

Having strong friendship helps two UNL students to publish own magazine



By Anne Steyer
Staff Reporter

The real life world of publishing can be a vicious circle. It's dog eat dog out there, and little things like friendship don't stand a chance.

But when UNL students Michael Okerlund and Sean Doolittle got together to create "Vicious Circle," a small press magazine publishing stories about the darker side of life, their friendship is what held it all together.

Okerlund, 20, a junior philosophy major from Cortland, and Doolittle, 21, a senior English major from Norris, have turned their shared love of reading into a business venture. "Vicious Circle," published by their new company, Garlic Press, features horror, science fiction and dark fantasy. But in the first issue, horror is the obvious winner.

"The magazine has stories with traditional trappings, others that do not, but have horrific undercurrents," Doolittle said.

"Supernatural, too," Okerlund added. They said they have known each other most of their lives, and the staying influence of their relationship is obvious.

But their friendship didn't take off until they came to college, they said.

"Sean scared me in high school," Okerlund said with a laugh.

But eventually his view changed.

"We realized we were each a little more interesting than the other had previously thought," Doolittle said, "and now Michael is in my wedding."

The magazine's evolution moved from the "wouldn't it be neat" stage to actual solicitation of manuscripts, to editing and finally publish-

ing. They started talking about it last October, and the magazine went to press the first week in February.

"It all went down really fast," Doolittle said. The total cost, without postage, ran about \$350.

They typeset the whole magazine themselves on Okerlund's MacIntosh and did their own paste-up. They sent it off to a printer, and it came back square bound without staples on glossy cardstock.

Okerlund said they read 200 to 250 submissions, some from as far away as England, before narrowing it down to the 10 fiction pieces and 10 poems that were published in Vicious Circle.

He said the narrowing down wasn't all that difficult because "some were just plain bad."

They spent a lot of time searching for a name for the magazine, Okerlund said.

"We wanted a name that would provide a balance between wonderment and horror, something that reflected the world as we saw it," Doolittle said.

"Mike looked up from the dishwasher one day and said 'Vicious Circle' and I said, 'Ahhh.'"

"Ahhh," Michael echoed with a smile.

Doolittle is the more reserved of the pair, with a calm, self-satisfied smile. He punctuates his comments with an occasional furrowed brow.

Okerlund talks less, but moves about more. His enthusiasm for the magazine translates itself into physical energy.

Okerlund said although his parents supported him, he was nervous about them reading a couple of the pieces in "Vicious Circle." His father is a minister, he said, and some of the printed material has more than a slight religious undertone and many have an obvious sexual undertone as well.

But Okerlund's dad will take it in stride, Doolittle said.

"He's a hip guy," Doolittle said. "He's not your average man of the cloth."



Robin Trimarchi/DN

Michael Okerlund and Sean Doolittle own, operate and edit Vicious Circle.

Magazine makes reader flinch with eerie stories and poems

"Vicious Circle"
Garlic Press

"Vicious Circle: The Magazine that Doesn't Flinch."

So says the inside page of "Vicious Circle," a small press magazine, published by UNL students Sean Doolittle and Michael Okerlund and released last week from Garlic Press publications.

The magazine, printed on high-quality paper with a glossy cover, is filled with strange and wonderful stories that explore the horrific side of humanity.

From the tone of the varied selections, it is obvious the magazine's editors didn't flinch.

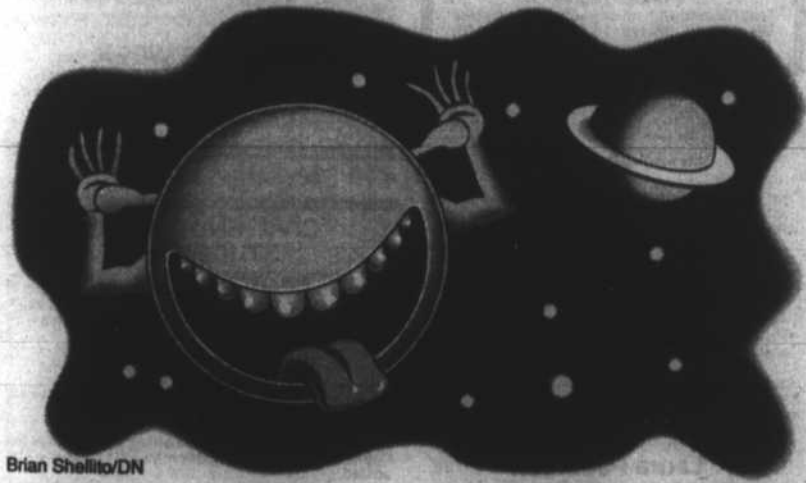
The magazine contains 10 stories ranging from topics such as murder and schizophrenia to alien life forms and things that go bump in the night.

The 10 poetry selections are varied also, with poems talking about dinosaurs, lust, corpses, homicide and the Los Angeles riots.

A few of the selections fly overhead and rereading them doesn't help, either.

But the overall feeling of the magazine inspires an eerie atmosphere — turn the phone off when reading so you don't jump out of your skin when it rings.

— Anne Steyer



Brian Shellito/DN

Rollicking, insane adventures continue in Hitchhiker's Guide's latest installment

book
REVIEW

"Mostly Harmless"
Douglas Adams
Harmony

"Anything that happens, happens. Anything that, in happening, causes something else to happen, causes something else to happen. Anything that, in happening, causes itself to happen again, happens again. It doesn't necessarily do it in chronological order, though."

So begins "Mostly Harmless," writer Douglas Adams' fifth book in what he calls "the increasingly inaccurately named Hitchhiker's Trilogy."

The insane adventures of Arthur Dent and Ford Prefect continue as Adams picks up where he left off in "So Long and Thanks for all the Fish."

Arthur Dent is still trying to find a world to live on that matches up with Earth. His Hitchhiker's Guide is malfunctioning, so he looks for advice from several oracles who spend more time ridiculing him than helping him.

Meanwhile, Ford Prefect returns to the offices of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, only to find that

InfiniDim Enterprises has bought out the Guide and his new job is to write the restaurant column.

Dent eventually finds happiness as a sandwich maker on a remote and Bob-fearing planet, inhabited by primitive people and perfectly normal beasts. Of course, it is just too good to last. During Ford's efforts to save the Guide from InfiniDim, he finds Dent.

The ending is hilarious and unexpected, as you might expect from Adams.

Old characters return and new ones are introduced as Adams keeps the insane humor up to the level of the first four books.

The cynicism and sarcasm of Adams characters, coupled with his mockery of reality, make this book a fine follow-up in the most popular science fiction/humor series ever—a series that spawned a computer game and a British television show.

"Mostly Harmless" is a must for the Hitchhiker's Trilogy fans and could be enjoyed even without reading the rest of the series, since there is so much crazy stuff going on, no one can keep track of it all.

— Joel Strauch

Breaking out of routine can be risky

I really should get out more often. It seems that every day is pretty much the same. Most times I am home only long enough to sleep and shower. To save time, I even cook most of my meals on the job.

Yet every now and then, the desire to break out of the routine slowly builds and gets suppressed until it finally erupts in an ecstasy of release. I skip classes, shun work and run naked in the woods or drink cheap wine and scribble haiku on suburban garage doors until I pass out at dawn.

Well, not exactly. The actual highlight of the entire semester was a brief ice-skating excursion. I'm not much of an ice skater in the first place, and I foolishly waited until the last day before all the lakes thawed.

It came over me one day in a flash—an overwhelming urge to go out and Do Something, to live life fully and strongly and leave behind the sedentary comfort of my room.

Once there, I found about an inch of water covering the ice, which made it even harder to try to skate for the third time in my life. Still, I was caught up in the rapture of the moment and would no longer be a namby-pamby hostage of caution and restraint.

I struck out, flailing and wobbling about, gaining at least 10 feet before each fall. So I got up again. And fell again.

After only a few minutes I was soggy and embarrassed and ready to spend the rest of my days shut away in a quiet, secure house with whiny French novelists and desultory volumes of Kant and Nietzsche surrounding me. My resolve melted in the early spring sun, which bore down upon me with unusual force. Never again would I venture out to Do Something. No, no—the patterned life of order and routine was for me.

Then a little girl about 5 years old zipped past and laughed uproariously as she drenched me with water.

No, no, no, I thought. I would not be beaten down and stumble back into the routine. This was my moment of rapture and release, and I would rise and soar and exult.

I got to my wobbly feet and labored a good 10 yards before falling again and hearing menacing laughter. I looked up and saw them. They formed a pack, dressed in wild costumes and padded to twice their normal size, each with ruddy cheeks and shiny skates: The Hockey Gods.

They slashed, looped and arced across the ice, slapping a puck about and occasionally trying to body check me. I scrambled toward shore but seemed to be moving in slow motion, almost like I had fallen through the ice and was trying to run through the water.

They finally let off and I scrambled to shore, pledging never again to go out into the great world of adventure and excitement but to confine myself instead to the security of order and routine.

Of course, I forgot the pledge not long afterward. Who could be bound

by such petty, hasty oaths when the first hints of spring arrive?

I had not gone out for weeks after the skating incident, but could not restrain myself one day earlier this week. The sun was out, the air was crisp, and my daily two pieces of toast tasted just a little better than usual. I watched the squirrels and the birds frolic in the trees, and knew that this was it—that all life lay ahead of me and that I had only, once again, to go out and Do Something.

I put my homework aside and went outdoors clenching a book by some sappy English Romantic poet. I would commune with the spirits of nature and be visited by one of the Muses.

I fell asleep and woke to find the backs of my pants and shirt soaked in soggy mud. The sappy English guy, too, had become soiled. I was thoroughly chilled and devoid of all inspiration, and I knew then that I most certainly—no matter what people tell me—should not venture out to Do Things.

— Bryan Peterson



David Badders/DN