

Madison foursquare

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This issue of *Madison Foursquare* is brought to you by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, who live at 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704.

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Official Business

[SC] I reached out to former *Turbo* contributor Jim Brooks to see if he would be interested in rejoining the apa. He responded positively, so I nominated him via email. I believe he received plenty of seconds. Assuming this is his first issue, I'd like to welcome him back.

Comments

Covers

[SC] Gorgeous! Needlepoint? Our first needlepoint covers, I think. Regarding the back cover, you live near San Francisco, was it declared an Anarchist Jurisdiction by the Trump Administration?

[JG] Lovely cover. I don't do any kind of sewing myself, probably due to traumatic shaming by my mother when I goofed up the first sewing lesson she assigned me—hemming a handkerchief. But weirdly, I did once design a quilt, a craft with which I had absolutely no experience. I felt some relief, at first, when the group of Madison fans embarked on the Tiptree Quilt project to raise money after Pat Murphy announced the Tiptree Award. "Ah ha," I thought. "This is one project that no one will expect me to volunteer for." But they ignored my inexperience and invited me to work with Tracy Benton to create the artwork. I converted Tracy's and my drawing to an Adobe Illustrator image so we could disassemble the thing and send individual block images to each person assigned to sewing those blocks. But first...

...I saved the hand-drawn artwork to a jpeg file and enlarged the pixels so they corresponded to quilt squares, nine in each block. I moved on to the Adobe Illustrator eps file after that. But it was the jpeg pixel part of the process that your cover art reminded me of—and the similarity of raster pixels to the elements of textile art. (In fact, my first thought about your needlepoint work was to wonder if ancient dot matrix printer tech was ever used to construct needlepoint designs.)

All well and good. Except my initial plan for the quilt called for squares that measured ½-in. x ½-in. Everybody screeched in horror and ignored my protests that the gradation would be so much cooler with very tiny squares. I learned my lesson that day. Quilt squares are *not* pixels.



Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] Wonderful Spring Witch flying on her rake and wearing her Wellies.

Regarding curiosity, your point is well stated. The Internet is an ugly thing in many ways. It kills curiosity, but it can also poison conversation/discussion and distort information and news. I think you have to use the Internet carefully to do very specific things, and to rely on it for very little else.

Regarding your comment to [Jim & Diane](#), in the cases of WisCon and the Tiptree Award, both organizations experienced major changes of leadership following big controversies. I wonder if there is something about taking over an existing juggernaut of an organization vs. inventing an organization. Isn't it common in business in the case of a dramatic replacement of leadership, that a new CEO will want to make a clear, clean break with how things were done by the last CEO? Or maybe a new management team just doesn't come in with the same sense of ownership that the creators had and are more willing to risk the survival of the organization by doing things differently, if only to better establish their ownership. Just wondering.

[JG] Nice inside cover! My first thought was, "hey, that's Suzette Haden Elgin!"

My reaction to your comment about WisCon was similar to Scott's. I do think there's a crucial difference between the experiences of individuals who invent an institution, as compared to the experiences of individuals who become active in the institution *after* it has become established. Your suspicion that newer concon members might assume that some things just "happen" and don't notice that they actually need to be planned, may explain what happened in the running-up weeks to this year's Otherwise Award ceremony.

After two years with no in-person award ceremony at WisCon, I reached out to an Otherwise board member and reminded them that I was still in possession of the tiara and an art gift that, years ago, we had bought for a future Tiptree winner (left over from the years when I was a member of the Tiptree Motherboard). Since I was not planning to attend WisCon this year, did they want me to give the items to someone? I noted that I had seen nothing in WisCon emails mentioning an Otherwise Award ceremony. Was there going to be a ceremony this year? I heard nothing in response for more than a week, and then, finally, a board member responded with a surprising note.

Yes, they really appreciated hearing from me, not only with the offer of these items, which they'd totally forgotten about, but also because they hadn't realized that they needed to reach out to the WisCon concon to arrange the ceremony. This was one of the duties I took responsibility for during the 28 years I was a Motherboard officer. I also wrote letters to the winners and made travel and hotel arrangements for them. This year, I suspect that the motherboard members may have assumed that the ceremony, and possibly other tasks I used to take care of, happened automatically.

Someone asked me recently what I would recommend to the struggling WisCon concon. I told them that if anyone on the committee asked me, I would recommend that they start over, new. Maybe even re-name the con. And/or move it to a city closer to the homes of the most active concon members, who are almost all out-of-towners at this point. They should re-invent the con. Those of us who invented WisCon knew backward and forward and inside-out how each element of the convention worked...because we had been involved in the initial planning and execution of those elements. It is a hugely valuable thing to understand how all the parts work, not only because the concon less frequently finds itself reinventing the wheel, but also because concon members feel empowered to actually experiment with new ways to do the work, or even to invent new elements. I think the current concon probably spends a lot of their time talking about how to supply services and events that attendees have come to traditionally expect. The extreme shortage of volunteers must make those discussions really difficult, and probably tends to obscure the power that the concon should feel to make the con be what *they* want it to be, and what they are able to produce.

Hmm, I will have to think more about your suggestion that composers target the most relatable characters for operatic death, i.e., that the choice is not necessarily based in misogyny. I do think it is a bit suspicious that librettists less frequently endow their male characters with enough emotions and sympathetic qualities to make them suitable for dramatic sacrifice. You listed some notable exceptions. And Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is another exception, I think.

Greg Rihn

[SC] Very lovely tribute to your friend Emerson Mitchell. I am sorry for your loss.

I would just as soon view zombie-ism as pure fantasy, so your piece on Dr. Tritt's lecture was disturbing. Isn't a "fermentation-based metabolism" theory behind the zombies in the new series *The Last of Us*? I'm not liking where this is going, pardon me while I jam my fingers in my ears and whistle loudly.

Regarding your comment to us, my father's mother went down the road you described. She broke her hip after my grandfather died and spent 15 years bedridden in a nursing home that basically forced her to spend down all her assets and go on something called Title 19 (I think?) to qualify for government assistance. Though she was barely conversational over most of that time, my dad visited her faithfully every day until she died.

[JG] Did Emerson's system ever get adapted into computer aided games?

Re your comment on Tritt's and Smith's epidemiology research—I recently listened to a fascinating audiobook, *The Premonition*, by Michael Lewis, which focused on a group of freethinking pandemic researchers whose work put them at odds with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Trump administration. The first interesting out-of-the-box-thinking researcher that Lewis spotlighted was 13-year-old Laura Glass whose science project inspired her father, Bob Glass, an accomplished scientist, to develop a model that could describe the evolution of a pathogen, given different parameters (what if the schools were closed? What if a certain percentage of the population wore masks? Etc.). I highly recommend the book. Lewis is a terrific writer.

I think you are right about who will benefit when the baby-boomer generation passes on its wealth, that it will mostly flow to long-term health care providers. It's also clear that subsequent generations profoundly lack the resources to afford anything like the sorts of post-retirement lives that many white, middle class baby-boomers currently enjoy. It would seem that business models whose projections assume that their retired customers can all afford to buy expensive cars and maintain expensive homes will need to be revised after the baby boomer generation dies.

Elizabeth Matson

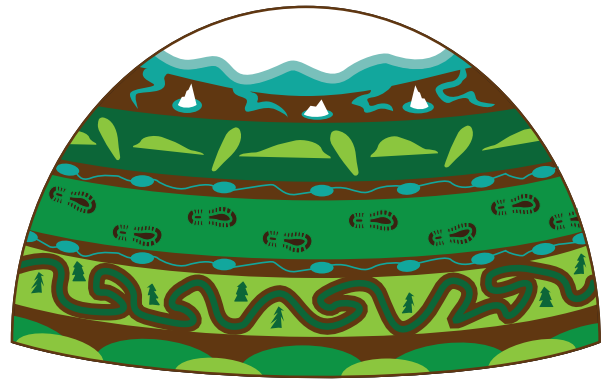
[SC] What fun it was to hang out with you at **Jeannie Bergmann's** party.

I continue to be impressed with your National Park hats. Beautiful work!

Regarding your comment to me, thank you for explaining the situation with yoga. I was pretty sure I remembered you being a practitioner from way back. I expect it's challenging trying to juggle everything you have going on in your life. I can identify with your drive toward strategies to keep mentally and physically healthy as you grow older.

[JG] Hmm, a *knitted, wool hat* for someone that lives in Arizona. I would be interested to know when Gerald (right?) ends up wearing it. Not this month for sure. I have seen the scorching weather maps!

OK, here's a hat idea for the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. I expect that this design, my first try, may be just as impossible to knit as my first quilt design was impossible to sew. But you did ask.... Layers, from top, are: Glacier and melted edge, melt water rivers and icebergs making kettle lakes, drumlins, lakes, footsteps along the trail, more lakes, eskers and trees, and rolling moraine hills.



I see in the photo that your student Aria seems to be mirroring your own lively body gestures while storytelling.

Pat Hario

[SC] Great piece on your shed-demolishing job. As I mentioned in my comment to you last month, helping out was a hoot. My favorite part was the socializing afterward including a tour of your bathroom project.

Regarding your comment to us, we are about finished with home projects now. A couple of

much smaller improvements may still happen, but this garage/driveway thing was the last big thing. Unless a tornado happens by, of course, or a landing commercial jet drops an engine on top of us.

Regarding your comment to me, I would have been equally happy to see either *Tár*, *Women Talking* or *All Quiet on the Western Front* win Best Picture. *Everything Everywhere All At Once* was fun, fast-moving and inventive, but all those other films did a better job of telling stronger stories.

[JG] I also get mad about rich/powerful people who go unpunished for things for which most people would get jail time. Reality Winner, for instance, released one single document about Russian interference in the 2016 United States elections (for which she should have received a medal!), and she was sentenced to five years in prison. Trump's defenders don't think he should even have been charged for mishandling and actively hiding hundreds of documents. I hate it when rich/powerful people are let off easy because they've supposedly already "suffered" the loss of their reputation.

I wish I could have helped demolish your shed. I find that demolishing things, throwing things away, crossing things off lists, even saying "no," occasionally, provides positive emotional benefits. Sadly, my body isn't up for demolition projects that require a crowbar anymore.

Steve Swartz

[SC] It was great seeing you over Memorial Day weekend. I had a very good time.

In my opinion, getting laid off after twenty-six years is shabby treatment by any organization. I'm glad you are finding out that it won't be so bad for you, beyond the bitter ending. When I retired, I knew they were sorry to see me go. I got a party and some official proclamations from higher up after twenty-nine years. At least it felt like they recognized the years of my life I gave them.

We have enjoyed many Studio Ghilbi movies over the years. You have some great films to look forward to. I think animated movies rarely get the appreciation they deserve. I expect Disney's stubborn efforts to remake their animated classics into live-action versions will mostly fail because there is something magic about animation that just doesn't translate to live action. Disney should be investing their vast resources into bringing us new stories via live-action or animation.



Regarding your comment to [Steve & Darlene](#), I also tend to look at AI from the Iain Banks' point of view. Why couldn't our AI gods decide they like us and want to help us enjoy life?

Regarding your comments to me, I saw a pair of three wheeled recumbent bikes (two wheels in front, one in back) the other day. They were stopped and I was a pedestrian so I looked them over a little bit on my way by. Interesting configuration with the steering, and I liked how stable it looked, and they were shorter than other recumbent bikes I've seen. It would take me a while to adjust to not being able to stand up on my pedals when I need the extra push power, but being able to push against my seat might suffice. I will be interested in your experiences.

FYI, I'm going to try a hard seltzer one of these days and I'll let you know what I thought.

Your photos were excellent and sometimes provocative, once again. I'm not sure you need captions, puzzling over them is kinda fun. Baby Shield and Dr. Enderlin were hilarious, the "foetus" skeletons were creepy and the tree growing through the piano was just odd. What's not to like?

[JG] Excellent reviews. Thank you.

I liked your explanation of the different flavors of layoff—attack on sense of self-worth vs the end of a relationship. I think that the relationship-severing metaphor, while certainly painful, seems more likely to allow quicker recovery than would damage to one's sense of self-worth. But I'd bet that some people experience both flavors when they get laid off or fired—they lose their most important relationship from which they had previously drawn their sense of self-worth.

My own layoff from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources did not attack my sense of self-

worth because the DNR actually wanted me to stay, if I would only let them re-classify me as an “administrative assistant.” Even if I was no longer officially labeled as a graphic artist, I would probably have done much of the same work I did before, though with less agency. But I was certain that the DNR would need to have *somebody* do the design work, considering their budget (more than six million dollars annually) for the production of high-end publications. I was confident that if I let them lay me off along with the other full-time graphic designer, they would be forced to hire us as consultants, only for much more money than we were currently earning as salaried employees. So, I lost nothing of my sense of self-worth. But neither did my layoff feel like it severed me from an important relationship, since I kept doing the same work, for some of the same people, in addition to finding new clients, many of them with really interesting projects.

The most difficult thing I dealt with when I was laid off was the thing that **Pat Hario** frequently refers to in her zines, the fear that I would not be able to afford basic living expenses. I worried about dry spells when I wouldn't be earning an income. Actually, it was extremely unlikely that I would get into severe financial difficulty, but I didn't actually begin to feel confident that the risk I'd taken had been a smart one for more than a year after I went freelance. I have no doubt that, if I had been supporting, or helping to support a family, I would have found it very difficult to take the risk and start my own business.

Your suggestion of a cross-town version of croquet as a *TurboParty* event, conjured up an image of a player confronted by an angry homeowner and a cop after their ball shattered a stained-glass window and bonked an outraged cat. Perhaps we could just schedule a game of Cross-Ally-Bowling-Ball-Tag.

I might be interested in the idea of a holiday *Turbo* one-shot. Don't reject it out of hand.

The “Baby Shield” ad immediately got me thinking about the fears and neuroses that the inventor of this thing must have been dealing with. I imagine him (I am definitely imagining a “him”) making a pitch to a group of investors, and saying, “We're all horrified by the thought of actually touching an infant, am I right?” And, judging by the fact that this ad apparently exists in the real world, I guess that enough people at that table replied, “Yeah, man!”

I think that one of the reasons, maybe the main reason, I dislike atonal music is that I've got a fixed

and prejudiced notion of what I want/need from music, and since atonal music doesn't satisfy that want/need, I reject it. I am completely aware that I am probably rejecting something that might satisfy me in a different manner if I tried to learn how to appreciate it. I certainly experienced a transformation in understanding when I finally listened to an opera without expectations. Suddenly I heard the voices of the people singing as another musical instrument and knew that it didn't really matter that I didn't understand the words. I suspect that I could go through a similar transformation of understanding with atonal music if I was persistent and attempted to learn some music theory. Bela Bartok's *Solo Violin Sonata* features prominently in the book we are discussing in June for the SFw/oBorders book discussion—*Light from Uncommon Stars*, by Ryka Aoki. I actually found a version on YouTube and hit play, so Scott and I could listen to it while we read the appropriate passages of the book aloud to one another. But it only took me few moments before I said, “Nope, not now,” and turned it off. Finding something in that music that interests me will definitely take some work. On the other hand, Scott keeps telling me that I should be able to learn to appreciate coffee and beer, that these are acquired tastes. But I am pretty sure it's a lost cause. So, maybe, atonal music will be another lost cause.

Walter Freitag

[SC] I liked your Part 9: Rituals essay a lot this month. Your observations about how rituals are so much a part of our lives, and what purposes rituals serve, were all very interesting.

[JG] Nice essay on the universality of rituals.

A weird note: A while ago, you extolled the benefits of cold showers and I subsequently began experimenting at the YMCA, after my swim, with ending my warm shower with a few moments under a spray of ice-cold water. That has begun to feel so good to me that I've extended the cold part of my shower and reduced the warm part, so I now take a 50-50 warm/cold shower. I'm not sure what to make of it, but there it is. Well, I've always enjoyed swimming in open, fairly cold water, so this new behavior isn't necessarily attributable to your zines, but.... Thanks?

So, did you talk with John Michael Greer? Of course, it is unlikely that I will find the answer to this question in your mailing comments, but I have to ask.

Lisa Freitag

[SC] Great convention report on VideoGameMusic Con. I had no idea this existed, but it's so cool you found it and discovered a way to fit in. Have you seen the movie *Tár*? I think the VGM world you described gives an interesting insight into what the ending of that movie means.

Thank you for the follow-up information on Denny and Terry and the house. You, Greg, Karen Schaffer, Mike Ward and a ton of other folks deserve thanks for all that got done that needed to be done. What a great community. We're sorry to have missed the memorial.

[JG] You might be interested in a book that the SFw/oBorders book discussion group read for June. It's *Light from Uncommon Stars*, by Ryka Aoki (who is one of the Otherwise winners this year, along with Rivers Solomon) Two of the main characters of *Light* are world class violinists. The younger of the two, an Asian, trans woman, named Katrina, loves to play music written for video games and anime, though she also plays a difficult piece by Bartok later in the novel (as I mentioned in my comment to [Steve S](#)). There is a lot of discussion in the novel about the enormous audience among young people for video game and anime music, and comparisons with the stodgy world of classical performers. (I think Aoki totally agrees with you that "the stuffy, snobby world of classical music is being kept alive by the lowest of lowbrow culture.") Mixed up with the gorgeous descriptions of music technique, and the art of violin construction, and what music means to people struggling with identity issues and fighting to survive, are two other wild stories: (1) an alien starship captain who fled a war in her galaxy and, with her family, bought and runs Stargate Donut Restaurant in order to camouflage the construction of an actual star gate, and (2) a brilliant violinist (Katrina's teacher) who has made a deal with the devil to deliver her student to hell. In addition to all that, it's a warm, funny story with an underlying theme, that music may be the salvation for humanity.

It's interesting to see (and hear) new artists and types of music being created for new audiences. It looks like the changes are reverberating onto the classical music world, whether they appreciate it or not. I read an article recently on BBC.com titled "Gen Z and Young Millennials' Surprising Obsession." Apparently, the

traditional world of classical music is getting a shot in the arm from young people who are "modernizing what has long been branded music's most elite and stuffy genre." ClassicFM.com summarized research showing a huge surge in Millennials and Gen Zers streaming classical music. "With the rise of streaming services, young people are listening to more Mozart and Bach than they did ten years ago. And during lockdown, classical music has experienced a second boom."

I need to thank you, Lisa, for pointing me toward some of the music you've been listening to. I do not play video games or see much anime, but I have liked quite a few pieces of music that I've heard so far. (A couple hours ago, I began listening to a one-hour classical guitar cover of the theme by Sentimental Goods (?) from

The Last of Us and then I checked out Aoki's playlist for her novel, *Light from Uncommon Stars*, that she posted on [largeheartedboy.com](#). There were some interesting pieces there.) Your posts definitely increased my understanding and enjoyment of Aoki's novel.

Thanks for your account of how local friends and fans pitched in to deal with Denny and Terry's belongings and house. It's a sad thing, but also very wonderful to see how many people care about them. And thank you for answering my un-asked question about Terry.



Jeannie Bergmann

[SC] Thank you (and Fred) for the Not At WisCon party. I had a lovely time; it was fun to meet some new folks and see your place.

So, the ablation option would involve a surgical procedure? Any choice that would keep you away from blood thinner drugs, not cause brain fog or cost a fortune might be worth it.

[JG] Thanks for the term, "flash." Interesting, but I suspect that's probably not a genre for me. I began what I thought was a short story a few weeks ago, but it turned into a novella. More on that later in the zine.

Since I continue to write fiction, I have been thinking about joining a writers' group. Though I love sharing my memoirish stories here in the apa, I don't really expect in-depth critiques from my fellow apans. On that note...maybe you are over-estimating the amount of scrutiny apa members devote to your poems if you are astonished that so many of us failed to recognize the poem as AI-generated. I do appreciate your comments on AI creations though.

You label the claim that AI plagiarizes as bullshit. I do think there is something to the accusation, at least in visual art. I saw an example of an AI-generated image that included a contorted version of the logo of a famous stock photo company. It's been decades since people began stealing images from web pages. They are warned frequently that they must get permission and pay for their use...but now that it's AI-generated image, that rule doesn't apply?

I think it's likely that book covers will mostly be created by AI from now on. Think of all those book publishers and editors who used to give art direction to the artists, using phrases that now sound remarkably like prompts, because it wasn't practical to let the artist read the manuscript. The art direction notes have always had something (often most) to do with what kind of images were most likely to tempt a buyer to pull the book from the sales rack. AI is a cost-effective way to create cover art and most likely will totally push human artists out of the field. At least that's my guess.

Your poem "Alternate," struck a chord with me, since my reams have turned into such a fertile source for my own writing. But again, more later.

Andy Hooper

[SC] WorldCon in Seattle in 2025? Really? I would like to go to Glasgow in 2024, mostly just for the excuse to travel around Great Britain again, but I'm not sure we will be far enough along paying off our garage project by then to manage a big overseas trip. It's hard to pin down any big travel plans right now.

Enjoyable article on the 1956 Worldcon in New York. It's a little hard for me to imagine what it must have been like. I was only a few months old back then. It's funny to think that an 850-person convention would be wrestling with some of the same size issues that we wrestle with today at a 5,000–10,000 person event.

[JG] I have to ask. What about the release of Microsoft Windows '95 during the Glasgow worldcon was traumatizing?

What a great Nycon II summary of Dick Eney's con report! I loved it.

I'm on board with planning a *TurboCon*, but hope that the Seattle relaxicon (a wonderful idea, by the way) will not be titled or subtitled *TurboCon 2*, mainly because that would cause way too many people to assume that *TurboCon 3* will necessarily follow. For some reason, I am not attracted to the idea of planning an annual

convention. Maybe we could call it something else, a *Turbo* gathering, or progressive party, or—?

Fall 2024 sounds like a good time to aim for. We should also discuss whether this con will be an invitation-only event, meant for members and former members of the *Turbo-Charged Party Animal Apa* or whether other fans in the Madison area will also be welcome. We could think about scheduling some events (like a picnic at a park, for instance) that would be open to non-Turbans, while others (in people's homes) would be invitation-only. A rough estimate of the number of attendees will be crucial in the choice of venues. For instance, if we follow through on the idea of a progressive party, with some events held at private homes, it wouldn't be practical if there were, say, more than 30 or 40 participants. At least, that's how I would feel about hosting part of the con at our house.

By the way, Andy, I finally got around to sending Joe and Edie electronic copies of Scott's and my apazines from the past many years for the Fan History Project. At least all the apazines that I saved as pdfs. Most of my apazines were laid out in obsolete software and I can no longer open their files, or (by far the largest percentage of my zines:) they were typed on paper. At Joe and Edie's request, I'm sending them all the three-ring binders with paper copies of my older apazines, one binder at a time. Eventually they will post all my apazines, from the late-1970s to now.

Carrie Root

[SC] Such nice photos, those smiling baby pictures are pretty fabulous.

Regarding your comment to us, glad you liked *Lessons in Chemistry*. This month I blew through something called *The Trees* by Percival Everett. When a pair of black detectives from the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation arrive in Money, MS to investigate a series of brutal murders of white men, they find at each crime scene an unexpected second dead body. The long dead body of black man resembling Emmett Till. This novel is a crime story that takes a dive into the supernatural as it comments on racism, lynching and police violence. Not for everyone, I found it fast-paced, funny, violent and thought provoking. Everett is a literature professor and author of many books. He has a new one coming out called *Dr. No*, a take off on James Bond that has gotten some attention in *Locus*. I may look for it. I just finished John LeCarré's *A Perfect Spy*. The author told a complicated story in a sort of



inside/out way that is interesting intellectually but did not really grab me emotionally. Long chapters also mean slow progress for me because I don't like to start a chapter unless I have enough time to finish it. Although it took me a long time to get into it, it was brilliantly written and had a great ending. I think I will appreciate it a lot more when I re-read it, which is my plan for many of my LeCarré novels.

The garage project is 99.9% done as I write this. The only thing left is a final okay from the electrical inspector. There may be a minor problem with where they hung the new box in the garage that we are waiting to get resolved.

We are looking forward to seeing you guys later this summer.

[JG] Love Jonah's lopsided smile—reminds me of Harrison Ford's grin.

I feel like we cashed in our invisible House Renovation Loyalty Reward Card: "Get one renovation at reduced cost and a fast timetable with every six renovations completed at normal speed and cost!" Make sure you get your card punched!

Speaking of Epic, it would be fun if we could arrange for a group tour of the amazing, fantasy world that is the Epic campus as part of TurboCon. I don't know if that would actually be possible, just blue-skying. But it's something to think about.

Yeah, swimming isn't the most efficient way, time-wise, to exercise. I drive to the YMCA and spend about 70-80 minutes actually swimming. But the additional time taken up with driving, undressing, dressing, and showering...well, it ends up gobbling almost three hours of my day. But I would hate to give it up.

Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] Nice photos as usual, but especially the "pod" of pelicans. Upper Mud Lake looks like a good hang out for them. I was riding through Brittingham Park

the Thursday after Memorial Day to find Monona Bay almost completely covered in algae. They had several of the weed "harvesters" out there but they were just starting to cut open lanes through the muck.

Jeanne and I are enjoyed *Light from Uncommon Stars*, which we are reading aloud for this month's book discussion. Did you get to meet Ryka Aoki at WisCon? Impressions?

We recently completed the Apple TV series, *Extrapolations*. The episodes were all pretty good but uneven. My two favorite episodes were the two guys trying to make an illegal delivery of an unknown cargo and the New Years Eve party where the husband makes a surprise announcement to his wife.

This was a profoundly disappointing year for morel mushrooms. I headed up to the Farmers Market on the square as early as 6:30 am for several weeks in search of them. I only once found a vendor. He was selling them for \$100 per pound. I bought a half pound for a stupendous streak dinner (hail Chef Jeanne!) That was it. I traveled out to the west side market where I've bought them in the past and saw no sign of them. I even dragged [Steve Swartz](#) to the square at 6:30 am on Memorial Day weekend to help me look one last time. Sharp-eyed Steve noticed a vendor with a sign listing morels that was crossed off. I would have asked the vendor about them, but he'd stepped away from his booth. Jeanne thinks the local sellers have found eager restaurant bulk buyers and no longer have to deal with farmers markets. Or it was a bad year. I may have to start looking at other strategies for getting them next year. One (great) meal was not enough.

[JG] We are looking forward to seeing *Schmicago*, but haven't gotten to it yet. I suspect we will recognize far



more of the musical references than we did in the first show, *Schmigadoon*.

Here's what we've been watching:

Traitors (Netflix) This is an interesting and entertaining British miniseries set immediately after WWII in London. It follows a young English woman (Feef Symonds) recruited by Americans to identify a Soviet spy inside the British Cabinet Office. The Americans don't trust the Brits to find the spy and are, at the same time, beginning to build the CIA. Thus, there are three "sides:" Brits, Americans and Soviets and they all distrust the others, and spend time spying on and assassinating each other. Feef is very smart, but ends up being swatted back and forth like a badminton shuttlecock. She got involved in the first place to contribute to the war effort, but gradually realizes that she is a pawn. This series definitely contradicts sexy, exciting spy movies. There is no second season, but if there had been another season, I suspect that the writers planned to focus on the famous British spy, Kim Philby. I would have watched it.

Happy Valley (AMC) Catherine Cawood (played by Sarah Lancashire, of *Last Tango in Halifax*) is a police sergeant in the West Yorkshire community of Calder Valley, also known as Happy Valley for its high incidence of drug-related problems. Cawood and Tommy Lee Royce (an excellent villain, played by James Norton who we were more familiar with as the very moral vicar in *Grandchester*), face off over the course of three seasons of *Happy Valley*. It's a really excellent show. I love the fact that Lancashire plays a middle-aged, unglamorous beat cop who is both supremely capable and a genuinely caring person.

The Consultant (Amazon Prime) This is a weird little series about a consultant, Regus Patoff (Christoph Waltz) who is hired to improve the business of the app-based gaming company CompWare after its founder and CEO is killed. This is a genuinely creepy story. We're never sure whether Regus is the devil, an alien, or a really good management specialist. Yeah, even

in the final episode, we're not really sure what he is. And many dangling threads are never resolved. I think I stuck with the show because I like Christoph Waltz's acting so much, but I don't know if I can recommend it to you unless you are also a big fan of Waltz.

Silo (Apple TV) *Silo* is a really excellent series based on a post-apocalyptic SF trilogy by Hugh Howey—*Wool*, *Shift* and *Dust*. The story is set in a giant underground silo that plunges hundreds of stories deep. It's a fascinating world and the science fiction is well done. People must walk up and down the silo's spiral stairway to visit other levels; there are no elevators. But since people seldom make the very long climb all the way up and down, cultures in the top, mids, and bottom levels have diverged over the years. Porters, wearing giant backpacks, walk continuously up and down, carrying messages, packages and news. The silo is lined with living quarters, farms, governmental offices, clinics, recycling/repair areas, and at the bottom of the shaft, a gigantic steam-driven engine. People live in a society full of regulations, most of which enforce a total ban on historical information and "pre-Silo relics." No one knows how or why the silo was built, or what happened in the early years of the silo's existence. Everyone believes that the world outside the silo is lethal to humans, but other than that, they know nothing of what lies beyond the desolate landscape shown on a monitor on the top level. There are so many secrets and the Silo is getting shabby. It seems that it will soon be impossible to repair all the essential machines that are wearing out. I'm not saying anything beyond that. I've read and remember the books, and I don't want to spoil it for those of you who want to watch this great show. They've done a fine job translating the novels to video. The visuals are awesome and Rebecca Ferguson is excellent as the protagonist, Juliette Nichols.

Prehistoric Planet 2 (Apple TV) We haven't finished watching season 2 yet, but it's really well done. It is produced by the BBC and narrated by Sir David

Attenborough. The documentary follows dinosaurs and other prehistoric animals recreated with CGI, living around the globe in the late Cretaceous period, 66 million years ago, just before the asteroid crashed and the dinosaurs went extinct. The first season made waves by depicting dinosaurs using current palaeontological research such as feathered dinosaurs. I am looking forward to seeing the swimming T-Rex, as shown in the previews for season 2. Very entertaining and beautiful.

Barry (Max, formerly HBOMax). Scott and I are three-quarters finished with this series and completely hooked. Bill Hader plays a former marine, and a poorly paid, low-level hit man. He's depressed about how his life has turned out. When he reluctantly travels to Los Angeles to execute a hit on an actor who is bedding a mobster's wife, he follows his target into acting class and ends up instantly drawn to the community of eager hopefuls and the craft of acting. Henry Winkler is great as the acting teacher. While Barry wants to start a new life as an actor, his criminal past won't let him walk away so easily. We're almost through with season 3 (of 4) and it's hard to see how it can go on much longer. There's simply no way for Barry to unentangle himself from his murderous profession. It's darkly funny and gets darker with each season. It echos both *Dexter* and *The Kaminsky Method*. Bill Hader, as Barry, is just amazing. Scott and I have been hearing about *Barry* for years, but it wasn't until we read some reviews of its final season that we decided to take a look. I'm glad we waited till the series was complete. I would have hated to wait for a year between seasons.

Spiderman: Across the Spiderverse (the big screen). This is the first movie we've seen in a theater for more than a month. There just hasn't been much showing that interested us. Scott wanted to see *Spiderman* more than I did, but as the end credits rolled on the screen I think both of us were equally impressed. The visuals were mind-bending. There are movies whose dialog is so fast-moving and intense that I practically feel I have to sit on the edge of my seat and concentrate in order to follow the story (I love movies like that). But *Spiderman* did fast and intense with *images* rather than words. But the thing I really liked about it was that the story asked the question, why does every version of *Spiderman* (and other superheros) have to endure a terrible tragedy in order to become a superhero? Tragedies are *canon events* in each comic book version, each movie, each animation, and cannot be omitted. In the multiverse, an association of Spidies enforce those canon events

and works to prevent anyone from stopping them from happening. I love this idea. And the movie was a lot of fun too.

We're looking forward to the new season of *Star Trek's Strange New Worlds*.

I'm not looking for an alternative pool to go lap swimming and actually I think I'd hate it if I was forced to use the UW Health Fitness Center in Science Park. Half-hour limits would really frustrate me. I swim for at least 70 minutes and often feel like going longer when I'm in the flow, so to speak. I like the YWCA pool on Cottage Grove Road. I apologize if I gave the impression that I was looking for someplace else to swim.

Thanks for the good wishes for my memoir. A bidding war would be lovely. Hey, and maybe a movie contract, too, while I'm daydreaming? And yes, Diane, I did indeed include the souffle story in my book. More on the book later in this zine.

Hope Kiefer & Karl Hailman

[SC] Thanks for the updates on your family. Congratulations to Forrest for success in a tough housing market.

Thanks for the tip on finding good night viewing spots by checking on-line. The last time Jeanne and I tried to see something in the night sky, we simply drove out of town looking for a likely rural road. It didn't work very well. I have yet to see Northern Lights.

I loved Karl's comment about wiping out on his skates close enough to crawl to the ER. Having crashed on my bike resulting in an ER visit via car back in 2018, I laughed when I read that.

Kim & Kathi Nash

[SC] I never make it all the way through No Mow May. I still have a gas-powered mower, so cutting the long grass is not the problem, I just can't stand looking at it anymore before we get to the end of May. This year though, I thought I'd have to wait because our mower was stored in the basement due to the garage work, and I was absolutely not going to wrestle that thing back out until I was certain I could store it again in the garage. I ended up mowing just before the Memorial Day weekend.

Okay, did you guys really take that opossum picture in your yard? It's awesome.

[JG] You guys, **Diane**, and **Carrie** have created such gorgeous gardens, amazing places to look at flowers

and relax. I admire them and you, really. But I always think, after reading about what all goes into planting and tending those gardens: oh my god, what a lot of work! Here I thought that those raised beds of yours would make it easier to garden because they raised the plants up so you didn't have to bend over so much while you worked in the garden. But it turns out that the infrastructure requires heavy-duty, regular maintenance. Whoosh. It's a good thing that you love to garden.



Our flowers are mostly accidental.

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] You and **Jeannie Bergmann** seem to share a similar view that AI appears to be a useful tool, but not yet ready to wipe out humanity.

[JG] I found it interesting how you made use of research that you understood well, and then asked a question connected to that research in order to test the capabilities of Bing and ChatGBT, I am mulling on the question of how a similar test might work with AI-generated art.

Darlene Coltrain

[SC] Beautiful work, Darlene. Do you guys have plans to do sales at a convention this summer?

[JG] Such gorgeous textiles!

Luke McGuff

[SC] Regarding driving to work in snow storms, Julie is wise about many things. Of the three of us you mentioned, she is the only Madison native. **Jim** and I had to learn our ways around this city as immigrants just like you. If it appears to you that we seem to finally know what we're doing, that's good news for you.

I like your work stories. You are accumulating an enviable set of skills. The zero turn mowers have always looked like fun to me, but I will never learn to operate one because our yard is much too small to justify one. Do you have to load and unload it from a truck to get to all your mowing areas?

Regarding your comment to me, for a city this size, we have an impressive array of food types available in local restaurants. Just across East Washington near La Taguara is a new Colombian place we have not yet tried called La Pollera (Julie may remember it long ago as Shakey's Pizza). If you try it, let us know what you thought. There are several places around town serving Peruvian food. Both Laotian and Vietnamese are also available. There are many adventures out there.

I took **Steve Swartz** on a tour of the extensively remodeled Memorial Union when he was visiting and we got to spend a few hours of a gorgeous day having beers on the terrace. It's one of my favorite places in the city. Consider the date saved.

[JG] It's amusing to imagine all of us streaming out of **Jim** and **Diane**'s house, getting into our cars and reading the apa to one another...

Must try La Taguara. Thanks for the recommendation.

Those were EVIL potatoes that we served you, not deadly potatoes. "Deadly" would suggest that we were trying to poison you.

See you at the terrace in July!

Jim & Ruth Nichols

[SC] I love your travel stories. I think *Amish Bomb Scare* should be the name of your next rock band.

I'm sorry your experience with Amtrak was so bad, but I can't say that I'm surprised. I also had some issues on our trip in 2021 to Seattle on the Empire Builder. Your roomette experience sounded much like ours. I remember it as a tight fit, but the privacy was worth it to us especially as we wanted very much to avoid other passengers and Covid. It sounds like the dining car experience has deteriorated as they continue to shift away from having dining cars at all. Despite all that, I still vastly prefer train travel to flying, unless I'm flying business/first class. Flying coach is awful even when it goes perfectly.

We were in Texas once when the Bluebonnets were in full bloom. People were pulling over to the side of the rural roads and posing their kids with the vast fields of flowers behind them. It sounded like Jim's dad is a lively character at 90. Terrific pictures!

[JG] As time goes on and more people travel long distances, it seems like all modes of travel get less and less comfortable, unless you're wealthy and can afford expensive upgrades. It used to be that air and train travel were marketed as a luxurious, special, and exciting, but now, all the features that were formerly advertised to tempt people to fly or take the train, have been slashed to pump up corporate profits. I wonder if people will begin traveling less for pleasure, given the decidedly un-pleasurable options for doing it. I think a similar thing happened with automobiles. The younger generations have already demonstrated much less interest in driving or owning a car than previous generations. Car ownership is expensive. The more people drive who drive frequently or long distances, the more crowded and dangerous the roads have become. Commuting in huge metropolises often means devoting many hours to getting to and from work. Recently I've read about businesses getting frantic about demanding or convincing people to go back to commuting, and give up working from home. I find it surprising that some business owners seem confused about why people are resisting letting go of their home office. It should be obvious. The business model which includes a large commuting population has many upsides for businesses, but not many, really, for workers. Sorry for going off on a tangent based on your train travel experiences....

WHAT'S NEW

Memoir update

[JG] I met with Timmi Duchamp on Sunday afternoon during WisCon at the Starbucks next to the Concourse Hotel. Here's the verdict: Aqueduct will not be publishing my memoirs. I am disappointed, but not really surprised, I guess. Timmi said that if the text had been exclusively or even mostly about WisCon, the Tiptree/Otherwise Award, and feminist SF, etc. she would have been interested. But the sections of my book that were focused on those things had less feminist analysis than she would want. Also, the length of the books simply does not fit within Aqueduct's publishing plans. I don't know how I would have responded if, as [Carrie](#) speculated might happen, Timmi had asked me to make major cuts in the books. Turns out that I didn't have to answer that question.

Timmi found a lot in the stories that she enjoyed and seemed genuinely glad to have read the books. She complimented my style and praised my story-telling. I appreciated her comments. She gave me some excellent advice. That part of the conversation was fun.

She pumped up my confidence to pursue publication. I told her about my plans to offer the books to the Wisconsin Historical Society Press and she thought that was an excellent idea. We talked too, about WisCon's future. Timmi says that this will be the last year she plans to run an Aqueduct table at WisCon, even if WisCon recovers from its hiatus and returns in 2025. She's running out of energy and is frankly worried that when she eventually steps back from publishing (probably soon) that none of her staff will be able to afford the time or money to continue the work. Aqueduct has never produced a significant profit so it's unlikely that it could attract a buyer. In a way, Timmi sees both WisCon and Aqueduct winding down at the same time. So, that's kind of sad.

I am ready to move forward—and will offer my books to WHS Press, and/or offer individual stories to smaller markets (ones that publish humorous writing, for instance), and maybe, eventually, will self-publish. Onward.

A Reddit Pandemic Story

[JG] It's been almost a month since WisCon, and I haven't submitted my books to WHS Press yet. I put it off temporarily because I became immersed in writing another story. You might recall in the last issue of *Madison Foursquare*, that I mentioned that I was writing stories based on vivid, detailed dreams. I became stuck in mid-May, after a complicated HALF a dream-story ended in a cliff-hanger. I wrote down the incomplete story and hoped to experience the post-cliffhanger part the next night, but nope, that didn't happen. For the next week or two, I tried to continue writing the story by using more traditional writing methods, such as pounding my forehead with my fist, doodling, pacing, staring at the screen, that sort of thing. The story progressed slowly and the characters gradually became much more real in my head. Then the characters began showing up in my dreams again, usually acting out whole scenes, which compelled me to scramble out of bed in the middle of the night and tiptoe into the bathroom, where I scribbled notes onto a legal pad, trying not to disturb Scott, but mostly determined not to let the scene disappear in the way that dreams often do. The very short story grew and began looking like it was going to turn into a novelette. I got stuck at one point and couldn't figure out how to stage a turning point in the plot, and that same night one of my main characters turned to look directly at me and impatiently addressed me. It was very weird. "You know," she said, "I know more people than just

the characters in this story!” Yes, ma’am. Of course! And then I knew what to do.

My story weaves together many of the conventions and stories of typical Reddit posts—including bridezillas, entitled Karens, malicious compliance, petty revenge, marital woes, and conflicts between step-parents and children. When I read or listen to these stories on-line, I usually assume they’re heavily warped by the teller to enhance their own perspective and demonize their antagonists. So, I twisted the conventional teller-centric point of view in my story. The story takes place during the first half of 2020—when the pandemic, Trump’s stupidities, and George Floyd’s murder dominated our attention in the US. I think parts of it are funny, others fairly serious. The story is almost totally told in the form of dialog, and written from the point of view of a slightly unreliable narrator. It is not an SF story and is heavily character-driven. It’s occurred to me that maybe this story could be converted into a play or screenplay. I don’t know. I need to get a little distance from it. I think perhaps I need to join a writers’ group.



The story is too long to post here. By the time I finished, the story had grown into a novella. I found a satisfying way to end it a few days ago and have set it aside for a while, so I can return to the project of submitting my memoir to WHS Press...right after we publish this apazine.

Light switch covers

[JG] I have been fascinated by **Diane** and **Jim**'s very cool light-switch covers. We have two arty light-switch covers—a rocket ship and Jupiter—but I've begun browsing for others on-line. Of course, once you start looking on-line for a thing, the Internet inundates you with more examples of that thing. A few weeks ago, I ordered three light-switch covers that I like. We installed two octopus light switch covers near our front door. Another light-switch cover, painted with the image of two steaming cups of coffee, will be installed in our kitchen, right below an amusing art print that depicts coffee-delivery by forklift. I may not be done shopping for light-switch covers yet.

