it is very out of the way. But when Salvation Army closed, it was like all of sudden people found us, because they were looking for a thrift store. And prices are very minimal here, because most people want to be able to afford their own stuff. They hate to ask me for it. If they can pay 50 cents for a t-shirt instead of asking me, they'll pay 50 cents. So it gives people a little bit of pride. We do try to keep people feeling good about themselves.

**Does the bus service come out here?**

Yes, right at the end of the driveway. And they have filled up a lot of the businesses over here, which is a comforting feeling because we were very alone here. And we've been broken into. If I want to work late, and I'm down in this corner by myself,





it is kind of nice to know that there are people over there. And the gym just took over, and they're open until 8 or 9 o'clock. So there is always somebody around and it is a lot better feeling.

**How many people do you see in a year coming through here in terms of your clients.**

Hold on, I just sent that to my Treasurer for his report. I just wrote it all down [pulling up the information on her computer]... The food pantry alone was just five shy of 10,000. I had predicted 10,000 last year. But a lot of that was the gas. Fuel went so high that people just couldn't do both. Just to give you an idea, in a 12 month period, last year in the food pantry—and this is food and supplies, like toilet tissue, dish soap, hand soap, shampoo, all of that—3540 families, 9995 individuals. And that is equivalent to 89,955 meals given away. Literally, given away. Nobody pays a penny for them. We gave away 99 gas vouchers, 17 prescription vouchers, 26 cans of formula, 21 large packages of diapers, not to mention everything we gave through the pantry also, and 150 store vouchers that totaled just over \$1500 in clothing, based on our prices—and our prices are a fraction of the value. So that is what we did. And our fiscal year runs from May to April.

**Is that an increase from past years?**

A huge increase in the pantry. I mean, I think we were running about an 18% increase and that started, I want to say, by June last year. And it was the gas. We watched the gas go up, and we watched our requests go up. I think one of the most touching things is when I have people come in and sit down there and say 'I

can't believe I am asking you for help, I was donating to you last year.' That's hard. Even in my own family, both of my sons lost wonderful paying jobs within seven days of each other. They are both college educated. So you understand. You get that real feel for 'Gee, it could be me.' But as far as the other emergency assistance, that stays about the same. It doesn't fluctuate a lot because clothes are clothes. I mean, I'm giving out more formula, giving more diapers. Formula cost \$12 a can. In addition, there is one more thing I do here, I give out half of an emergency fund through the churches, through the Inter-Faith Church community. I share the fund and we are given through their treasurer X number of dollars every few months to help with rental issues, utility shut-off notices. One day I purchased some kerosene for someone's kerosene heater. We've bought eyeglasses for an elderly woman who didn't have glasses or funds. You just never know what you are going to be asked for. What we try to do is bring people full-circle without them having to waste a lot of steps because most everybody is on foot. So someone might come in here looking for something and I will call all the other agencies and we'll get everything going so that they know where they are going and what they are doing. It saves a lot of time on everybody's part.

**That makes a lot of sense. You've been here for nine years. Did you start as a volunteer?**

No. I'll tell you, it was fate [laughs]. I used to work for Applied Graphic Technologies in downtown Rochester. I was their HR manager. I lost my job as a direct result of 9/11. All of our corporate offices were in New York City and after that happened they pulled all the outlying





financial positions back into New York and let everybody else go. So the finance person and myself, we both lost our jobs. I could have been working. I was interviewing with different places in Rochester and I just didn't like what I was seeing. So I was home for one month and, I don't know how I got a hold of the *Finger Lakes Times*, because I live in Williamson and it is not easily delivered over there. And there was an ad for food pantry manager/resource coordinator for X number of hours a week. And I applied and was interviewed on Presidents Day. That night, the Board President called me and he said 'We want you.' And I said, 'OK, when?' and he said 'Tomorrow!' [laughs]. But I came over here and interviewed and I walked into this mess. In my job before, I had worked with a lot of people at RIT, they were the cream of the crop. My bosses made a quarter of a million dollars a year. And I walked into this huge mess in a place that they had just literally taken boxes over and dumped them into this other office. I walked in thinking 'Oh my

gosh!' and I walked out of there thinking 'I can do this.' And I think it is the best thing that has ever happened to me, because I went from working with the cream of the crop—you know, very uppity, 'Oh my education is from RIT or wherever'—to people off the street coming in... I have one woman who is in here all the time and finally one day I said 'What do you want today?!' and she said 'I just came for a hug.' And I think of that... My husband and I are divorced and I think, if he knew now that I was literally hugging people who came off the street, he wouldn't believe it. It is funny how things change. But it is good for my heart to be here. And everyone says 'You're so good at what you do' but it comes very natural to me, because I like to help people, I have a lot of customer service experience—we owned a marina for years—and some of the people I meet here are better people than I've ever worked with in my life.

And when people come in here with a request, if I can't give it to them, at least I can give them something and it is more



than what they had. We might have someone come in and ask for, oh I don't know, funds for something and I won't have it, but what can I do to make it easier? 'Can I give you a gas voucher? Can we give you some food? What can we do to ease up your budget so you can pay for this?' And that usually works just fine.

**Many of our readers will be aware of the Center of Concern, but not all of them might be aware of all of the programs here. What can people do to help out? If somebody reads this and wonders 'What can I do?' What would you say to them?**

Year-round, we need food. Salvation Army is always saying 'Food doesn't take a holiday.' Food is not one day of the year or one season. People are very, very generous between Halloween and the first of the year. My toughest time of the year is the summer. We need food in the summer because kids are home from school and these are the kids who get two meals a day in their school and then all of a sudden mom and dad are suppose to provide it. Food year round, donations year round. Whether it is your clothing, your time, your money, but just remember that people need help year-round. As for food, people ask 'What do you want?' Think of children. What will children eat? Peanut butter and jelly. Macaroni and cheese. Anything to fill their stomachs. Finally, we want to let people know that we are very, very grateful. We know that people are often giving what they don't have, especially this year. We've had a huge response to our Christmas program this year. Where last year I felt that people were kind of complacent, but because I think everybody is hurting, they aren't complacent anymore. You know, we're all realizing 'Oh, maybe we have it a little bit better than that other person.'

For more information, contact Geneva Center of Concern:  
58 Avenue D  
Geneva, NY 14456  
Phone: 315-789-1117





The Geneva #6: Giving more without spending more  
OR  
Christmas Fun Facts

When I sat down to write this I had the idea that I would go on about how Christmas had turned into a rabid, heartless consumer orgy. I planned on talking about how we should get back to the basics of the charity of Christmas and focus less on the material consumerism locust swarm.

Naturally, to this end, I was interested in referencing the origins of Christmas.

Well.

I have a treat for you.

Like most Christian holidays, the origins of Christmas are a primordial stew of Pagan rituals spiced up (or unspiced, as the case may be) with Christian themes. A prevailing theory is that Christmas was built on the foundations of the Roman holiday: Saturnalia. Saturnalia celebration Saturn, god of harvest, husbandry, and thrift.

While gift giving in Rome was eventually between all Roman citizens, it was originally an obligation placed on the undesirable citizens of Rome to bring gifts and offerings to the Emperor.

Also during Saturnalia, a "Lord of Misrule" was appointed. This person would be lavished with gifts and feasts. The Lord of Misrule was responsible for the festival's antics of debauchery, and lawlessness. This sounds like a nice little setup for the Lord of Misrule, until the end of the festival, at which time he was sacrificed on Saturn's altar.

This type of behavior was recorded up to the 3rd century.

All this makes me think: Christmas nowadays... not so bad.

Here's a moderately abridged timeline as I see it:

Saturnalia-Sacrifice	Wassailing
THEN I-----I NOW	
Impromtu cage match for the last Tickle-Me-Elmo doll	



We've come a long way.

So.

First, let's take a moment to pat each other on the back for not nominating the other for Lord of Misrule.

Thanks.

OK.

Now that that's done, let's continue down the path of improving our (Insert your favorite winter gift giving holiday here).

One major thing that you can do: Do all of your shopping locally.

Buying your presents locally not only allows you to give a nice thoughtful gift while removing yourself from the consumer-mongering of Wal-Mart and Best Buy, but also it gives an economic boost to the local businesses.

And remember- local isn't just Geneva, local is everywhere. If you have a sister in Idaho, consider doing some research on where she lives and buying a gift from her local area. Not only are you possibly giving a more thoughtful gift, but spreading the idea of shopping locally. While spending money in Geneva is great, trucking gifts cross-country is not the sustainable path.

In short: Keep buying local.

While at first buying gifts locally may seem restrictive, you may find that the limitations invoke your creative genius in the same way that writing poetry within the confines of a set structure opens pathways of thought which may have gone otherwise unexplored.

Until next time,  
Your Prince des Sots,

-8-



# domestic incident

annie greenwood

I read that a spontaneous memorial of teddy bears and flowers had appeared at the murder site.

On the way to pick up my own daughter from school, I turned left onto North Street. I sensed it was close to us. I knew I would see it. I thought, "Maybe it's one of these run-down houses that seem from the outside to be filled with the desperate, poor, or criminal." No. Forget the stereotypes. It's a pretty, clean, middle-class house. It's that small, tidy, glowingly white house, the one full of long elegant bay windows, with the crime scene tape across the porch, and a small, dingy collection of bears and wilted flowers hunched together in the cold.

Who left these gifts? Who are they for?

Everyone is dead.

Violent crime seems to be on the upswing in Geneva. At least it is on my own personal radar. In the last five days, a friend was chased, jumped, beaten and robbed on a Friday night in Pulteney Park, and now this: a double-murder in my own neighborhood.

When I hear about a violent crime, I want more information. Mother, 34, worked at the Outlet Mall. Daughter, 7th-grader, former cheerleader. Both stabbed to death by mother's boyfriend, an ex-con formerly incarcerated for 3 years for some kind of assault involving an infant. The two bodies discovered by 14-year-old brother.

More information never helps. It just produces more questions, and more layers of agony. Was there an argument first? Did she know about his criminal background? What kind of assault ... what infant? Why was he out of prison? Is this about poverty? Was he on drugs? What? What HAPPENED? WHY? WHAT is WRONG with my TOWN?

But I can't find anyone to talk to me about this. Everyone wants to avert their ears.

When I first heard, my mind went straight to those other two, one of them a Geneva middle-school girl raped, murdered, and left behind a dumpster, in 2003. The other left to burn in a building. That horror, I thought I would never forget, but maybe I did. Then, I remembered that young man shot in front of his home on Genessee Street—the town's knee-jerk responses (curfews, neighborhood watch militias), at first all offense and no defense.

The same day as I learned of the recent murders, sitting in the Water Street diner, a flyer on the window pleads, "Missing Child."



I too feel the impulse to reach out, but to whom? I want to cry, to grieve, but—I didn't know them. Though I try to. I try to picture a female twenty-something Waterloo Outlet Mall retail clerk, but they all blur together into brown hair and a helpful smile. I try to remember my own 12-year-old middle-school self, but I only come up whole and happy, not stabbed to death. I try to picture a 14-year-old brother discovering their bodies: what must he have seen? Was he alone? How can he cope, as a lone survivor? My body is rigid, shivering, choked with sorrow. No, with rage. Which is it?

Those bears and flowers made me sick.

Only days after the murders, the Geneva Chief of Police Frank Payne was quoted as saying, "We want to assure the city of Geneva that it is safe here. This was definitely a domestic incident." Yeah, right. Think again, Chief. Does the fact that it was a "domestic incident" mean it's not about public safety? The fact that it was a domestic incident is what makes it so scary: we are not safe in our own homes.

Random Act of Violence. One Time Occurrence. Comparatively Rare. Sure. You can tell yourself these things. But domestic violence is the second leading cause of death for women ages 20-25. It's the fifth leading cause of death for women 25-35. It's the number one cause of injury to women, worldwide. Outside of medical complications, homicide is the number one killer of pregnant women. Such figures are even higher for women of color.

Adding insult to their injuries, the culture blames women for their own victimization. "He's bad news. Why doesn't she leave?" In up to 75% of intimate partner homicide cases, the victim had shown signs of independence, such as filing for an injunction or divorce, or breaking up with their partners. How about asking this: Why do men keep doing it? Why does he always hit again? Why do we keep raising boys to be violent? To confuse the line between love and hate? That hitting and killing are play?

One in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. 85% of domestic violence victims are women. Most cases of domestic violence are never even reported to the police. As a mother of two daughters, I am terrorized by statistics. As a mother of two daughters, I take this crime personally.

Can you love a town enough to keep it safe?

Postscript: If you are interested in battling domestic violence in your community, consider making a donation or volunteering for one of the following organizations:

Rape and Abuse Crisis Service of the Finger Lakes 315-536-9654 or on the web at <http://www.fcsfl.org/index.html>

Family Counseling Service of the Finger Lakes (315) 789-2613 or on the web at <http://www.rapeandabusecrisisfingerlakes.org/>



HEADLESS SULLIVAN THEATER PRESENTS

# PUGILIST SPECIALIST

A PLAY BY ADRIANO SHAPLIN



FRIDAY, JANUARY 29  
SATURDAY, JANUARY 30  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5  
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6

MISSION START TIME: 8PM

TICKETS (\$5) AVAILABLE  
AT AREA RECORDS  
& AT THE DOOR

HEADLESSSULLYWORDPRESS.ORG  
427/429 EXCHANGE STREET





# and a beer in a tree.

matt werts

I don't know if I need to explain this, but I work at the post office as a mailman (I'm the nerdy guy with black-framed glasses who eats at Wegmans all the time and gets coffee at The Coffee Shop almost every day; I also probably look like I hate my job while I'm actually doing it). The reason I bring that up is that it's Christmas, so it's an extremely busy time. I'm working my ass off and who knows, by the time this issue hits the streets, I may have been buried alive under Amazon boxes and mis-addressed holiday letters. The only thing that's getting me through the insanity is sweet, sweet Christmas music! I know some people loathe Christmas music, and even I can't handle "Last Christmas" or "Feed The World" or any version of "Santa Baby". But how can you argue with Vince Guaraldi or John Denver & the Muppets? Even the absolute crappiest, schmalziest, most hideous holiday garbage is amazing. Like that one song where the woman sings "a baby changes everything" over and over, and there's a part where she's talking about a girl and how she's never touched her boyfriend? It's unbelievable. It'll give the warm fuzzies to your gag reflex and then make your brain explode. If that's not your thing, maybe you'll like this list of some of my favorite holiday songs that are maybe too weird and outsider-ish to make it onto the playlists of Sunny 102, Warm 101.3, etc. Happy Holidays!

## Alan Vega - "No More Christmas Blues"

Alan Vega was/is the singer for a band called Suicide and on at least one occasion, he whipped a giant chain at audience members while they hid behind over-turned nightclub tables (see also: an infamous 1978 show in Brussels with Elvis Costello). His voice, however, is rarely that aggressive. It's often warbly and breathy with a strange ache, landing somewhere between a '50s romantic and a desperate pervert. His heart pumps endless love and his brain pumps something else. On "No More Christmas Blues", Vega tries to maintain during yet another rough holiday, and it's hard not to be sympathetic, even while you're slightly weirded out. Also, for those who enjoy the synths on Paul McCartney and Wings' "Wonderful Christmastime", but have serious issues with its overall cheery vibe, this might be a little more your speed.

## Caetano Veloso - "In The Hot Sun of a Christmas Day"

I love this song for a variety of reasons, but the two biggest are the string sections and the fact that it's about being chased by men with machine guns. Possibly based on a true story? Veloso is somewhat famous as one of the founders of the Tropicalia movement, and for being imprisoned by the repressive Brazilian government for being too cool and revolutionary. This song is so good, I almost wish it wasn't a Christmas song, just so I could listen to it all year round without feeling like I'm breaking the rules.



### King Diamond - "No Presents For Christmas"

You might know King Diamond as the singer for Mercyful Fate, or maybe as a guy who looks evil but who often sounds like a muppet. Or maybe you have a really good friend who can sing along to most or all of Abigail on long car-rides, and now recognize King Diamond as an unimpeachable genius. I haven't listened to this song in a while, but I know there's a part where he sings "Santa needs a helping haaaaannndd!" Lord help me, I hope some metalheads are reading this. You don't see the words "Christmas riffs" very often, but here's a situation where you will see them, and hear them.

### Claudine Longet - "Snow"

For years I only knew the name Claudine Longet from the phrase "accidentally shot by Claudine Longet" (it's a pretty weird story, look it up). After hearing her wispy, kitty-kat vocals on "Snow", I can't even imagine her holding a gun, then pointing it, then firing it. I can only imagine her standing alone in the living room of a chalet, gazing out onto snow-covered mountains, a tear rolling down her face. At one point she sings, "our dreams lay buried in the snow". Brutal! And at the same time, cute and lovely.

### AKIM & the Teddy Vann Production Company - "Santa Claus is a Black Man"

As the artist Derek Erdman once noted, this song is worth it just for the opening "Hey!" Everything else you might need to know is right there in the title, although maybe I should also point out that this song will kill you with adorableness (adorability? adorable-osity?). You can find this on the very special *A John Waters Christmas* compilation, along with Rudolph and Gang's "Here Comes Fatty Claus" and Little Cindy's "Happy Birthday Jesus (A Child's Prayer)". In the liner notes, Waters talks about hunting for the AKIM single his whole life and finally buying it on eBay "at a great deal of personal expense". He also calls it "the motherload of crackpot Xmas carols". That seems a bit harsh, but I'm sure he meant it in a good way.

### Bob & Doug McKenzie - "The Twelve Days of Christmas"

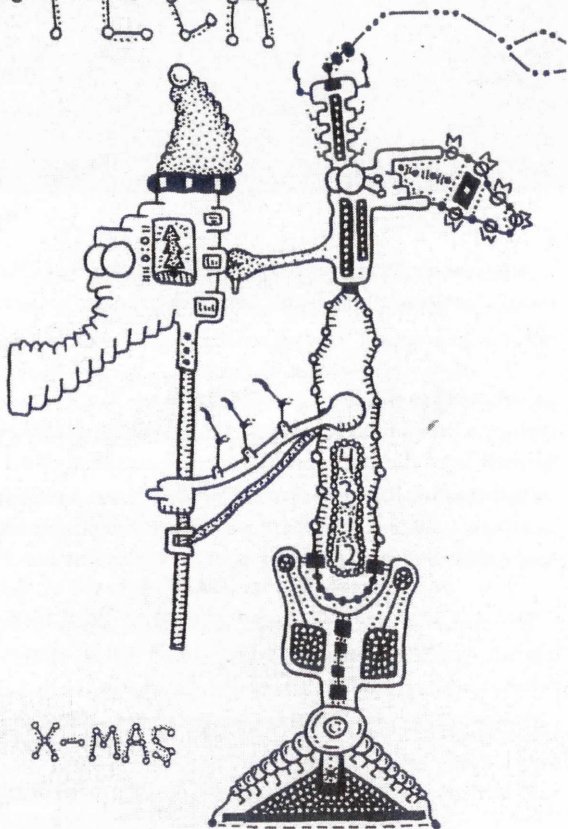
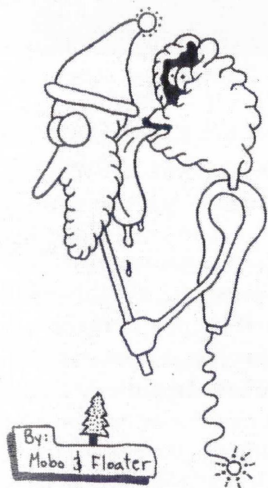
This is still the only funny Christmas song that will be funny forever. I usually lose it around the 3:08 mark when they start singing too fast and get to the "five golden toques" part too early. No wait, I lose it like 5 seconds in when Doug says "snow". This is on their *Great White North* album, which also features a collaboration with Geddy Lee of Rush. If you don't own it or at least love it with all of your being, I don't know what to tell you. We probably can't be friends? No, we can still be friends. I want to watch *Strange Brew* now.

### Crom-Tech - "O-Climtwist Tree"

Crom-Tech were a duo from D.C. who played spazzy, shouty punk that was also jazzy and shreddy and awesome. They made up their own language of sorts, with words like "ixor stix", "kramtil", and "norplexoxix", and their art was always cartoon-ish and bizarre. They seemed like they could've been on crazy drugs, but I like to believe they were just operating on a much higher level than me or you (no offense). I heard a story about some house show they played where Ian MacKaye was totally going nuts and yelling

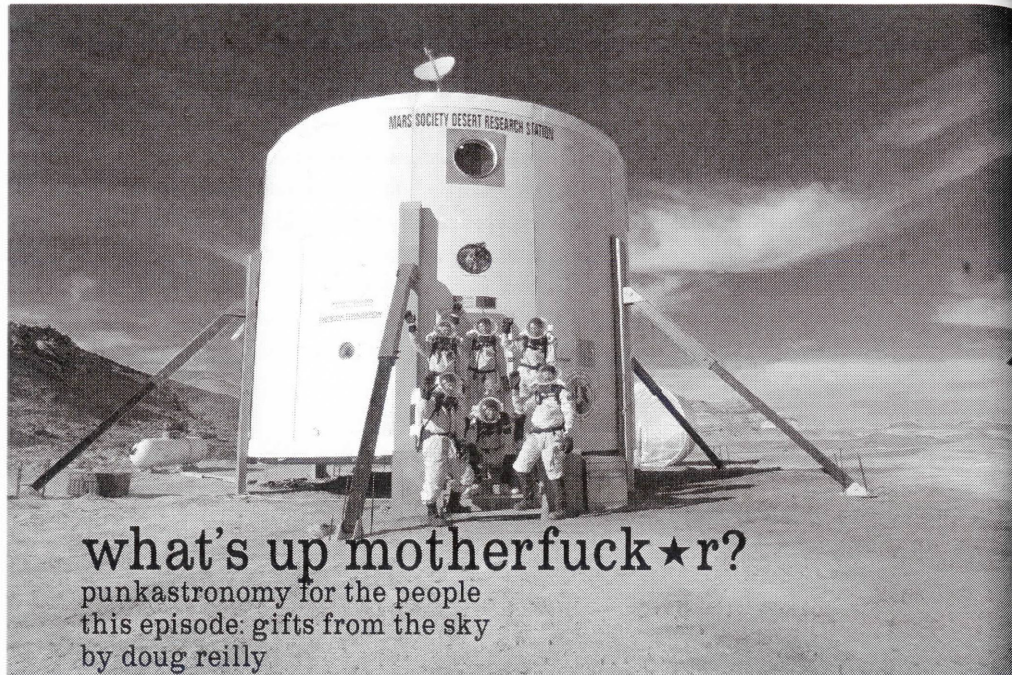
and dancing. I can't remember where I heard that. Maybe it was in Jeff Winterberg's *Rat-a-tat-tat Birds*? Anyways, on their *Crom-Tech X-Mas 7*", you get 12 holiday songs in 10 and a half minutes. Every song sounds like it was recorded in one take off the tops of their heads, and "O-Climtwist Tree", their take on "Oh Tannenbaum", features a brief surfy reverb part that's hilarious for reasons I can't really explain. This record will make you happier than you've ever been in your life, though, no joke!

# CROM-TECH



## CROM-TECH X-MAS





## what's up motherfuck★r?

punkastronomy for the people  
this episode: gifts from the sky  
by doug reilly

I.

Every time you drink a glass of water, or pause by a clear creek to breath and listen and feel the coolness of the water emanating up, you're literally appreciating a gift from the sky.

Compared to the other planets, Earth has more water, a challenge scientists have been trying to explain for some time. The current narrative runs something like this. Earth formed from the sun's accretion disk (basically a cloud of stuff left over from the sun's own formation) around about 4.5 billion years ago. Soon after, just as earth was starting to get comfortable in its skin, another planet, about the size of Mars, came rolling in and collided with the young earth.

The impact threw up a large amount of debris from both the earth and the other planet, which astronomers have named Theia, after a Greek Titan who birthed the Moon goddess, Selene. Thank the Greeks for such a diverse and confusing pantheon that almost any astronomical object can get a name that befits it.

Then, in a matter of 100 years, all that junk coalesced into the moon. Had a person been on earth at the time, they may have actually seen the debris filled sky clear over their lifetime as the moon slowly grew.

Of course that person would be too busy suffocating from a very hot noxious mix of rock vapor created by the impact, and burning up from the 500° temperature to really appreciate the sky much. The device of time-travel, let's move on. The impact of Theia, if that's what really happened, was a gift in disguise, like a slap on the face that keeps

you from doing something stupid. That rock vapor atmosphere helped the early earth retain the water released by the Theia's impact, and kept the pressure high enough to allow for oceans of liquid water despite the intense heat.

The second theory explaining how the earth became the lovely, wet world we love so much is similarly violent: earth's water supply was bolstered over prehistory by repeated impacts of comets, which of course are big dirty snowballs originating from the farther reaches of the solar system. Other inner planets may have been similarly subject to impacts from comets (and the idea is that there were far more of them in the earlier epochs of the solar system) but Earth had the mechanisms to retain that water. Mars, for example, has been losing water and atmosphere for a very long time, blown away on the solar wind.

## II.

In many ways, Punkastronomy has always been about the gift of the sky. Earth has an amazing window into the universe. A relatively transparent atmosphere in a relatively transparent part of the galaxy. Other locations (where rents are probably much cheaper) would not create a very interesting sky. Giant dust clouds, or the centers of dense star clusters where the sky would be very pretty, but not very diverse, just a field of blazingly bright jewels.

On earth, you can look up and see, with your own eyes and no telescope, another galaxy, millions of light-years away, the light your eyes are collecting having started its journey from that galaxy of stars the same number of years ago. Things near and far can delight; the other night I saw a shooting star, which of course is one of the nearest astronomical events we can observe, being a small piece of something falling into the earth's atmosphere and burning up. Again, violence with a subtle gift.

I've seen thousands of shooting stars, which kind of boggles my mind when I meet people that haven't seen a single one. Anyway, in spite of all I've seen, that one little shooting star punctuated a brief and very cold observing session in my driveway. I can't exactly describe the feeling of that. Many of the things we observe change not-at-all (in our limited earthling perception of time) or change only quite subtly night to night. But a shooting star is a single moment in time, something humans have evolved to understand all too well.

The feeling was a cocktail of delight, peace, and joy, a sense that despite what the radio keeps trying to convince me every hour on the hour, the world is still a place where beautiful things happen. I suspect that if scientists studied the brain to see what was happening in the mind of an astronomical observer, they'd find similar results to people eating *crème brulée*, standing on top of a tall mountain, or holding their infant child for the first time.

## III.

The sky holds the promise of other gifts as well, and ironically these gifts continue the theme of creative destruction that must be part of the universe's code.



The atomic age and the space age share the same origin: the German V1 rocket crafted by Werner Von Braun as a weapon of vengeance to be used against Great Britain. Thus the British were the first to experience war from space, as the V1s arced into the upper atmosphere, touched space, and arced back down to rain random destruction on London. Von Braun had bigger plans for the rocket, but anyway I suppose the Nazis had the money and labor (in the form of Jewish prisoners) and the willingness to put these resources behind the project. After the war, the United States “acquired” Von Braun and brought him to the US along with dozens of captured V1 rockets. One of those rockets took the first photograph of earth from space in 1947 New Mexico.

Those first rockets held out both a threat—combined with the new power of the atomic bomb, of global destruction—and a promise—to free humanity from the bounds of earth’s atmosphere, to allow it to go where it has long tried to reach with its imagination. Space. Literally, the final frontier.

The idea of the frontier is likely deeply rooted in human prehistory. Our brains are hard-wired with the ability to project ourselves forward into new situations. Prehistoric human had to imagine her form on the other side of the river before wading in and figuring out how to swim. Our ability (or even tendency) to project ourselves into the future probably made the empty spaces where people weren’t, particularly attractive. Early human history is a tale of migration, and who knows what motivated the first migrants to leave the Great Rift Valley all those millennia ago.

Frontiers represent, among other things, a clean slate. Human civilizations have a tendency to stagnate, for power to both coagulate into the hands of a few and of course, corrupt, and history is replete with examples of groups going off on their own to try to get it right, this time. The promise of a frontier is in the challenges it poses to survival, a new set of parameters to adjust to. People actually eschew comfort for situations that place them in life and death situations. The value in that has to be in more than the thrill of the hunt or the chase.

The frontier of space held out a similar promise. There’s a long tradition of thinkers looking off-world for answers to central problems in the human condition. A common theme in science fiction is that, finally free of the Earth’s tangle of suffocating traditions, and faced with all those new challenges, people will be forced to innovate new ways of being and associating. It’s the next step in evolution, and these thinkers will be forgiven for thinking the earthbound humans are in too much of a mess to think straight. I go back to that momentary sensation of possibility and beauty when watching a shooting star.

To make up for its paucity of water, Mars has captured more than its share of utopian/dystopian speculation. Among the best of the Martian chronicles are the three books by Kim Stanley Robinson, *Red Mars*, *Blue Mars*, and *Green Mars*, the colors representing the phases of Mars’ terraformation (earth-making) in human hands, as water is freed from below the planet’s surface and plant life spreads across the red desserts.

Robinson proposes that humans on Mars will revisit the many political and economic arrangements of the past and develop new ones to suit their new reality. And, while discussion on Earth gets mired down in ideology and paranoia, on Mars the necessity of the moment focuses and clarifies human motivations.

One of the many developments Robinson proposes is the formation of a "gift economy" that governs the distribution of non-necessities. The idea of a gift economy, which several Earth cultures have experimented with, is that social capital is gained not by how much you retain, but rather by how much you give away. Some of the indigenous groups of the American northwest practiced a gift economy in the form of pot-latch, ceremonies where wealthy families would gather friends and relations and give as much away as they can. Interestingly, pot-latch was deemed by the early white invaders of the area as public enemy number one. It sounds harmless enough, but for some reason it provoked a deep reaction, probably because it threw the Calvinist ideals of the "settlers" into such disarray, challenging the very basis for economics (accumulation) as well as the idea of private property. Anyway, they vigorously outlawed pot-latch ceremonies.

Robinson resuscitates them on Mars. Social capital as well as personal happiness is increased by trying to match the people around you with the things that they need to be creative and productive. To thrive, in other words. And the gift economy doesn't get mired down in discussions about altruism vs. selfishness. The gift is both. Like a year's enrollment in the Jelly of the Month Club, it keeps on giving.

Robinson's books are a fascinating thought experiment, and highly recommended. But lest you think it's all just fictional daydreaming, there are thousands of Americans who have already "gone" to Mars. Members of the Mars Society, for example, maintain "stations" in Mars-like places in Utah and Arctic Canada, and try to live as explorers would on Mars (see the image that began this installment.) They're not (just) role-playing...their research is helping NASA work through real issues they anticipate on the Red Planet's surface. And the society hosts a growing web community called New Mars, where people discuss—earnestly—every issue they could think of that might confront human settlers on Mars, from political organization to drinking water to educational systems to urban planning. The conversations are focused, creative and full of good ideas.

What strikes me, venturing into the forum on political organization, is how free the conversation is. Free in terms of the horizons people are willing to consider and also free from acrimony you'd find on any other forum. Participants bandy about all sorts of ideas drawn from anarchism on one end to libertarianism on the other, and everything in between. They refer to Earth-bound examples but are quick to recognize the new context. There are frequent references to Mars as the "clean slate." You sense the Mars Society members recognize in Mars an autonomous space to try again to get things right, a way to circumvent chronic problems and bad institutions by simply leaving them behind.

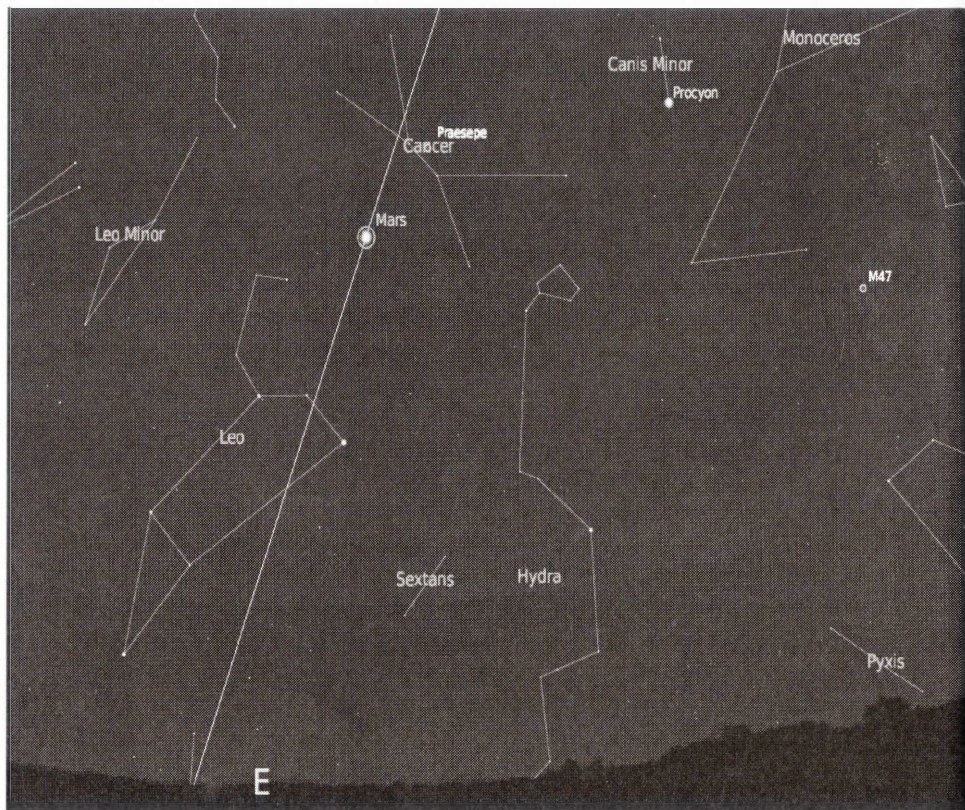


Sometimes I get challenged for being an enthusiastic supporter of space exploration. There's more pressing things to spend our money on, the argument goes. And certainly there are higher priorities at the moment. But sell off an aircraft carrier, for god's sake, and keep us pushing out into that frontier. The dividend is not in tech spin-offs or space tourism or national security—it's in ideas and the autonomy to perfect ourselves.

#### IV.

What do you imagine is the potential for Mars? You can see Mars yourself, every clear night this fall and winter, rising due east in the late evening now, though it will rise earlier and climb higher as the winter goes on. Mars is just off of Leo the Lion's snout. It's bright, and it's obviously orange, and no, it isn't every going to appear as large as the full Moon unless you're on a space ship on an intercept orbit. Through binoculars Mars will transform appearance from a bright star to a tiny orange disk. Through a modest telescope you can see the Northern polar ice cap and even some of the surface features, like the largest volcano in the solar system, Olympus Mons.

Check it out for yourself, show your kids, and imagine a group of humans there, struggling to survive, to get along with each other, to live long and prosper on a precarious planet. It's the same situation that we are in here on Earth, in fact, but there, in our minds and in our public speculations, our precariousness is laid bare, and we are truly free to chart our course.



# Tales of Glee: the Swansons

k-d- 12/09

Where are we  
going to spend  
the holidays  
this year?



My family.  
Not with  
your family.



Why not?



Your dad is loud  
and gaseous. Your  
mom can't cook  
and your brother  
drinks too much.



But what about your  
sister's restraining  
order against me?



You can stay  
in the car.



k-d-



# geneva13 gear



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Prove your smashing good taste.

Show your community pride.

One color: None More Black.

Sizes S, M, L, XL.

Tees: \$15 Hoodies. \$30

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## why geneval3?

Because 12 and 14 are square and inhibited. Because 13 is forlorn and melancholy, with just a hint of anti-authoritarian panache. 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 by state, ours was number 13. We've since found more, but reserve the right to not change the name of our zine.

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## geneval3: end-matter manifesto

Geneval3 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.

Geneval3'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.

Geneval3 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.

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## give the gift of giving: submit to Geneva13!

This is your town and this is your zine. Contribute to them both. Send us your art, photographs, drawings, poetry, rants and ramblings. You can e-mail them to us at [mail@geneva13.com](mailto:mail@geneva13.com) or mail them to PO Box 13, Geneva, NY 14456 and make Myra do some work at the post office. She is pretty awesome. And so are you.

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