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IN CYBERSPACE, THIS IS ONE NOISY NEIGHBORHOOD

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When Jeff Kurz moved to Somerville in April, he decided that keeping a weblog would be a better way to stay in touch with friends and family back in Ohio than phone calls and postcards.

So he launched "Jeff Goes to Somerville," writing about his new city and taking photos of it. He chronicled his job search to his position as assistant manager at the Davis Square bar the Joshua Tree, and excitedly mused about his new surroundings. "Everybody here calls the subway the 'T.' Short I suppose for MBTA," reads one of his early writings. The T would also serve as the backdrop for a recent emotional entry after Kurz witnessed a man commit suicide in June.

Kurz, 23, is one of many local bloggers, each of whom offers a unique personal perspective, but all of whom are colored by their Somerville surroundings.

There is no way to say how many blog sites are Somervillecentric, but Adam Gaffin, founder and editor of online Boston happenings sites Boston Online and Universal Hub, said he estimates there are a lot more than the 45 Somerville bloggers he lists. There are Somerville bloggers on other blog havens such as Xanga, LiveJournal, and myspace.com. Gaffin said he finds bloggers from Somerville, Cambridge, and Jamaica Plain "more likely . . . to identify where they're from than residents of most Boston neighborhoods."

Susan Kaup started "The Life and Times of Sooz" three years ago and uses it to display her photography and promote local events she organizes, such as the recent Game Night at the True Grounds coffeeshop in Ball Square.

"It's my life's hub," she said of her blog, "so anything I'm working on or thinking about goes on there." Kaup, 32, owns 15 Internet domain names, including ballsquare.com, which she just purchased because she is such a fan of her neighborhood.

Many bloggers count success by the number of readers, or hits, their weblogs receive each week.

Jesse Gersten is a stand-up comedian who uses his blog, "Jalapeno Burns," to share cartoons that might be hard to translate onstage and to talk about his stand-up experience. He also uses the space to rant about current events and odd bits of popular culture.

He said he gets about 1,000 hits weekly, depending on how universal his posts are. When he writes about current events, his hits increase as web surfers Google the hot topics of the day.

"When I get the little write-up here and there, I also get new visitors, and a handful become regulars," he said.

Margaret Sanford began "The Son Always Rises: Journal of a Working Mother" to soothe her abnormal sleeping patterns when her son Eric was a baby.

"I just started writing it down trying to get my thoughts out," she said.

As Eric began to develop regular sleep patterns (the titular figure of her blog will be 2 in September), Sanford kept writing. When she doesn't have anything she wants to discuss about her life, she writes book reviews. After some positive feedback from friends and strangers, she e-mailed a few reviews to ChickLitBooks.com, which publishes them in exchange for free books.

"I really enjoy writing and it has given me something creative to do," she said, "and it has given me confidence."

Sanford's recent posts detail events in her hectic summer such as a dryer fire in her condo, the lackluster medical care she received after a recent operation on her knee, and the "convoluted process" of trying to

get a Somerville building permit for an addition to her condo.

Andrew Grumet, a software consultant who started a blog more than two years ago, began it as a research experiment.

"We can think of a weblog as a special kind of home page that has a time element. Or, even better, as a public, online diary," he wrote in his Deep Thinking About Weblogs essay. "So why all the excitement? Everybody seems to have one and yet a weblog feels more like a pet rock than a revolution."

Grumet said a lot of the excitement comes from the confidence keeping a blog gives its author.

"It's that the same motivation that might inspire someone to write a book is fulfilled by writing on the web," he said. "It's a chance for you to put your thoughts in a place for other people to consider."

Grumet's online thoughts steer toward the technical.

"I tend to attract a geeky audience because I'm a programmer, and I tend to unabashedly write in programmer lingo without explaining it," he said.

Grumet said he thinks blogs could be most important for the writer to read later.

"Weblogs are a strange mix of public and private," he said.

"It's something nice to be able to share a little bit of yourself in a very unselfish way, and to be able to go back and see what you were thinking a year ago and see what you've learned."

Ed Giardina, a software developer, said his blog played a role in his landing his current job.

"The blogging software that runs on my website was written by me," he said.

"I was able to showcase that to my current employer," Boston-based web software company Pica, "and he was impressed enough to give me a shot."

Giardina said having a blog is like having his "own little social sandbox."

"I can talk about whatever I want, keep others informed about things in my life, and pretty much say whatever I want without real worry of what other people might think," he said.

SIDEBAR:

TRUE LOCAL GRIT

The following are excerpts from blogs posted by Somerville residents:

I grew up in Cambridge. By the time I was 20 I knew 10 or 15 people my age that had died. None of them in car accidents. I lost friends to cancer, gunshots and hiking accidents, but none of them were behind the wheel when they died. Why? Because we lived in an urban area with a decent public transportation system. Most of my peer group didn't get their licenses until they were in college. There was simply no need. Our parents tended to have one family car, so the people that did drive had very limited access to cars.

It's just another reason to put safe sidewalks into the suburbs. Just another reason to rethink our complete dependence on cars.

This from the woman with the gimpy knee who's been driving into Boston to get to work!

THE SON ALWAYS RISES

12:09 pm: The Red Line inbound to Ashmont peeked around a corner in the tunnel and began its entry into the station much to the relief of the one hundred or more waiting passengers. That sense of relief was quickly sent reeling into a growing feeling of shock, disbelief, and anxiety.

As the train pulled into the station like it had done thousands and thousands of times before without incident, something new and disturbing happened right before my eyes. A Man about forty in brown corduroy pants, a dark yellow t-shirt, and Converse One Stars said his final goodbye to this world in a gesture I will never forget. Seemingly out of nowhere, he ran across the platform and wasting no time as the train entered the station, performed a swan dive onto the tracks, just one or two feet in front of the oncoming beast. The train ate him alive.

JEFF GOES TO SOMERVILLE

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