



THE EMPTY NEST NEWSLETTER

VOL VI NO 3, LATER FEB, '88
"Who Killed Cock robin?"
-- Mother Goose

SSU PROF GASPS LAST

CROAKS WELL ENOUGH TO FOOL 20 PEOPLE, INCLUDING 3 NURSES

Spfd. I never knew I could act, otherwise I'd have hammed it up more, as Becky Veatch warned me I should. The first night of class, "Women & the Mystery Novel," the instructor (the ENWL Ed.) and 4 accomplices: 2 other faculty, a fac. secretary, & a student, staged a murder. The carefully-timed drama was played to an unsuspecting audience, the students in the class, as they assembled. First Phyllis Walden, faculty, brought me in a hamburger & coke, since I'd just got in from Decatur. I thanked her, & began to eat it at 5:55, invited her to stay for a bit of class: I had a table of murder implements in front: guns, crowbars, knives, ax, a clock wired to a bomb, bottles of poison, a plastic bag, pillow, etc., & books about poisons, famous murders, etc. To one side (farside) a tea table w/ water, teapot, etc. A near table w/ class syllabi, etc. At 6, my friend Ginny (the secretary, older than me) came in w/ a plate of cookies for the break (cont on p. 3)



May 3, 1972

Miss Phyllis Walden
314 University Apts. Drive, 4B
Columbia, Missouri

Dear Miss Walden,

It is with deep reluctance and regret that I must write this letter to inform you that your fourth extension for finishing your Ph.D thesis expired on April 29.

We feel we have done everything in our power to help you achieve this final deadline, including many extra hours spent by your thesis advisor and other members of the graduate faculty. The regulations of the University now force us to terminate our educational contract with you. Your request for a fifth extension has not been granted.

We realize that this will no doubt be a blow, and though as of the receipt of this letter you are no longer a Ph.D candidate at our institution, we are granting you the privilege of availing yourself of our psychological counseling service for six months, should you stay in the area, at the lowest rate for non-university personnel. We know you are acquainted with several of the Procrastination Clinic leaders.

Please arrange for non-University housing before the end of this month. You may turn in to my office, by the end of this week, your (a) office key, (b) key to the Graduate Reading Room, and (c) the padlock to your locker in the Intramural/Physical Education Center.

We deeply regret the necessity of taking this action, recognizing the amount of effort (although somewhat scattered) that you have put in over many years. Best wishes for all future endeavors, be they attempts at Ph.D work at another institution, or assays into the workaday world. Should you request, I am sure several of your professors would be happy to write you letters of recommendation. We do appreciate the valuable contributions you have the potential to make, in the academic community and elsewhere. However, at this point we can take no other course than the one we are taking.

I remain most sincerely yours,
Lloyd E. Berry
Dean of the Graduate School

3 documents incriminating Phyllis Walden

DEPOSIT RECORD

Special Account

Marine Bank

ACCOUNT CODE NO. 0-684-22

CHECKS AND OTHER ITEMS ARE RECEIVED FOR DEPOSIT SUBJECT TO THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THIS BANK.

DATE	AMOUNT
May 20 '87	500.00
June 21 '87	500.00
July 20 '87	500.00
Aug 19 '87	500.00
Sept 20 '87	500.00
Oct 21 '87	500.00
Nov 20 '87	500.00
Dec 22 '87	500.00

INSTRUCTIONS INSIDE COVER

FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, A PLACE TO RECORD AUTOMATIC PAYMENTS/DEPOSITS IS LOCATED IN BACK.

J -
Sorry the money is late this month
P



Bebit This picture of WJD, silo filling, was found by JJ in the Dougan attic, that treasure trove of memorabilia, last fall, in sorry shape. Some of you got a copy for Xmas. It shows the authentic "Clims of This Farm": Bill Behling's editorial on Ronald left out the first aim, then added an "a" to the last. Somehow, "life" seems to me to be slightly different, & better, & deeper, in meaning than "a life." I will be glad to debate philologists & philosophers on this point.

The chute you can (I hope) see on the r. is similar to one around behind the silo, down which Ronald fell, at age 12, not just to the barn floor, on which WJD is standing, but all the way down to the cement floor of the lower cowbarn, breaking both his heels, & luckily not his neck. (He fell from the very TOP.) If you visit the Round Barn now (& do, & take gr-gr-grandchildren before it's too late) you'll see it's signed -- "W. J. Dougan."

LAST GASP, Con't from front page

S.S.U., 1st night class giving me a special cookie which I promptly ate: she then put tray on tea table, came back to Phyllis & me, & a student or two I knew, & Phyllis admired a handsome necklace. Ginny got all coy, she'd got it from a new man in her church, a lawyer from Boston; she was dating, AT HER AGE! he wanted her to come to Boston & meet his mother, Jackie, you met him at the New Years Eve party, didn't you think he was nice, but he's 10 years younger than me! And we all assumed Ginny that that was de rigueur these days. (Karl, you heard Ginny being Tom Sawyer's Aunt Polly, on the tape we made at WHA, & you & Marv pricked up your ears. She's a FINE actress -- was Emily D in "The Belle of Amherst" a few years ago - so we had one pro.) Then G. complained of a fierce headache - anyone have any aspirin? I offered some in my purse (G rejected a student offer), Ginny goes to my purse, discovers a letter to me in it, in her sweetie's handwriting, which she surreptitiously reads (only 2 students saw her), becomes v. distraught, & then takes the aspirin, having been steered from the coke to the tea table by Phyllis. Enters (now abt 6:05) Kathy Costa, flamboyantly dressed student, flourishes around, thrusts a letter at me, I refuse it, she sticks it in my purse anyway, I follow her to her seat, in controlled whispers tell her she's not in this class, I won't have her, she insists the Dean is letting her, I abandon her & start my lecture, abt 6:07. Enter Mark Cheren, pausing -- I ask him if he's in this class, he says yes; we all cheer the only man; I give him a campus mail letter I'd been meaning to send to his office (he's Management faculty) and state what's in it - has he found the manuscript yet he borrowed last fall? - yes, yes, he'll get it to me -- It's my only copy & I need it, how'd you children like it? -- very much, he'll get it to me -- etc. -- I return to my lecture falter abt, say I'm not feeling too well, falter abt more, & then, **COLLAPSE!** At which point one student streaks from the room, &

STEVEN SPEILBERG ASSOCIATES, INC.
7171 Posh Place, Suite AA-1
Hollywood, California

Professor Mark Cheren
L-51
Sangamon State University
Sherherd Road
Springfield, IL 62708

a red herring
for Kathy Costa,
student →

Dear Mark, ol'buddy:

Are you sitting down, I've got news for you. Prepare to be a rich man! That story you sent me is SENSATIONAL! Women's Lib for the kiddy-space crowd, with Animal Lib thrown in. We're already casting, what do you think of Meryl Streep as Patsy Possum? That skinny tail, oh-la-lal! And Woody Allen wants to be lead male possum. This show will make millions, I guarantee it-- and with all the spinoff, books, video cassettes, stuffed possums, possum cape-and-tail, possum-guns, etc., etc., the profit will be astronomic. Your cut, as originator, will be 10%--at least a million on this first film, and after that we're slating "The Posse Returns," "The Posse Strikes Again," "Daughter of Patsy Possum," and "Patricia Possum, Space Potentate." All things are Posse-ble, heh heh! Dune, move over. By the way, we're changing the name to "Never Play Dead, Patsy Possum," for this first go-round, more zing than "Patsy Possum and the Purple Possum Posse from Outer Sp

I'm enclosing a check for \$15,000 as earnest money. More will follow when you sign and return the contract you'll be receiving in a few days. Allowing any changes we want to make, guaranteeing that it's your own work, residual arrangements, that sort of thing. Pure formality.

No more Publish or Perish for you, pal--a book's a book, even if it's not in your usual line of work, and a movie's even better, right? You can even chuck that job at that podunk university if you want to, and come on out here to the palm trees and swimming pools. You're in the big time, now!

Greet your mom for me. I still drool over her apple pie. And do you ever see anyone from Mechanical Drawing 7-B? We sure gave that teacher ulcers!

A Mark Cheren motive

Your friend,
Steve
Steven Spielberg, Director
Spielburg Associates, Inc.



Clue in Jackie's purse which gives Ginny motive. (I couldn't find "French Tickle.")

SPRINGFIELD, IL (AP) -- Katherine Costa, the colorful "Wooden Leg" murderess, is out on parole after serving two years of a five-year sentence for manslaughter. Ms. Costa slew her abusive husband in self defense in 1984, striking him over the head with his prosthetic device. The trial became a cause celebre for feminist groups and a battle ground for the VFW. A chapter describing Ms. Costa's ordeal has helped to make the Women's Press publication, When the Worm Turns, a near best-seller. Ms. Costa plans to attend Sangamon State University, a school in Springfield, Ill., where she will seek her roots through the Individual Option Program.

Three nurses are upon me, taking pulse, loosening clothes, etc. I realize I've been too convincing, open eyes & whisper I'm OK, I'm OK! But nobody pays any attention to me (Heart & stroke victims often say that, I learned!) and Maintenance comes running, having alerted the paramedics who are only waiting word on where to come. By then Phyllis is in front of the room

saying (unheeded) "Well, we have a corpse," and things begin to get sorted out, and a student in the back row leaves saying "Well, I don't need THIS class!" I'm declared out of bounds, given the pillow, and Ph. explains there are 5 of us in on this simulation, & the class is to be the detectives. They write out all the facts as they saw them, individually, then gather in teams of 5, to pool facts & decide what further info they need. We were amazed at how much of our drama they collectively saw ("I thought everybody was crazy"-- student) and then each team was allowed a certain no. of questions & procedures. When they discovered procedures covered in -

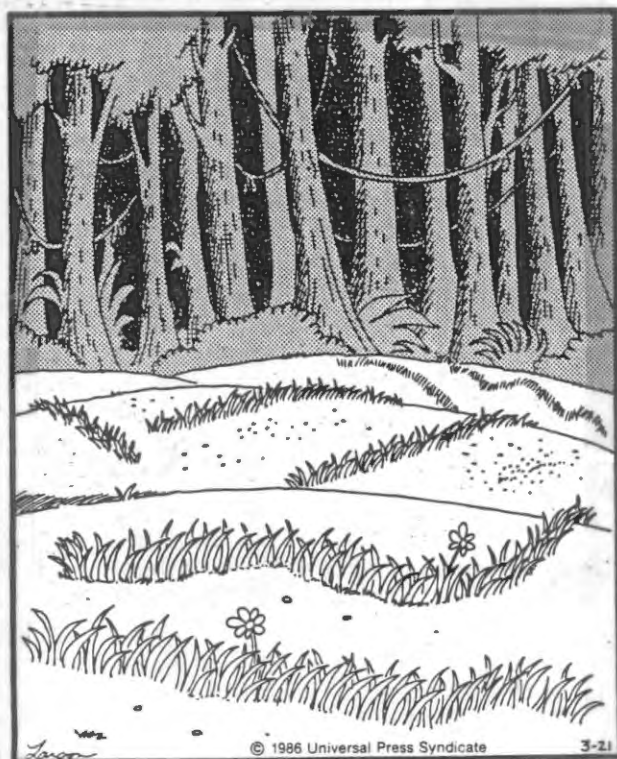
LAST GASP, con't from p. 3) clude searching persons, purses & briefcases, they really got into it. Kathy, the most colorful, was frisked first, & proved to have all sorts of junk in many pockets, relating to her obsession that she & Damaris were switched in the cradle, & she is my daughter. She had threatening & pleading notes on her, (to me) etc, as well as a clipping (in my purse) showing she was on parole for manslaughter. Ginny's poking in my purse was recalled, and they found a letter to me therein, from her lawyer friend, making it clear he preferred me. Also a packet of condoms. Also my bank book (real) & my keys: "This is her car keys, these look like house & office keys, & these-- these look like lock box keys." Mark's pockets revealed my note, & a letter from his old school chum, Steven Spielberg. They missed P's "sorry money is late this month" (in the zipper pocket in my purse) & so had nothing to lead them to P, facilitating. But the last detection team (the Miss Marple Team) decided they'd better have a look in my briefcase, & they found a flat, locked box ("we know where the keys to that are!") which contained a secret bank account & a letter from the grad. dean of the U. of Missouri (see front page) and a Xerox of P's Ph.D. diploma some 6 mo after her letter of dismissal. The teams then conferred again, & came up with their hypotheses. (Oh, Ginny had poison in her purse- for her roses.) 3 teams picked Ginny, 1 Team Phyllis, the one on each team had held out for P. & been overruled. The Phyllis team reasoned well: Phyllis faked her diploma, JT found out, & Ph was paying blackmail. Phyl stood to lose livli hood & reputation - strongest motive of the four. Ginny's betrayed love motive also strong - G. had means (the cookie) but the cookie came before she read the letter. (Ph. had ample means w/ hamburger & coke.) Mark had strong motive - riches - but no opportunity. Kathy was the Kookiest, & a previous murder, but no motive: she wanted me alive. [Solution: P. had poisoned my coke.]

This whole exercise was not merely a catchy way to start a mystery novel class; Phyllis & Mark are on a task force at SIU Med School (here in Spfld.) working on "Problem Based Learning." The med students are given the patient's symptoms only, & then must follow a path of detection to narrow it down to the illness & subsequent treatment. Phyl. had said a detective story is a good example of P.B.L. with the crime being the tip of the iceberg, the symptom. So this was all monitored & recorded (alas, not videotaped) (we couldn't have, or the class would then have suspected s'thing was up), and Dr. Barrows of the Med School vastly delighted, and we will be written up in the literature to come from this committee, & Phyl & Mark may get an article for their own scholarly journals. (This is mine!) The students were, a lot of them, upset, they confessed - even angry -- but got over it in the detecting fun. They said I should've really hammed the death, to spare them shock & concern. We had them write, the next week; one question was, "Did you learn anything from last week's exercise?" and one responded, "To be on time to class, so I won't miss anything!" I said I was impressed that help came so quickly, after my collapse, & someone chirped, "It won't be the next time!" ... Now we're several weeks into class, reading Christie, Sayers, Tey, etc & eventually the new women writers. BUT IN A SENSE, the climax was the first n. of class, & it's being downhill ever since. (Ellie said, "Mom, you can't top yourself forever. Everyone would die of exhaustion!") Some ENNL readers have asked what we're reading; I'll give the list here. I omitted some big names: Ngaio Marsh should be here, & others. (I did try for variety.)

WOMEN & THE MYSTERY NOVEL READING LIST

Christie: Murder of Roger Ackroyd; A Pocketful of Rye. (The latter not the best Miss Marple.)
 D. Sayers: Strong Poison, Gaudy Night
 (don't you like Petheridge as the new Peter on Mystery?)
 Josephine Tey: Brat Farrar & The Daughter of Time
 Amanda Cross: Death in a Tenured Position
 Sue Grafton: A is for Alibi (tho I prefer B is for Burglar)
 Sara Paretsky: Indemnity Only
 Barbara Wilson: Murder in the Collective
 Katherine Forrest: Amateur City
 Maureen Moore: Field Work
 Ellis Peters: One Corpse Too Many (Brother Cadfael)
 Maj Sjowall & Per Wahloo: The Locked Room
 P.D. James: A Taste for Death

← This joke I looked all over for & couldn't find, a few issues back. It was supposed to go in the ENNL issue where Paul Campagna sleuthed out Uncle Horace's grave & got a tombstone, & where RAD told you all that there was now space in the family burial grounds.



The secret python burial grounds.



READERS SEND HYMN Spd. Three ENNL readers: Martha Robertson, Mac Kullberg, and Bobby Smith, sent in the words & music to the hymn Mom was singing in the night -- turned out to be in the good ol' Methodist hymnal that I grew up with. Thank you! I find the words to the last verse especially poignant.

NEWS BRIEFS

Beloit. Cressida Broten & her mother visited C's great grandparents & Grandma Jackie after Xmas. Cress went to see Cressie-calf at the McCabe barn, pronounced that the large animal was now "Cressie-Kid." Next time she'll be Cressie-Cow. At one point Cressie referred to RAD as "grandpa." For some reason I said, "great grandpa," and C. said, "He's the only grandpa around!" Spokane, WA (or near it!) Friend Krista Sweeney sent J.J. a black widow spider through the mail -- well wrapped in napkins. The arachnid did not survive the trip.

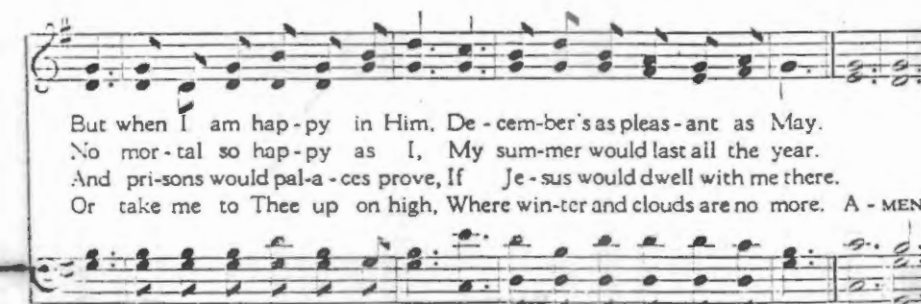
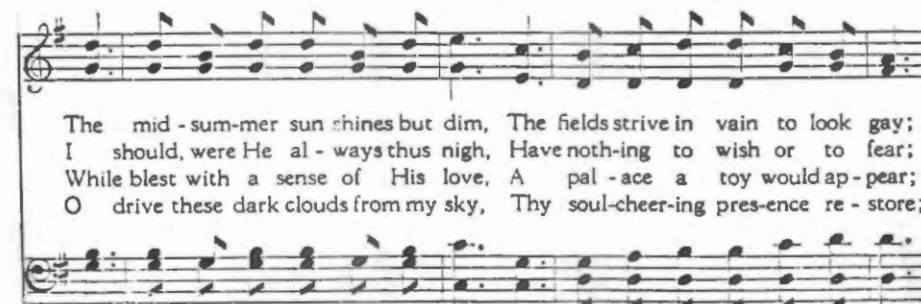
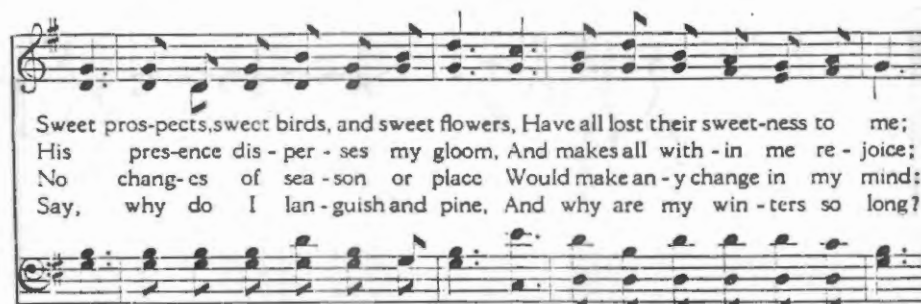
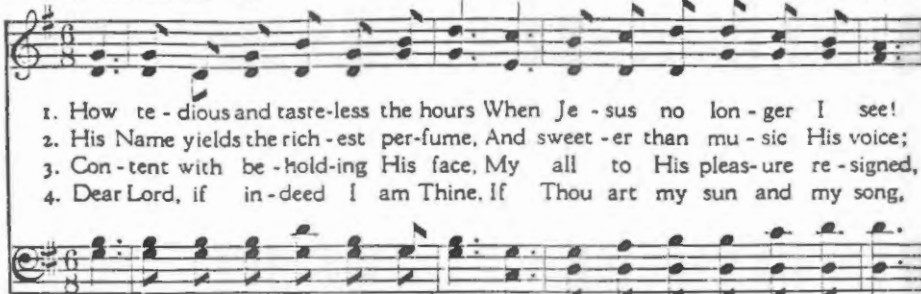
Rutland, Vt. Audrey Moore took 12 quartets -- count 'em, that's 48 "solopart" singers -- to the New England Music Festival Auditions. They sang an antique French carol & a French secular madrigal. The judges were rapturous. One said she has the best choral pro-

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JOHN NEWTON, 1725-1807

CONTRAST. 8. 8. 8. 8. 8. 8. 8.

Early American melody



Rocking the anthropological world, a second "Lucy" is discovered in southern Uganda.

gram in N.E. We've known it all along! Santa Cruz Megan has bought a drafting table, and is taking a graphics class. Hinesburg Did I report in ENNL that our difficult neighbor Lisa Brackett has published a book, How to Bury Your Own Dead? I applaud her: it's the ultimate in, "if life deals you a lemon, make lemonade." (Her husband committed suicide, her in-law died of AIDS) NPR Heard a Barber violin concerto over N.P.R. It seems B. was commissioned to write the concerto; when done, the violinist & foundation who sponsored it didn't like it, said it was too easy, B. took it back, wrote a last movement they then pronounced was "unplayable." Barber took it to another violinist, who proceeded to play it! But Barber accepted only 1/2 of his commission because of the hard feelings. The last movement is magnificent! Beloit RAD's been on his own sev. times this winter on acct of being snowed in. But one bad blow, Eula Johnson the night shift, got stuck at Chez Nous for 48 hrs! So Dad had help & company.



Col-
orado
Elle J.

had forced
vacation days
at her job, so
she & friend Bob
went to ski in
Col. When accom-
modations nearly fell thru,
they nearly stayed with
ENNL reader Mimi Bald
win. THANKS, Mimi!

At a Beloit Christ-
mas visit, Damaris saw
the Cammings, & Tom, Talie & twins.
Later, Gillian, Cress & JJ had
a fun supper w/ T, T & Tw's.
In Chicago, Elle entertained
Susie & Demi before Xmas, & had
Gill, Cress, JJ, Tim Veach & Chris over
for brunch, after New Years. A fine time!

More News Briefs (and Queries)

Spfld. A stranger I met told me we'd had a
room, at 816 N 5th St., in the early years, with
nothing in it but a big tipi. Kids, can any of
you refresh me on that? (The Music Room?)

Beloit Jo, Pat, Craig: Do you remember (fondly
or otherwise) ever having fried egg sandwiches
in your school lunch bag?

Jackson, WY Jeremy & Wendy are BACK, I hear, from
circumnavigating the Himalayas for 8 or so months, but
I haven't any details on any thing yet. NEXT ENNL!

Beloit Yes, Craig (& Jo, Pat, & all progeny): There
is a recipe for the "Uncooked Chocolate Pudding"
that we used to eat with toothpicks at the Little House,
to make it last longer: 2 squares melted chocolate
(hot); 3 eggs, beaten separately; 1/2 c. sugar;
1 tspn. vanilla. Mix melted chocolate, beaten
yolks, sugar & vanilla. Fold in egg whites. Put in
individual dishes, ^{serve with} whipped cream.

NYC Demi Jackson went to
see her quilt in a N.Y. opening.
While there, visited Dianne Wren.
Then on to Dallas to a quilt show.
Peterborough, ONT: Heather Dell
is busy revising her MA thesis on
Murder Mystery weekends for pop-
ular reading. It has been a valuable
to JJ for her mystery class, & for
the 1st n. Murder staging.

Beloit About those bluebirds
mentioned in the last issue in the
BDN article abt RAD: Children
& grand children can recall, walk-
LOTS A NEWS OMITTED; MORE ANON.

ing w/ R & D down by the pond, how he'd come up
to a bluebird box on a fencepost, rap on it & say
"Anybody home?" and a bluebird would pop out her
head & they'd eyeball each other. (If no answer,
he'd raise lid & look inside, find a mouse nest w/ babes.)

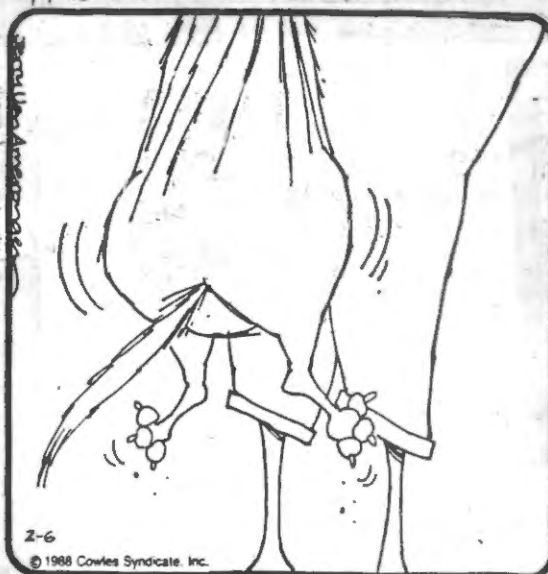
~BEGGAR DONATES TO MEGAN~
S. Cruz, story: MTJ's pic was in paper (Roving Report-
er.) M, trying to buy paper in rain, can find no papers.
Changes wet pants at home, sallies forth again, finally finds
paper in vending machine, finds she left money (exc 17¢) in
other pants. Enter beggar: "Can you give me a quarter?"
M, frustrated: "You ought to give me 8¢ so I can buy a
newspaper!" Beggar digs into pocket. Megan returns
home, comes back with money, gives beggar \$1.50.

FIGHTS COMPUTER; COMPUTER WINS

Spfld And ENNL loses. JJ tried, this time, to
learn to use her new (hah! almost 2 years!) Mac
computer for this issue. The Mac insisted she make

a paragraph, she resisted, they
wrestled, but it was an uneven
match which Mac won by erasing
the lead story (murder) which
JJ had half written, expending
much time & labor. JJ hopes to
get up courage to try again,
next issue -- or do you folks
prefer a handwritten ENNL?
(It has more character, I tell me.)

HAS GOOD CONTROL
Beloit. R.A.D. reports that
Cover, tho aged, still has good
control. She can stay out in the
snow for ages, then come inside
when it's warm, & do it on the rug.



Mr. Chambers has a word with Skipper.