

**The Life and times of Anarchy: A Journal of
Desire Armed: 25 years of critical anarchist
publishing**

Jason McQuinn

2004–2006

Contents

The first Decade of <i>Anarchy</i> magazine. The rebirth of North American anarchism	3
Origins of the Columbia Anarchist League	5
The beginnings of <i>Anarchy</i> magazine: 1980–1989	8

The first Decade of *Anarchy* magazine. The rebirth of North American anarchism

Throughout the 1950s and early '60s most of the historical anarchist movements around the world looked like just that, historical movements — withering and dying out where they hadn't already done so. In fact, one former-anarchist writer, George Woodcock, announced in his well-known 1962 anthology, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, that anarchism as a social-political movement had had its day.

By chance I happened across one of the more lively remaining embers of the North American anarchist milieu in the late 1960s as a crippled teen attending a Midwestern high school in a thoroughly white, working-class suburb of St. Louis. Like many others of my generation, I followed with great interest the emergence and radicalization of the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam war movement, the growing hints of the oncoming second wave of feminism, the slow ecological awakening, and the many student struggles around the continent. Unable to participate directly in any substantial way due to my relative isolation, lack of mobility and consequently limited range of opportunities, I spent much of my time during my high school years reading about the then-current crises and researching the histories of radical theories and movements. One of the radical threads that interested me greatly happened to be the criticism of schooling. And this led eventually to some of the writings of Paul Goodman, one of the more notable and controversial educational critics of the time. While reading one of his books, probably in 1967 or 1968, I happened across a line in *Notes of a Neolithic Conservative*, in which he mentioned his perspective in a off -hand way by saying something like: "I, of course, am an anarchist."

From that first indication that the word "anarchist" could qualify as more than a swearword for reactionaries and anxious liberals, I began following up on Goodman's hint and discovered, bit by bit, that there were more than a few isolated individuals who opposed capitalism and the state and who happened to call themselves "anarchists." There was a whole historical movement whose activities at one time or another embraced and encompassed all the continents of the world. It didn't take me long to realize that if such a movement had existed, my deepest sympathies lay with both its previous developments and with the obvious need to revive, publicize and rekindle its remaining embers as much as possible. From that time on my eyes and ears were sensitized. I sought out all the occasional flashes of activity, slogans, music and other expressions of anarchy amidst the tumult of the late '60s and early '70s milieus of rebellion. Though these were increasingly submerged by a tidal wave of Marxist dogmatism, sectarianism and authoritarianism that has been sometimes slowly, sometimes more quickly, receding for the last couple decades, ever since it contributed so much to suffocating the radical impulses of that time.

There were a few hints of anarchist influence in the North American 1960s besides that of Paul Goodman, but not all that many of substance. If one looked closely one might come across the works of Dwight MacDonald, Allen Ginsberg, Henry Miller, Abbie Hoffman & Jerry Rubin, Gary

Snyder, Judith Malina & Julian Beck (founders of the Living Theater group), Karl Hess (the former Goldwater speech-writer), Dorothy Day & Ammon Hennacy, Kenneth Rexroth and Kenneth Patchen, along with a few others. Also available, were a few assorted remnants of anarchist (and related utopian and cultural radical) treasures from the nineteenth century or early decades of the twentieth century in libraries. Here I encountered William Morris, Charles Fourier, historical accounts of rebellions and revolutions, and even a few Surrealist novels.

Here and there in the underground, anti-war and student press there were other mentions of anarchism or anarchy, most often in the midst of incoherent diatribes against the war and the “establishment” or rants about marijuana & LSD, youth culture, Ché Guevara and Mao-tse-Tung (in the predominant ‘60s transliteration). At first, aside from the works of Paul Goodman and beyond the Dover editions of Bakunin’s *God and the State* (1970), Roger Baldwin’s anthology of Kropotkin’s *Revolutionary Pamphlets* (1970) and Emma Goldman’s *Anarchism & Other Essays* (1969), or the 1963 Libertarian Book Club edition of Max Stirner’s *The Ego and His Own* (reprinted by Dover in 1973), it was still hard to find books in print by or about anarchists in North America. This was especially true in the Midwest — though Goodman’s works and these four classics remain among the very best and most important contributions to anarchist literature. However, in the aftermath of 1968, and as the 1970s began, something more of an actual anarchist milieu slowly began to take minimal shape throughout the continent. A few books by anarchists from other continents (predominantly European) began trickling in and appearing here (mostly in translation). Some of the most important of these included Daniel Cohn-Bendit’s *Obsolete Communism*, the 1974 Abraham Guillén anthology *Philosophy of the Urban Guerrilla*, and the many Freedom Press reprints from London like the 1974 reprint of Petr Kropotkin’s *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow*. At the time there were also a few theorists and activists struggling (with varying degrees of success and failure) to overcome the dead weight of their immersion in the Marxist tradition by moving in an anarchistic direction: Daniel Guérin (author of *Anarchism*, published in English translation in 1975, also editor of the massive anthology — only available in French at that time — *Ni Dieu, Ni Maître*), Herbert Marcuse, Henri Lefebvre (the first volume of whose *Critique of Everyday Life* finally appeared in English translation in 1971), and the Situationist International (whose essays and pamphlets began to appear in quantity here only with its dissolution, aside from the 1970 Black & Red editions of *The Poverty of Student Life* pamphlet and of Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*).

North American scholars, and even a few anarchist writers and activists, began appearing in print more often in the later 1960s and early ‘70s. Irving Horowitz’s important anthology, *The Anarchists*, appeared in 1964. Leonard Krimerman & Lewis Perry’s anthology, *Patterns of Anarchy*, soon followed in 1966. In 1970 Murray Bookchin’s surprising *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* appeared. In 1971 Martin Miller edited a new Kropotkin anthology titled *Selected Readings on Anarchism and Revolution*, before publishing his biography a few years later in 1976. Marshall Shatz’s anthology *The Essential Works of Anarchism* appeared in 1971. In 1972 Sam Dolgoff’s *Bakunin on Anarchy* was released. Alexander Berkman’s *What is Communist Anarchism?* was also reprinted by Dover in 1972, while Julian Beck’s *Life of the Theater* was published the same year. And Paul Avrich’s important studies, *The Russian Anarchists* and *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*, were published in 1971 and 1973.

Even in the midst of the explosion of underground press periodicals in the 1960s and early ‘70s few could be classified as even semi- or quasianarchist, like *the Yipster Times* or *Overthrow*. *The Match!* emerged as an increasingly explicit anarchist periodical under Fred Woodworth, from its

days as a collective, anti-war project of the Student Libertarian Action Movement at the University of Arizona. Throughout the '70s the *SRAF Bulletin for Anarchist Agitators* (published by Jim Bumpas from Mountain View, California) made the first sustained, and even somewhat effective, attempt to bridge the isolation of the handfuls of anarchists spread around the continent with both its bulletin and the increasingly frequent SRAF (Social Revolutionary Anarchist Federation) conferences. Later on SRAF groups also launched *Black Star* magazine as well. In 1972 (if I recall correctly) in Montreal the semi-academic journal *Our Generation* made an explicit editorial commitment to libertarian socialism and anarchism. *No Limits* showed up from Madison. A vestigial IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) union was revived with new energy. A handful of issues of the *Black Rose* journal appeared from Massachusetts. And, especially importantly, Detroit's *Fifth Estate* was reorganized as an anarchist paper in 1975, presenting the most stimulating and coherent attempt to that date at synthesizing the best elements of the anarchist and (semi-libertarian aspects of the) Marxist traditions.

Throughout the '60s and early '70s isolated anarchists (and a steadily increasing number of widely scattered anarchist groups) participated in the most important social events of the time, most often as loyal (but often skeptical and critical) participants in the various single-issue movements which made up what many people called "the movement." There were anarchists here and there involved in the civil rights movement, the various student free speech and university-reform movements, the anti-war movement, the gay movement, the feminist movement, the sexual-freedom movement, the anti-nuclear and ecology movements, the back-to-nature/ back-to-the-land movement, and all the others. There were a fair number of anarchists involved in Students for a Democratic Society, the largest student-left organization of the time, though they were unable to establish an effective identity within the larger group. There was a brief series of anarchist conferences held at Hunter College in New York (I attended the end of one of them in the summer of 1972 after hitchhiking in from Missouri).

Most anarchists at the time — due to the near complete lack of continuity with anarchists from earlier generations — had little knowledge of theoretical nuances or of the history of anarchist movements either here or on other continents. Most were (as they often are to this day) activist-oriented and relatively uninterested in radical history or theory, frequently participating in New Left — or even old left — groups (including those which explicitly condemned anarchism) in order to be able to work with anyone at all. Unfortunately, while the spirit of the times was often consciously libertarian, the various Marxist ideologies and organizations were increasingly dominant in practice. Even when anarchists were welcomed into activist groups, they would often find themselves the object of repeated attempts at conversion to Marxism at best, or at worst silenced as a condition for participation. And, almost invariably (as is still often the case), despite proclaiming the importance of "democracy" or even "participatory democracy," major decisions of the various leftist organizations were made behind-the-scenes by leaderships often tied to Marxist political parties or proto-party groups.

Origins of the Columbia Anarchist League

After participating in a short-lived high-school underground paper, experimenting with a few drugs, and attending the first Earth Day activities in 1970, I entered college (the first in my family) in St. Louis and began attending meetings and activities of both SDS and, shortly thereafter,

the newly-forming St Louis Radical Libertarian Alliance. The SDS chapter was under the control of Progressive Labor Maoists following the then-recent split and was the main leftist group on the University of Missouri-St. Louis campus. The St. Louis RLA (later the St. Louis Anarchists), on the other hand, was a motley study group made up of both capitalist and anti-capitalist libertarians meeting at St. Louis University. It was organized by someone who became a good friend, later moving to Columbia where he helped start our housing coop before writing for *Anarchy* magazine (under the pseudonyms of Badguy and Julian Noa). He had been a member of YAF, the nationally-organized right-wing, pro-capitalist federation (with CIA influence) whose small semi-anarchist/anti-war faction split off at its 1969 St. Louis convention. In a scenario that seemed to play out in many places around the U.S. following the SDS and YAF meltdowns, capitalist and anticapitalist anarchists who had fit into neither left-wing nor right-wing organizations, met, formed a few groups together and explored their common ground (antiwar, anti-state, anti-authority). In the end most of the anarcho-capitalists reverted to a “minimal state” politics, going on to form the misnamed Libertarian Party (which both opposes the creation of free communities and remains enamored with every opportunity for economic exploitation), while a few of the now-former capitalists and most of the anti-capitalist anarchists went on to work and play within the nascent anarchist milieu.

By the mid-70s with the increasing proliferation of local anarchist groups (including ours established in 1974 in Columbia, Missouri), the development of a growing network of anarchist-identified periodicals, and the organization of more and more regional and continent-wide gatherings, there finally began to emerge something of a genuinely self-conscious anarchist milieu across the continent which, while remaining heavily involved with the social movements of the day, also focused on helping anarchists develop the beginnings of their own identity as a potential social force. By 1975 even the usually-quiet Midwest had a noticeable anarchist resurgence with two Midwest anarchist gatherings — one in Columbia during the summer, followed by one in Minneapolis that winter, each drawing participation by from dozens of cities.

By the time our anarchist group in Columbia gained a name and a public existence in the fall of 1974, a number of local anarchists had been increasingly active individually — and informally together — for a couple years. Most were involved in one or several underground and alternative media projects, beginning with a local underground tabloid, *The Hard Travelin' Times*, a less-focused alternative tabloid, *The Community Sun*, and the formation of a “listener-sponsored” alternative community FM radio station, KOPN. Most also participated in a membership-controlled food co-operative, lived in various collective houses, and were involved in other radical, alternative and community projects (including the local independent women’s center and rape-crisis line, study groups, and miscellaneous student and community activist projects).

The latter 1970s saw the slow, but steady expansion of the anarchist milieu, both locally and throughout the continent. Anarchist periodicals began popping up all over. *Soil of Liberty* appeared from Minneapolis, *Bayou la Rose* began its itinerant life in New Orleans, a few issues of *Anarcha-Feminist Notes* appeared (for women only), the *North Country Anvil*, a Christian anarchist-pacifist magazine published in rural Minnesota, *Emancipation* began publishing an impressively long run of issues in Washington, DC., *Work and Pay* made an appearance in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Woodstock Anarchist Party put out a quirky periodical, *Anarchy in Atlanta* made an energetic showing in the South, Open Road published an impressive, colorful activist-oriented tabloid from Vancouver, BC, *Bulldozer and Kick It Over* (which still occasion-

ally appears) began publishing in Toronto, and a number of other important projects began to flourish.

The late 1970s saw the withering away of the largely-informal Social Revolutionary Anarchist Federation — following a string of successful gatherings in places as unlikely as Fayetteville, Arkansas (1976) [where the humorless Bruce Allen from Toronto made his memorable retort — when conferees broke up to go skinnydipping in the White River outside of Fayetteville — that he “didn’t come one thousand miles just to go swimming!”] and Wildcat Mountain (1977), Wisconsin. A new (though short-lived) North American Anarchist Communist Federation was founded in 1978, with a fairly decent paper for the time — at first titled the North American Anarchist and later (following the usual organizational problems, resulting in the federation’s disintegration in 1982) renamed *Strike!* In the meantime, the bulk of the anarchist milieu remained intransigently unorganized as (isolated or fraternizing) individuals and informal groups.

The idea of publishing a periodical of some sort was quite natural for our local anarchist group in Columbia. We had already learned printing skills and acquired two large Multilith 1250 printing presses (one a 1250W) for printing posters, leaflets and pamphlets at our housing co-op. We acquired light tables, layout tables, a paper folder, and had plans to build a plate-burner. We even moved a ridiculously large (about 8-foot-long) copy camera up from Texas, intending to build a dark room in our small print shop building. But in the end we didn’t have the money or resources to finish this project. And, in fact, most of our local group’s printing projects ended up being done in the middle of the night at a rural newspaper’s print shop where one of us had a part-time job.

By this time we were engaged in a never-ending series of projects and interventions. For two or three years we held somewhat regular public meetings. These meetings drew both a smattering of genuinely interested individuals (a few of whom became more involved in our group) and the usual assortment of police informers, provocateurs, journalists and (sometimes disruptive) curiosity-seekers. Following involvement in local underground and community newspapers, some of us published the local food co-op’s newsletter and/or worked on the new community radio station’s program guide, as well as doing quite a number of radio shows. Nor were we shy about confronting state functionaries — most notably our public trashing of former CIA director William Colby (director of the Operation Phoenix mass-assassination campaign that led to around 40,000 to 60,000 deliberate murders of civilians in Vietnam) when he attempted to speak at the University of Missouri in 1978, and the infiltration of the Missouri Sheriff s’ Association convention in order to confront FBI director William Webster and Missouri Senator John Danforth. There was hardly a local protest or alternative community project we didn’t have a hand in somewhere. To the point where an article appeared in one of the local university student papers making it sound as though our group was a powerful conspiracy orchestrating every significant radical or countercultural project in the area! (After that experience we made it a habit to never again speak to — or encourage in any way — the local capitalist press.) After hosting a Midwest anarchist gathering in 1975, we also participated in other gatherings and conferences whenever we were able to travel. Myself and another member of our group even attended the 1977 International Anarchist Festival in Barcelona which was inspired by the decriminalization of the CNT (following the long-awaited death of Franco) and whose events were attended by thousands of anarchists from across Europe and around the world. Given all our other activities, producing our own periodical in order to publicize our interests, ideas and intentions with an aim to increasing our abilities to intervene in our own community made perfect sense.

The beginnings of *Anarchy* magazine: 1980–1989

The idea took hold. Submissions, participation and donations were solicited. A unique name was developed. “Anarchy” was chosen for its clarity, and because it was available since the long-running London *Anarchy* magazine had by then completely stopped publishing and — especially in the U.S. — was fading from memory; “A Journal of Desire Armed” was chosen for its poetry, its emphasis on everyday life, and as a strong hint that we were interested in far more than traditional leftist politics, economics and ideologies. We wanted it to be especially clear to everyone that *Anarchy* would be wickedly opposed to the boring moralism of political correctness. A first, tiny issue of an amateurish, very quirky, fourpage streetsheet was produced in the Winter of 1980 to be freely distributed around town. We described it in the masthead as “an irregular publication of the Columbia Anarchist League, an anti-profit, anti-capitalist organization of local anarchists dedicated to catalyzing the creation of a more libertarian world.” Unfortunately, although we had plenty of experience by then with working on local projects and publications, we didn’t really have much of a clue about how to create something that would allow us to engage effectively with people as anarchists in our local community. But even with very little response to the first issue, we had no doubts about continuing. A second issue appeared shortly thereafter in March, following which we decided that 500 or 600 copies just wasn’t enough to reach all the people we wanted to reach. And, anyway, neither was an 8-1/2”x11” newsletter-format street-sheet impressive enough to attract the attention of all that many people.

Our sights turned to producing a consistently non-ideological anarchist tabloid with enough space to get more of a message across to the local population, including news coverage of the international anarchist movement, reviews, fiction, and a changing mixture of cultural, political and economic criticism. However, we soon figured out that there was no way we could afford to publish anything more than a very irregular four or eightpage tabloid with our then-current low wages working relatively unskilled jobs. Especially not when we preferred giving *Anarchy* away for free. So I decided it was time to go back to school in order to acquire a degree that could help me land tolerable jobs paying enough to support the publication of a real newspaper. (Earlier at college I had ended up studying philosophy, with the intention of definitely not doing anything that would help get me any sort of mainstream job.) Unexpectedly, an opportunity for me to go back to school in the health field turned up by accident, leading me to quit the collectively-owned and -run restaurant I had recently organized, even though I had been enjoying my time there.

Although we had planned to continue publishing regularly while I was taking classes, the reality of being a full-time student while working part-time and participating in all our other usual projects meant that at first the tabloid version of *Anarchy* appeared very infrequently. A fairly uninspired issue #4 appeared after a long hiatus, notable mainly for publication of an amazingly longwinded rant by Kathy Fire (an anarchist-feminist musician) critical of a call in a previous issue to disarm police. Issue #5 (February 1983) was the “Punk Anarchfesto”/“Punk in AnarColumbia” issue, reflecting the relatively new entrance of punk bands and culture into the area, along with the inevitable combination of anarchist anti-politics and punk music on local radio shows. The issue also featured Noa’s essay “The Cripple and the Man,” a personal call for the radicalization of the everyday life of marginalized cripples and creeps, suggesting that *Anarchy* was definitely interested and willing to explore aspects of radicalism usually ignored elsewhere — or dismissed in a moralistic way. Despite our original intention to publish a free, locally-oriented paper, already by the publication of this issue we had begun offering subscriptions (at a

paltry \$3/6 issues to off set the cost of postage) because of the (for us) surprising demand for the magazine that began showing up from other places across North America.

After another long wait (following the initial shock of finishing school again only to find myself working an exhausting night shift job that left me with little energy to work on a publishing project), it was time to reorganize our editorial and production process for publishing more regularly. And, in fact, the sixth through the eleventh issues were published on a monthly to bimonthly basis from August 1985 through April 1986, before we settled back to a more sustainable quarterly to semi-annual schedule. The look of the publication began to slowly improve. The content continued to avoid the more conventionally boring repetition of political and economic clichés, along with the backward-looking historical focus which so often makes radical periodicals unreadable. Following a second (smaller, invitation-only) Midwestern anarchist gathering held in Columbia in the summer of 1985, we published a four-page special issue of *Native American News* as an insert to *Anarchy* #6. Notable contributions to *Anarchy* by members of our group during this time included Diane Dekay's "Pornography & Female Sexuality" (in *Anarchy* #7), along with Julian Noa's "Eros Denied: A Culture against Untouchables" (also in #7) and "The Plague (Central America)" (in #9), plus my own series of short articles (originally written for the co-op newsletter) collectively titled "Cooperation is Anarchy" (#9). (From the start of *Anarchy*, my own writing appeared under the pseudonym of Lev Chernyi until I dropped that name with publication of issue #32 in 1992.) Notable reprints from elsewhere included Bob Black's seminal synthesis, "The Abolition of Work" (in issue #8), and several Gerry Reith stories from *Neutron Gun*. With the tenth issue we started our first serialization — of the new English translation of *The Papalagi*, a book of collected speeches attributed to a Samoan chief (but actually written by a German anthropologist) which apply a sort of reverse-anthropological critique of European civilization from an indigenous perspective. Issue #10 also included a newly revised and much-enlarged version of the Columbia Anarchist League's statement of principles, then titled "As We See It" The statement was modeled loosely after the British Solidarity Federation's statement by the same name, though it owed more to the influence of Max Stirner, Raoul Vaneigem and the Situationist International than to the Solidarity Federation's rather pedestrian vision of libertarian socialism.

In order to reach as many people as possible throughout the local area we devoted a lot of time and energy to developing several forms of intensive local distribution. Besides the usual practice of placing bundles of the paper in the few sympathetic local businesses and gathering places that allowed it, we put a (free) paper machine outside the local co-op's front doors, we handed out a thousand or so copies of each issue at the university, and at every appropriate public event, and we began rolling up copies of the magazine (usually about a thousand bundles of two or three subsequent issues at a time) to toss out from the back of an old flatbed truck onto the lawns in different sections of Columbia. With each new issue that came out we'd cover a new section of town, until we were back to the beginning and we'd start over again. Expanding on this to cover the rural countryside, we also started sending copies out to the Post Office rural routes around the city, with the aim to eventually get copies to every address in the entire county. We started with Rural Route 1 and worked up to probably RR 4 or RR 5 before deciding that we no longer had the time or money to continue it. However, in 1986 prior to stopping this latter distribution strategy led to complaints from three upset rural residents around the county to the Postal Service demanding that *Anarchy* magazine be banned from the mail, or that its staff should be prosecuted for its content. Local postal workers twice procured extra copies of *Anarchy* by

lying about the purpose in order to send them on to postal inspectors in Kansas City. The first we heard of this was when one of the daily newspapers in Columbia reported on it. It turned out that the first batch of magazines sent to the Kansas City Postal Inspection Unit was “lost in the mail,” requiring a second batch to be requested. Ultimately, postal inspectors reluctantly decided that the periodical was neither obscene nor advocating violence, and were forced to continue delivery.

1986 was also the centennial anniversary of the infamous Chicago Haymarket Affair, as well as the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Revolution, both of which led to the call for a continental anarchist gathering. Our Columbia, Missouri group attended the gathering in Chicago, along with three or four hundred others, making it the first of four increasingly massive and exciting gatherings culminating in the San Francisco gathering of 1989. We celebrated the summer of 1986 by co-publishing *Anarchy* #12 with our nearby Kansas friends’ *The Gentle Anarchist* #12, distributing the double-issues to each others’ mailing lists. This double-issue, at 24 pages total, was our biggest issue to date, and also the first issue with a contribution from Anti-Authoritarians Anonymous, a simple détourned comic titled “The War of Dreams,” critical of the political left. It also included our second reprinting of a hard-hitting Bob Black essay. “Let us Prey!” is brilliantly critical of the incoherence of the left in the context of its responses to new-right, Moral Majority-style organizing of the time. Among other things, in “Let us Prey!” Black argued that “A leftist is someone who shoots himself in the foot once he gets it out of his mouth.”

We finished up the year with a “Weekly World Anarchy” parody issue (#13), though it’s kind of hard to parody something (like the *Weekly World News*) that is already so ridiculous. One of our cover headlines read: “New study reveals four out of five Americans prefer Violence to Sex: Nine out of ten prefer Slavery to Freedom,” while the top banner proclaimed: “Smash the State! Have a Nice Day!” This issue also included a reprint of Murray Bookchin’s “Theses on Libertarian Municipalism.” Although Bookchin had been lecturing and publishing for over twenty years while identifying himself as an anarchist, his influence had remained peripheral since his primary concern seemed to be with ecological and green politics rather than with any sort of genuinely eco-anarchist approach. His venture into libertarian municipalism appeared intended at least in part as an overture to an anarchist milieu which had largely ignored him — in the context of an increasingly co-opted environmentalism and green political reformism that could no longer be stomached even by Bookchin. About this time the doyen of the West German Greens, pacifist Petra Kelly, showed up in Columbia for a lecture on the Green Party with her (former-general) partner/sidekick Gert Bastian. With a sensitivity for audience proclivities shown by politicians everywhere, Petra (and Gert, when prodded) gave people a glowing picture of the German Greens with the usual generalities, refusing any genuinely self-critical analysis. In order to draw out a bit more truthfulness concerning the divisive, anti-radical politics being whitewashed in their presentation, I asked whether the German Greens were showing any solidarity with the Berlin autonomists and squatters (still very active at the time). Green ex-general Bastian was unable to control himself, spitting out in disgust, “They are our *enemies!*” Petra Kelly tried to calm him down and put a slightly more conciliatory face on this conflict, saying that the Greens were quite willing to work with them, but first the squatters needed to abandon their confrontational tactics. A few years later, in 1992, Kelly and Bastian were both found dead, killed by Bastian’s own gun, most likely a murder-suicide.

At this time we began realizing that — as fun as it often was confronting the manifold idiocies and contradictions of local liberals and conservatives, Christians and greens — there would never

be a large enough number of local people interested to justify publishing a bimonthly tabloid primarily devoted to this purpose. At the same time the magazine was attracting the attention of more and more radicals from around the country, and even that of anarchists in other countries. Although our original intention was to encourage a dialogue in our letters column with local people, the number of letters from out-of-town kept increasing, while too much of the local response tended towards the brain-dead regurgitation of conservative and/or Christian banalities. How many times is it worthwhile to print and respond to letters urging naive belief in the rotting corpse from Nazareth?

Several changes starting with issue #14 in the Summer of 1987 marked the beginning of a new trajectory for *Anarchy*. The most easily notable was the introduction of some color to the publication's covers, including our first full-color art work by Phil Lollar, which appeared on the back cover of that issue. We increased the number of pages (up to 28 pages with issue #14 and 32 pages with issue #15). We increasingly began asking important, recognized anarchist writers to reprint their work and/or contribute to the magazine: Noam Chomsky's "Intervention in Vietnam and Central America: Parallels and Differences" appeared in #14. We devoted a growing amount of space to a direct dialogue with readers in our letters column. And we published the first piece submitted by the ever-controversial John Zerzan, "Vagaries of Negation," at a time when his contributions were beginning to become less welcome in the *Fifth Estate*, which had been publishing much of his most important work.

The expanding dialogue with *Anarchy* readers was important to me at the time and has remained especially important to me throughout the magazine's life. Open, common space for differing opinions from within and without the anarchist milieu to appear (without censorship or manipulation), be read or heard, and for dialogues to develop, is an essential requirement for the growth of our mutual understanding. Before *Anarchy* was conceived, our means of public communication in Columbia were limited to our personal voices; personal efforts like leafleting, holding signs, postering or graffiti-writing; and writing letters to the local newspaper or other publications. While all of these means of communication have their uses, it didn't take long to discover that the main local daily newspaper (and other publications) would often (arbitrarily) refuse to print letters or would change the wording to make them appear unintelligent or worse.

Beyond the local press, I was somewhat astounded to find various forms of censorship and manipulation throughout much of the more general radical press and the specifically anarchist press from the 1970s to the present. Many times I have personally written letters that have been refused publication, to the point that I seldom bother writing letters anymore, assuming that many — or even most — won't ever appear. I especially recall about this time writing a corrective letter to the semi-libertarian ecological newsletter *Synthesis*, which had published — without any comment — a completely scurrilous accusation from (a local Missouri) would-be green-politician, David Haenke, charging that anarchists have historically committed genocide and now engage in "ecocide." My letter was apparently refused on the grounds that challenging Haenke's vicious libels would be "a personal attack" and such "attacks" were not allowed in the newsletter!

In another bizarre example, for years I have read *The Match!* and encouraged others to read it and its publisher's other work. But the publisher, Fred Woodworth, has over decades' time taken an increasingly antagonistic attitude towards *Anarchy* magazine — to the point of lately making lunatic charges based on nothing at all that *Anarchy* receives funds from the CIA and/or FBI! Before Woodworth had degenerated to this current level of insanity, Fred acknowledged to me by mail that he would never print any reference to the address of *Anarchy* magazine that might

allow readers of *The Match!* who hadn't seen it to make up their own minds about it. And, indeed, no letters that have mentioned the magazine's address have ever seen print in what he bills as "The World's Largest Letters Column"!

In response to a letter I wrote to the Canadian anarchist magazine, *Kick It Over*, supportive of the sex-positive feminist filmmaking of Lizzie Borden (whom KIO had interviewed) and critical of moralizing anti-porn feminism, *Kick It Over* refused publication because "...Men are always trashing feminists for not being radical enough & what you said had been said before" (though certainly not in the censored pages of KIO!

Although not on quite the same level, I've also had recurrent problems with the Fifth Estate (FE) regarding letters both in FE and in *Anarchy* magazine. Early on I was amazed to be told that since I'd written two interesting letters to FE between issues I would need to provide two different names for the letters if I wanted them both to be printed! I provided the names while shaking my head in disbelief. Although I've come across a similar phobia for publication of more than one letter from the same person in a single issue in other periodicals I've never been presented anywhere else with FE's novel solution! What has bothered me more about FE has been the recurrent attempts to pressure *Anarchy* magazine to censor letters critical of FE, along with promises that FE would in turn censor criticisms of *Anarchy* in letters to FE (and that FE had already done so)! Of course, this same type of pressure demanding that *Anarchy* magazine censor letters has also come from other places as well over the years, usually from individuals (sometimes prominent anarchist writers and publishers) who seem to be overly-sensitive to public criticism and apparently see no harm in taking away other people's chances to express contrary opinions wherever possible. Having had my own letters censored so often, in most cases for the most inane of reasons, my sympathies lie entirely with free speech and access to letters columns as unfettered as possible in the anarchist milieu. Most participants in the publication of this magazine have agreed with this stance, consistently preferring integrity to censorship, and as a result *Anarchy's* letters column has been consistently one of the most open, honest and responsive in the North American continent and probably anywhere else as well.

Whether because of the ever-popular/everhated open letters column, the increasingly colorful covers, the steadily improving design and content and writing, or the consistently honest and irreverent attitude expressed throughout the magazine (or a combination of all of these), its popularity across North America began taking off at this time. The orientation of the magazine was consciously changed from an attempt at a local dialogue to a more outward focus on the national and international radical milieu. Issue #15 in the Winter of 1988 included first attempts at "Alternative Media Review" and "Anarchist Media Review" sections of the magazine featuring a prophetic review of the first issue of *Z Magazine* and a number of anarchist periodical reviews. Along with the encouragement of discussion in the *Anarchy* letters column, this magazine is also justly acknowledged for its now long and effective commitment to promote and provide information on the anarchist press in general. This is currently our 18th year of zine and magazine reviews. And given the consistent scope, accuracy and coverage of our reviews, at this point anyone doing research on the history of the last couple decades of the North American anarchist milieu could do far worse than starting with a survey of the anarchist press in any given year as revealed in *Anarchy* reviews. During the last two decades I can personally attest that no anarchist publication was ever intentionally avoided or ignored. A genuine attempt has consistently been made to comprehensively cover the entire range and breadth of the continental anarchist

press, subject only to the limits of our time and the publications interested in sending us their materials.

Besides the reviews, issue #15 featured the reprinting and substantial expansion of a previous exchange of articles on anarchy and religion written by Fred Woodworth, Jay Kinney and myself, which had first appeared in several issues of the defunct paper *Strike!* This was the first issue to include an expanded masthead box including the press run (7,000 copies) and a list of magazine staff (9 people at the time) under the heading of "Editorial Advisory Group." With this issue the subscription price doubled from \$3.00 for 6 issues to \$6.00 and a goal of 2,000 subscribers was established in order to turn the magazine into a self-financing project. The following issue (#16) in the summer of 1988, focused on feminism, sexuality and pornography, along with continuing the discussion of anarchy and religion between Jay Kinney and myself begun in the previous issue.

At this point the *Anarchy* production and editorial collective decided to make a significant change in format for the paper from tabloid newspaper to tabloid magazine in order to make it much more possible to distribute in book shops and on newsstands. Since issue #17 the magazine has focused primarily on distribution through newsstand sales rather than through our original focus on giving away as many copies as possible in as inventive a way as possible, or our subsequent focus on obtaining enough subscriptions to pay for publication. I had always assumed that it would be nearly impossible to get space on mainstream bookstore shelves, especially on chain bookstore shelves. After all, if it could be done surely someone else would have been doing it!

At this point in 1988 the Anarchy production and editorial collective decided to make a significant change in format for the paper from tabloid newspaper to tabloid magazine (a tabloid-size format that has been trimmed and stapled) in order to make it much more possible to distribute in book shops and on newsstands. From a beginning with issue #17 the magazine eventually increasingly focused on distribution through newsstand sales rather than our original focus on giving away as many copies as possible in as inventive a way as possible, or our subsequent short-lived focus on obtaining enough subscriptions to pay for publication. I had always assumed that it would be nearly impossible to get space for an anarchist publication on mainstream bookstore shelves, especially on chain-bookstore shelves. After all, if it could have been done surely someone else would have been doing it! So we started by looking for information on all the anarchist, or radical, or self-defined community and alternative book stores and newsstands that we could locate. We soon found that even a few of the better (and usually) larger mainstream independent book stores were interested in carrying the magazine as well. The main complaint we got was that the tabloid magazine format was too large for the magazine shelves in many of the stores. Thus the magazines would be put in the back where they were less visible, or there were problems with the tops of the magazines flopping over, obscuring the title. But the change to tabloid magazine format seemed to work well enough at first that we stuck with the large tabloid format, especially since many long-time readers reported that they liked the larger size more than a standard magazine format.

During this time a major change in production technique meant that instead of layout being done with the series of old electric typewriters (from a used IBM Executive to a Selectric to a fancy Brother typewriter with a diskette memory and a small selection of daisy-wheel typefaces), layout was now done with a primitive PC, a new IBM XT-clone that I built myself from mail-order parts (in 1988). This meant that we could now spend many fewer hours typesetting each issue, and no longer had to retype any columns for line-justification purposes as we had to do with the older electric typewriters. By this time collages by Freddie Baer were appearing on many of our magazine covers, a collaboration that would last many, many years. Almost every new issue included new contributors of news, essays, photos, comics and/or art work, since we made a conscious attempt to keep our pages open to anyone with something worthwhile and coherent to say and the competence to write, draw, construct or photograph it even if it required a critical response from us! There was increased coverage of Earth First! and eco-anarchist activities, as well as critical discussion of the ideologies of biocentrism, bioregionalism and deep ecology. John Zerzan became a regular contributor, especially with his new column, "The Nihilist's Dictionary," which made its debut in issue #17 (Fall/Winter 1988-89) on the subject of "Niceism"! (The issue also included my critical review of his first and most important book, *Elements of Refusal*.) Laure Akai began contributing her column "A's for Attitude" (at first, under the pseudonym of L. Fulltime) in issue #18 (March/April 1989). And Feral Faun began contributing his "Feral Revolution" column (later renamed "The Iconoclast's Hammer") in issue #19 (May-July 1989) We introduced an "Anarchy Contact Network" column that ran in each issue with an increasing number of listings (27 by issue #24) of people and groups interested in the "growth and development of a post-situationist, anti-ideological revolutionary tendency." Amazingly, the discussion on anarchy and religion continued to fill pages and pages of several different issues, including Feral Faun's critical essay, "The Quest for the Spiritual" in issue #17. And coverage of the controversies surrounding the series of continental gatherings continued to build from the 1986 Chicago Haymarket Centennial gathering and the 1987 Minneapolis gathering to the 1988

“Anarchist Survival Gathering” in Toronto and the 1989 “Without Borders” San Francisco gathering. This coverage included publishing the results of the “Another Heresy” survey concerning the annual gatherings in issue #19.

Although the magazine collective had never been shy about tackling touchy subjects any time in its history, the children’s sexuality theme of issue #19 (May-July 1989) was still a shock to some readers. Besides the now usual mix of radical and anarchist news, alternative and anarchist media reviews, columns, the serialization of *The Papalagi*, and an oversized letters column, the children’s sexuality issue featured a chapter from Richard Walters’ *Sexual Friendship* book titled “Save the Children,” a too-often suppressed view from the other side (the child’s) of the adult/child sexual divide, reviews of Walters’ *Sexual Friendship* and the wonderful picture book for children titled “Show Me!” (these days it is insanely suppressed only in the us as child pornography), along with Laure A.’s concise essay on “Sexuality and the Mystique of Innocence.” The views expressed in this are exemplified by the text of a Tuli Kupferberg comic on the opening page of the issue’s feature section: “I know how to get rid of pornography in one fell swoop...Permit the free expression of adolescent sexuality.”

The first decade of *Anarchy* magazine ended with a double-issue on “Relationships” (#20-21/ Aug.-Oct. 1989) which also featured some excellent fiction by Laurie Ulster and Kevin Keating (“The Man in the Box”) and with issue #22 (Nov.-Dec. 1989) reporting on that summer’s San Francisco “Without Borders” conference. The “Relationships” issue included Feral Faun’s controversial “To Have Done with the Economy of Love,” Richard Walters’ “Whatever Happened to the Sexual Revolution?” and Isaac Cronin’s “Jealousy,” along with a discussion on “Monogamy or Non-Monogamy?” The issue also included as a 4-page insert a large-format reprinting of a then newly enlarged and updated version of the Columbia Anarchist League’s very popular “As We See It!” (which was also published concurrently in an independent edition with a substantial print run). And the issue was also notable for the density of Mikell Zhan’s compelling photography. We managed to haul a couple thousand copies of this issue to San Francisco in order to give them away freely at the continental “Without Borders” conference. Although we already gave away a substantial number of each issue to prisoners, we thought all the efforts that had gone into the successful run of continental gatherings deserved such a gesture as a show of our support. And, of course, it also meant that many anarchists who would otherwise (for whatever reasons) never think of paying for the magazine actually got to look at it, read it, and find out for themselves what they had been missing. We started a serialization of Raoul Vaneigem’s *Revolution of Everyday Life* in *Anarchy* #22, the last issue of 1989. The *Papalagi* serialization had ended in the previous issue and Vaneigem’s situationist analyses seemed for some of us to elegantly summarize some of the most important themes of contemporary revolutionary theory and practice. Our serialization of his work helped introduce it to many more new readers, and its North American publisher, Left Bank Books, commented that its appearance in *Anarchy* was one of the reasons the book became increasingly popular on this side of the Atlantic. In fact, long after its serialization was completed, C.A.L. Press still distributes the book and we still receive appreciative comments from people who first read chapters many years ago in *Anarchy* magazine. Issue #22 also featured a wonderful critique by Janos Nehek titled “In Search of the New Age: The Infinite Egress of You,” and Will Guest’s incisive “In the Wake of the Exxon Valdez: World Capitalism and Global Ecocide.” And it introduced the first issue of a companion periodical, *North American Anarchist Review*, initially published as a 4-page insert. *North American Anarchist Review* was “a semi-annual tabloid primarily intended to let the libertarian community know about

interesting new books, journals and publishers.” Inspired by the British New Anarchist Review, it was intended as a free, editorially-independent, stand-alone periodical which would also be included as an insert in *Anarchy* magazine in order to increase its circulation. At a time when *Anarchy* magazine’s circulation was increasing steadily (especially its subscriptions, which had quintupled during the preceding year), it seemed like an optimal point to pursue our long-time support for anarchist publishing in a new direction — focusing on books rather than periodicals. My “Anarchy Notes” column from issue #22 summed up the situation following our first decade of publication:

For those who’ve been involved in the last 20 year’s rebirth of the North American anarchist movement the changes have been both remarkable and inspiring, as well as at the same time disappointing. Much the same could also be said for the simultaneous rebirth and resurgence of anarchist movements in other areas around the world. The contrast between the almost total isolation and demoralization of anarchists in the late ’50s and early ’60s with the current visibly growing movement is now undeniable even for those who wish it wasn’t so. Not so long ago only a relative handful of anarchists continued a feeble struggle to maintain any sort of real presence and identity during the worldwide eclipse of anarchy as a historical movement. While now anarchists around the world are once again poised at the edges of the immense possibilities for genuine social change that have opened up since the ’60s.

“Yet, both theoretically and practically the anarchist movement is nearly as impoverished as all the other sociopolitical movements that clamor for converts and cadres. Most anarchists are too easily seduced by all the various traditional leftist myths. While many of the rest are mystified in their turn by self-destructively ultra-marginalist reactions to them. Still, it seems to be increasingly obvious to a growing number of anarchists that this situation calls for a re-thinking of the entire anarchist project. We see this as both a positive sign, and as a central aspect of our intentions in publishing this journal.” My own personal vision for *Anarchy* involves using its pages to both re-think a genuinely radical critical theory of the person, society and nature, as well as to assist in the reinvention of a truly anarchic social practice. Because of this orientation, my overall perspective as it is expressed in this journal will remain highly critical towards the anarchist movement (and the other, even less-advanced social movements) because we not only can, we must do better if anarchy is ever going to present a serious alternative for more than those on the margins of society. As far as I am concerned, the pathos of self-congratulation can be left for those who have never really aspired to any genuinely radical social change in the first place — like the new-agers, the social democrats, and most of those who call themselves greens. However, at the same time this does not mean that I think there is any future in merely cultivating contempt for everyone’s (including our own) failures! Far from it. The point is to learn from our failures, not to denounce them from a position of feigned moral superiority.

“At this point the question becomes one of whether enough of us are interested in pursuing this line of development? If so, I expect that the current levels of support for this journal (which remain somewhat dismal considering the potential) will increase dramatically in the upcoming months — especially as they stretch into the years ahead. With more solid support from the anarchist community *Anarchy* could begin to pay for itself by the end-of the next year. And at that point we could pursue an expansion of the project: How many of us would like to see an exciting, well-produced, colorful and critical 48-page anarchist monthly in North America? What kind of effect could a 20,000 circulation anarchist journal have in encouraging the development of

a more widespread and challenging anti-authoritarian struggle, and a more critical and explosive libertarian culture? We'll never know if we don't try."

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Jason McQuinn
The Life and times of Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed: 25 years of critical anarchist
publishing
2004–2006

theanarchistlibrary.org