



Madison Foursquare

81

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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Comments

Cover

[SC] Very nice cover, **Ruth**. Perfect summer cover. Thank you.

[JG] I liked it too!

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] I enjoyed your experiment using ChatGTP to turn your essay into a Shakespearian treatise. I think it turned out well. I know you did some edits, too.

Regarding your comment to me, I enjoy seeing Mary Trump every time she shows up on TV. As much as I want Donald to end up behind bars in some sense, if I had to bet money, I'd bet that doesn't actually happen. Between his age at time of conviction (probably close to 80), complications from Secret Service obligations, his likely deteriorating health/mental acuity and political squeamishness I expect he will end up at home or in some kind of hospital setting.

[JG] I just read a long piece on how ChatGTP is being asked to write "in the style of..." and some authors and artists are demanding to be paid for their work which ChatGTP scrapes up to accomplish this work. Sarah Silverman has some really interesting things to say about how her livelihood is being threatened. I fully support the writers' and actors' demands that this issue be addressed before ending their strike.

Catie Pfeifer

[SC] I loved your zine and photos about your adventures in cosplaying. What a great hobby (passion?) and it's awesome that you are sharing it with us. It's impressive to me, also, how popular anime has become not just in *Turbo*, but in my own family. I have several nieces and nephews (and their kids) who are into it. Between you (with cosplay) and **Lisa** (with anime music), we are getting an interesting look at something that is staking out space in our shared cultural landscape that I should try to not ignore.

[JG] Great photos! Looks like you are having a lot of fun!

Thanks so much for your comment on my sunflower piece.

Greg Rihn

[SC] Your piece on the Oddities & Curiosities Expo really drew me in this time. I would have loved poking around that place for a few hours. So the Expo visits different cities every year? This is

the sort of thing that would make a perfect day trip by train to Milwaukee, Chicago or Minneapolis so I wouldn't have to deal with driving or staying overnight. It's so sad we can't have nice (or even sensible) things.

I liked your cartoon. I just read a piece in the *Washington Post* (I think) about one of the biggest uses of AI so far has been to create dumb jokes, memes and humorous short videos. Many of them are very stupid, but sometimes funny.

[JG] The situation with Mary Nohl's house in Fox Point reminds me of my former literature professor, who had a collection of art and books in Shorewood, north of Milwaukee. She had corresponded with Jean Paul Sartre and also had photos of herself with Sartre. She donated her house in Shorewood to a museum, and I wonder now, what happened with that. It certainly was not converted into a museum, but possibly its contents were more portable than Nohl's artwork and so it was easier to handle.

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] Your Bardic dinner presentation sounded great. I wish I could have seen it. We have just finished (and enjoyed) the *Endeavour* series, and a few years ago we finished all the seasons of *Inspector Lewis*, but we have never seen a single episode of the original *Inspector Morse* show. This is a weird place to be, but *Morse* has not been easily available to us. I have heard great things about it. Is this 35-year-old series worth the effort to track down?

I thought your essay on Cleopatra was very good and I'm inclined to agree with you, but I have one question. Wasn't Cleopatra's father Ptolemy XII? Doesn't her Greek heritage run through him and isn't the unconfirmed identity of her mother the source of the belief that Cleopatra VII may have been black?

[JG] I wonder if some peoples' insistence on Cleopatra's black skin is simply a reaction to white reactionaries' insistence that Jesus and Santa Clause (and others) are white. It's an ownership thing rather than an opinion based on history. So, yeah, your idea seems likely—that the casting decision is rooted in the desire/belief that Cleopatra, as a famous African leader, *should* be categorized as a person of color. And I also agree with you that it's sort of a relief that this categorization is meant to enhance, not denigrate, her image. However, it doesn't seem that her revised image will change much. I read that the movie is pretty awful.

If I ever read *Bad Girls Through History*, I would want to read a copy annotated by you.

Andy Hooper

[SC] Sir Cecil Creape had to be the ugliest host you have yet profiled, but still an interesting story. Steve Bieler is hilarious.

Regarding your comment to **Jim and Ruth** on AmTrak and childhood railroad dining experiences brought back some memories for me. I made a couple trips to L.A. with my mom back in the very late 1950s and early 1960s when she would make regular trips out to visit her family, who all lived there. I believe we rode The City of Los Angeles that picked us up in Marion, IA. My memories are hazy, but very sweet. I loved it. I also feel lucky that, as an infrequent and reluctant flyer, I got to experience Midwest Express Airlines a couple times. The whole plane was two-across (no middle seat) leather seats, lush food on real dinnerware, a free glass of champagne on morning flights or glass of white or red wine on evening flights and everyone got fresh, warm cookies after take-off. Most people have no idea how pleasant flying could be, even if you don't happen to be stinking rich.

[JG] Well, I hope that you and **Carrie** are right that the State Historical Society Press will find my writing attractive. I submitted a book proposal to them last month and received an immediate reply (which I really appreciated, after the long silence for *Aqueduct*). Apparently, I will hear from them sometime in late September. Thanks, Andy, for your very complimentary comments about my stories these past years.

Carrie Root

[SC] Regarding your comment to me, "no cash" transactions have not yet reached Madison, at least to my knowledge. My first response to "no cash" is, isn't that illegal? Aren't businesses required to accept "legal tender" for transactions? I thought that if cash could be refused, then it would undermine the value of paper currency and coins. Maybe not, or maybe I missed the memo on that.

Nice flower photos, once again. We are looking forward to seeing you guys here in Madison this summer.

[JG] Your comment to **Luke** about the smaller size of Madison, compared to Seattle, being the thing that makes socializing easier reminded me of a

conversation I once had with my sister Julie. She made a similar observation—that she was able to do more things with friends in Madison than seemed possible in Austin because of travel distances.

Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] Thanks as always for keeping us current on the medical front for both of you. Great news about Sumana’s success at the Otherwise auction at WisCon. Three thousand dollars is a very good auction, especially considering a reduced-size, post-pandemic convention. I’m still glad Jim is moving to retire as Otherwise Treasurer.

Nice photos. The one of Diane and Terry is very good. The bike bridge over University Bay Drive just opened. I’m planning to try it out on my bike soon. I was over that way several weeks ago but had to detour off the path, cross University Ave and take Regent, Bluff and Kendall to get around all the construction.

[JG] My allergy to latex incurred delays and problems with my hip surgeries, similar to Diane’s. But my hip replacements were screwed in, not cemented—which, as far as I know, is still the standard procedure for most hip replacements, except in the case of elderly patients whose hip replacements get glued in, under the assumption that it will be unlikely that their replacements will wear out. I guess knee replacements are a whole different thing, though mine had to be specially sourced to make sure it contained no latex. I’m so sorry that this has all discombobulated your year! But very glad you found out about the problem before surgery!

Glad to hear that you’re looking to retire from the Otherwise Award, Jim.

This is the first year in a long time that I haven’t read any of the novels nominated for a Hugo. (Usually I’ve read most of them by the time the nominations come

out.) This year, all I’ve read is one novella (*Where the Drowned Girls Go*) and one series (*Children of Time*). However, I’ve seen five of six movies. The only movie I haven’t seen is *Turning Red*. Actually, I haven’t even heard of that one. I’ve also seen a few of the nominees for Best Dramatic Presentation, but I’m definitely out of the loop for written fiction this year.

Here are some streamed and theater movies that we’ve seen in the past month. Looking back, it seems that we were mostly attracted to movies based on real life stories. We are watching a couple series too, but I will wait to talk about them until we’ve finished them.

Blackberry (Prime)— A movie about the company behind the first smartphone, the BlackBerry, which experienced a period of explosive success (when its product was nicknamed “Crackberry” by its addicted users) but met a catastrophic demise when iPhone leapfrogged its smartphone technology. It’s the familiar story of what happens to a company when the creative guys who invented tech in their garage get taken over by marketing executives—the old t-shirts vs suits story. Primarily a character study. Entertaining.

Georgetown (Netflix)—A 2019 American crime drama, based on Franklin Foer’s 2012 *New York Times Magazine* article, “The Worst Marriage in Georgetown,” which details the 2011 murder of 91-year-old socialite Viola Herms Drath, by her much-younger second husband (Ulrich Mott) in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington D.C. Christoph Waltz stars alongside Vanessa Redgrave and Annette Bening. Waltz’s character, Ulrich Mott, excels in complex, huge lies, that would make George Sanchez or Donald Trump jealous. Fascinating.

Breach (Prime)— a 2007 American spy thriller based on the true story of Robert Hanssen, an FBI agent convicted of spying for the Soviet Union and later Russia for more than two decades. Chris Cooper is excellent as Hanssen as is Ryan Phillippe as Eric O’Neill,



the FBI Investigator who helped bring about Hanssen's downfall. A fascinating movie.

7500 (Prime)—Tobias Ellis starts his shift as a co-pilot and everything seems normal, but things quickly take a turn when terrorists storm the cockpit of his Airbus A319, and hijack the plane. Joseph Gordon-Levitt plays the co-pilot. (The Emergency Code for a plane hijacking is 7500.) The entire movie, except for a very brief introductory scene, takes place in the cockpit. While the plot is not directly based on a true story, the story does take inspiration from past terrorist hijackings. Not a bad movie, but not very memorable either. I had to refresh my memory of the plot on-line. Also, a series we are watching right now, *Hijack*, with Idris Elba, offers a far more compelling story. More on that next month after we've finished watching the season.

Who Killed Maggie Moore (Apple TV)— Police Chief Sanders (played by Jon Hamm, who does comedy really well) unravels a web of small-town lies while investigating the bizarre murders of two women with the same name. He meets and quickly falls for Rita (played by Tina Fey), a nosy neighbor who's eager to help solve the mystery. This was lots of fun, but it was *not* based on a real life story.

Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny (Theater)—Bang! Whoosh! Gosh-Wow! Keep an eye on Indiana's hat! Oh-oh...eels look like snakes! My favorite part was when the WWII bomber time-traveled into the middle of the ancient battle of Syracuse, which was protected by weapons invented by Archimedes, who Indiana actually gets to meet.



Steve Swartz

[SC] Your Condor colophon was entertaining. I also liked having all your photo captions at the end of your zine. Puzzling over your photos as I read is fun, but it's nice to get the facts eventually.

Regarding "Thots on Climate," you wrote, "Al (Gore) was as prone to fact-check fails as former President Trump..." Are you sure about that?

I also liked *Light from Uncommon Stars*, especially the genre mash-up of a story involving both demons from hell and aliens from other planets. Katrina's story was compelling and there were several other interesting character arcs as well. I thought her

genre mash-up approach caused the author a small problem with the ending of her story, however. Her story worked so long as the mythology of demons/hell and the mythology of space aliens operated independently of each other. When she brought them into conflict at the end, I didn't think it worked as well. But it was a good story overall.

Thanks also for the "body-weight" exercise suggestion. There are a number of tempting features to this idea.

Thoughtful and interesting comments throughout, Steve.

I'm looking forward to your writing about your road trip. I've been wanting to take an extended drive since before the pandemic, but it's become a more complicated prospect than it used to be. For the last few years, a drive west through the mountains meant avoiding vast wildfires, dangerous heat in the south, and flooding in the east and south east. This year the wildfires have come to us. We aren't on fire, but smoke from the extensive Canadian fires is almost continually with us. Jeanne and I drove down to Iowa last month for a funeral, and a couple times on the drive I said to Jeanne that it looked like we were about to drive into some unforeseen rain. It wasn't rain, it was Canadian wildfire smog. So, I guess I will stay home and read about your adventures.

[JG] I also disagree with your characterization of Al Gore as being as fact-challenged as Trump. What an insult! I'm aware of several errors that have been pointed out in *An Inconvenient Truth*—all of which Gore has acknowledged and corrected in later statements (not something Trump would ever do!). Gore attributed Kilimanjaro's reduced ice cap to global warming when in fact, sublimation explained changes there. Nevertheless, the data he relied upon did prove accurate for the vast majority of retreating mid-latitude mountain glaciers. He made other errors concerning the timing of future changes, and gave an impression of imminent chaos. But does that matter? Not really. If you know the oceans are going to rise by several meters, whether that takes 50, 100 or 200 years is something of a distraction. *An Inconvenient Truth* did contain a few errors, but that's not surprising given it was about climate science but created by a well-meaning politician. In reality, the reaction to it in certain quarters did a great deal to expose the simplistic mindset of climate science deniers. In their world, any error, however small, invalidates our entire understanding of how the planet works. It's like saying

that because a single doctor misdiagnoses a condition, medicine should be abolished in its entirety.

I recall that the term “climate change,” frequently replaced the term “global warming” in environmentalists’ lexicon—mainly to allay the simplistic interpretation of the latter term by climate change deniers. (“What warming? It’s snowing!”) The way I’ve most frequently heard the terms used is that climate change includes a vast array of altering conditions, all stemming from the basic fact that the temperatures of our atmosphere and oceans are rising.

Excellent review of *Light from Uncommon Stars*, thanks! However, you mentioned Lan’s and Satomi’s escape “into the multiverse.” I don’t remember that the multiverse was mentioned in the novel. It was my impression that the star portal sent Lan’s ship very far away, but in the same universe as our Earth. Did I miss something?

I also enjoyed *Light*, but I was left with several questions at the end, questions that also bothered Scott in his comments above. The factual existence of the devil and hell (and thus, God) didn’t seem to ruffle any scientific or even practical feathers among the space aliens. But while reading the book, I kept waiting for the two worlds, governed by science and demons to connect in some way.

I agree with you about the irrelevance of blame assignment in the case of Covid or other problems. In fact, I think I even wrote in my zine last time that I was agnostic about the causes of Covid in specific—that I was willing to change my mind with the development of new information and understandings of how the virus was unleashed. So, yeah, I agree with you that it’s more important to deal with solutions than to identify the initial cause. But, in the case of Covid, there are a whole lot of people who base their acceptance or non-acceptance of any solution on the source of those solutions. If they identify agencies or individual scientists as being left-leaning, then they automatically reject the solution. If they consider the source of a solution to be politically adjacent to their own beliefs, then and only then are they willing to accept it. For some of these folks, the question of who to blame is the main issue.

Walter Freitag

[SC] Regarding summer, here in Madison summer so far has been hot and dry. Rain has been moving around to the north and south of us so consistently we are starting to think we are in some sort of

atmospheric vortex. At least we have not had the extreme heat they are suffering in and around Texas.

I greatly enjoyed your article on the swans.

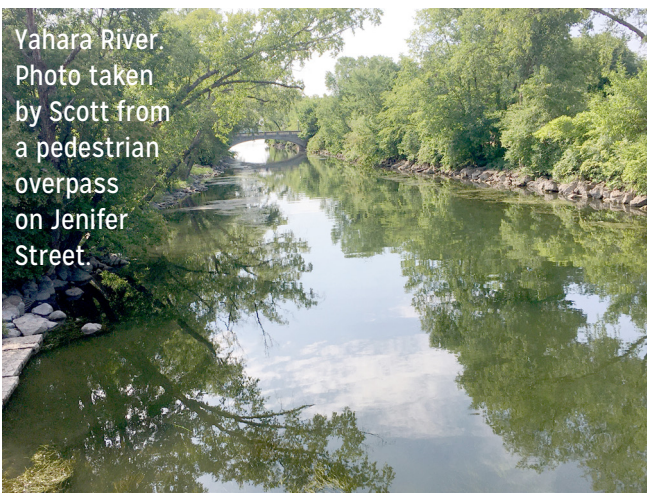
[JG] Nice story. Thanks.

Pat Hario

[SC] Some days seem like nothing but death and poop. The city says you have three options for disposing of dead animals: put it out in your trash container on trash day, put it out on the terrace (berm, or whatever it is) then fill out an on-line form to the City Engineering Department and they will come and pick it up or hire someone to come to your home and take it. Engineering does pick-ups Monday through Friday. Trash day is only once a week. Nowhere does it say to put the corpse in a plastic bag, so I guess it’s up to you what to do with it over a weekend, or the day after your last trash pick up. An unbagged body is a smelly thing to have around for long in the hot summer. I have trouble believing that Engineering would rush out to pick it up, so if you leave it on the roadside unbagged, even just overnight, it seems likely to me something will drag it out into the street or back into your bushes before it gets picked up. I have never had to dispose of a corpse as large as a squirrel or rabbit, but if I did, I think I’d bag it in plastic and toss it in with my trash for the next pickup, like I have done with smaller animals.

For what it’s worth, you’ve come up with a nasty, but effective, way to kill off squirrels.





Vahara River.
Photo taken
by Scott from
a pedestrian
overpass
on Jenifer
Street.

[JG] Re your comment to **Hope & Karl** about road construction.... It's been a bad year, mainly I think, because of the new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route and its stations. The work on Atwood has caused me to learn to zig zag through the neighborhoods west of Dempsey and south of Fair Oaks. I may not actually return to using Atwood when I drive to and from the YMCA. I've grown to actually prefer driving through the quiet neighborhoods.

I include a story from my memoirs this month that you inspired.

Luke McGuff

[SC] I hope you will eventually move into a less onerous job. I was delighted to read about your (and Julie's) Memorial Day weekend excursions.

Who ordered the rain delay at your terrace birthday gathering? At least it didn't slow us down much. It was fun hanging out as always. I'm up for another trip. I should share a story from that gathering. When I showed up, the first pitcher of beer was about half gone. When we finished it, I felt there was enough interest for another pitcher so I set off to acquire one. I went to the BBQ and beer tent close to us to avoid getting stuck in a long line. I think all of the concessions at the terrace are staffed by students. When the young people at the counter asked me what I wanted, I surrendered **Kim's** pitcher and ordered a new one of Bell's Oberon. He asked me if I was a (Memorial) Union Member. One of the first things I did when I moved to Madison 35 years ago, after getting a permanent job, was to buy a Memorial Union Membership so I could buy beer at the terrace. So, I proudly set my membership card down on the counter...and I got what I deserved. He looked at it and said, "Wow! Great card!" To his

partner he said, "Look, its laminated!" Ugh! Old again. I think the new cards probably look like credit cards. Maybe it's time to get a new membership card; they don't otherwise expire.

Regarding your comment to me on writing, distractions are absolutely an issue with writing for me. I also think writing may get easier with practice, which I do not do nearly enough. I also think good writing often requires revealing (in different ways) more about yourself and I have never found talking about myself to be very easy.

[JG] Your mention of turning on and off sprinklers on campus lawns caused me to notice, for the first time, the built-in sprinkler ports on campus lawns. I'm now really curious about how they work. Like, do you have to attach a sprinkler to the ports? Is there a complicated, underground infrastructure that needs to be tended?

Do you have an ideal job in mind for which you would swap your current, arduous job? Are there transfer possibilities?

Lovely pictures.

Jae Leslie Adams

[SC] I don't remember reading about your amazing rodeo gramma before, perhaps we were not in the *Turbo* at the time. Great photo of you mighty women of 1982.

Best of luck with your letter to Cardiology. Maybe a "frank exchange of views" face-to-face discussion will be effective if the letter doesn't help.

I liked your advice to **Luke** about heading over to Maple Bluff in search of the lake, but I'd warn him to watch out to not get run over by the army of landscapers who always seem to be everywhere there.

[JG] What an excellent, firm, and articulate letter to Cardiology. I like it. I hope you receive a satisfying, possibly even useful reply.

Jeannie Bergmann

[SC] I hope you get the a-fib thing figured out, at least you have conquered the brain fog.

Exciting news about Fred's trip to Peru. Please post photos if he takes some.

[JG] I liked the Time Trap images and stories, and was intrigued by *Mobius's* AI policies, though it seems likely that things will continue to change rapidly and policy revisions will also need to change accordingly.

What's New

Writing

[JG] I submitted a book proposal (memoir: *Pretending and Becoming*) to the Wisconsin Historical Society Press, using the required form, which asked many questions, each requiring long, detailed essay answers. Completing the form felt quite intimidating at first; it took me most of a Sunday to complete. (I imagine that its complexity may be intended to dissuade submissions of incomplete work). But in the end, since my book was already written, I found it fairly straightforward to complete, just time-consuming. My proposal came to 36 pages, including a list of chapter titles, but did not include three sample chapters. A WHS editor responded immediately and let me know that they'd received my proposal. I can expect a decision (or more questions) sometime in late September. I found the quick response quite nice compared to the agonizingly slow response from Aqueduct.

I also submitted my novella, "A Reddit Pandemic Tale" for publication by Split/lip Press. This is the dream-inspired novella I wrote about last month. I debated about whether or not to find a writing group in order to get some feedback on it, but I decided, what the hell. I think it's a good story. I compiled a short list of possible markets and hit the submit button. Onward. So far, I haven't written any new fiction, but that's probably because we've been busy acquiring and transferring computers.

New Computer

[JG] Apple has been hinting and promising to update its most powerful desktop computer for several years. I've always chosen to buy the most powerful Macs because I use high-end graphic software (Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Acrobat, etc.), which tend to evolve to take advantage of the fastest and most powerful computers. I bought my PowerMac in 2014. (It was the Mac sarcastically nicknamed "trashcan-shaped," but I thought it looked pretty cool and it was certainly an excellent computer for my uses.) Since then, the top-of-the-line Mac dispensed with the word, "Power" in its name, and in 2019 the first Mac Pro came out. Soon after, we began to hear about a newer and better Apple-built chip—the M series—that was going to function as central processing and graphics processing units in Mac computers. These chips were expected to completely change the architecture of Mac computers. I decided to wait until these new

chips were installed in whatever followed the Mac Pro. In 2020, I would have told you that I expected to get a new computer soon, but in 2020, the new Mac Pro was delayed until 2021. In 2021 it was delayed until 2022. "M" chips were installed in all the other computers in the Mac line, but the Mac Pro lagged behind. In order to push the Mac Pro to market, rumored features were reportedly being dropped and some people suggested that there wasn't going to be a big difference between the new Mac Pro and the Mac Studio. But finally, this year, the new Mac Pro was unveiled...and I changed my mind about buying it. It turned out that the Mac Studio had M2Ultra chips installed, together with almost everything I expected/wanted in a new Mac Pro but at a more affordable price. I'm glad I waited, but I'm also very glad to finally have a more current machine. I was running out of storage space, and my software was running slow. I've been having a lot of fun working with my new Mac Studio.

Anyway, all the research and decision-making ended up gobbling up my time. Once I decided to upgrade both my computer and my monitor, I offered Scott my old monitor since he wanted to replace his very old Mac laptop for a desk computer—a Mac Mini. He accepted the monitor enthusiastically. Then, my Mac guy (who is Bob Mahnke, owner of Graphite—and who I recommend to any Madisonian looking for an excellent Mac technician and supplier) asked me if Scott would also inherit my old Power Mac. Wow, neither Scott nor I had thought of that. But we immediately agreed that was a better idea than buying a Mac Mini. So, after juggling several removable hard-drives-worth of back-ups and archives, migrating contents of old computers to new computers, setting up a new cloud-based back-up system, updating software, and doing all the other tasks involved in moving to a new computer—we are set now.



In 2001 Pat and I had been friends for fifteen years or maybe longer. I can't remember very well when I actually met her in person the first time, but I got to know her in the apa, *Turbo-Charged Party Animal*. Getting to know her in a written forum was a bit ironic because Pat actually lived in Madison and I could easily have spent time with her in person. But, at the time I was coming out of one of my low-involvement-with-local-fandom phases, and had become aware of an influx of new faces at the regular Wednesday evening meetings. Andy Hooper had collated several issues of his new apa, so I thought it might be interesting to join it in order to meet some of the new folks in our group.

One of Pat's zines contained a lovely account describing a long trip she had taken several years prior on a working sailing ship. (In other words, it was a working vacation, not the kind with brunches served to you every couple hours. Pat scrubbed decks, learned about sails and knots, and slept in the crew's berth.) She obviously considered this experience to be one of the high points of her life. Ever since then, she had dreamed about embarking on another sailing-ship adventure.

The first time she mentioned her dream to me I sighed, smiled, and agreed that it sounded like a wonderful idea. Nevertheless, we were all stunned in 2001, when she announced that she had decided to quit her job and sell her house in order to take a year-long cruise around the world. I think her decision prompted some of us to re-examine our own dreams and think about whether we might actually ever do what was necessary to accomplish some of them. Pat decided she needed to shake up her life, do something entirely different, gain a new perspective on herself and the world. She worked

for the city and had never been very happy with what she did. It was a job, you know? She has an obviously loving family, and lots of good friends, but...she wanted to feel again the daily sensation of doing something she loved. So, she found a second job and began making all the practical preparations necessary to join the crew of the tall ship, the *Picton Castle*, within two years.

Pat is a very organized, very practical person. She applied for a berth and began to make extensive arrangements for her cats, her money, her belongings, her house, and her health. She prepared a will and made arrangements in case she was injured during her year at sea. It turned out that she was able to rent her house for the year she was gone rather than sell it. In addition, she was able to convince her employers to put her on an unpaid leave of absence while she was gone, so she didn't have to quit her job. But it was a good thing she started organizing things so long in advance, because she was a nervous whirl of energy for the last couple months as she scrambled to get things done.

Pat left Madison a couple weeks before WisCon 27, in 2003, and she sent back regular emails from her ports of call—Panama, the Galapagos Islands, Pitcairn Island, Fiji, Bali, and Madagascar, telling us all about her glorious adventures, full of sailing terms that reminded me a bit of reading Patrick O'Brian's books, without the cannon fire. Occasionally she sent me photos which I scanned and sent out as electronic images to her friends and family. The images all showed her glowing with amazing, vibrant joy. Everyone commented on it. They looked at the photos and smiled. You couldn't help but smile. And then they said, "She looks so happy!"





When we said goodbye to Pat at her going-away party in May, I remember thinking that I expected her to turn into a different person by the time I saw her again in July 2004. She made momentous changes in her life, leaving herself open for

new perspectives and realignments of her priorities. After such a long time away in a situation in which she was able to redefine herself as she introduced herself and interacted with new people, and became accustomed to feeling joyful on a continuing basis, I thought, she would be able to sweep away undesirable commitments and habits upon her return home. She would know what she wanted and find it possible to go for it. I was incredibly happy for her, but also wondered if I needed such a re-awakening, shaking-up sort of experience myself.

It's not like I secretly cherished a long unfulfilled dream such as Pat's sailing adventure. With little disappointment I had given up the idea of becoming an astronaut the first time I became sick on an amusement park ride and realized I preferred an earth-bound existence. In fact, I had accomplished many of my most cherished dreams already. In grade school I dreamed of two sorts of futures for myself—to become a confident independent woman, and to become an artist, both of which surprised me a bit when they came true. But as I watched Pat rid herself of belongings and making plans to jump off the edge of the world, I wondered if I had become complacent and too set in routine, and whether I would know it if I was. I fell in love with Scott in 1984, and we sometimes laughed at how we resembled the old, married couple stereotype—sometimes finishing each other's

sentences, cooperating in life so smoothly that the process sometimes felt automatic. I loved him madly and would not leave him for a year's exploration of other possibilities.

As for my job.... I originally conceived of my job at the DNR as something to do for only a few years. When I was hired in 1979, I expected to become quickly bored with this job, and to eventually strike out on my own as a freelancer, maybe after five years. But here I was, twenty-three years later, still working at the DNR, making plans to retire from that job, firmly convinced that freelancing was not the life for me.

I'd worked for my entrepreneur-sister Julie's design company for a month, and had become enlightened about the realities of running my own business. I saw Julie spending much of her time dealing with her employees and the business of doing business, and not spending much time making art. That wasn't for me, I told myself. I would never want to give up actually creating art, doing design. Furthermore, I liked the fact that I could leave my work at the office and devote myself to Scott, or my own projects at home, not to mention WisCon and other volunteer commitments. So, I had given up the idea of freelancing. It didn't seem to me like I'd buried a dream. It felt like I had chosen another, better path.

So, as we waved goodbye to Pat, I wondered if this clear, familiar path was an altogether good thing, or whether I should be thinking of taking some detours.

Well, that interior debate was resolved just a few weeks later. No sooner had we closed the books on WisCon 28 than I was handed my "at risk" letter at the DNR. Ready or not, my path suddenly took a sharp jog and my future was no longer map-able. Pat pulled anchor from North America, and I lifted anchor from a fairly secure, no-risk lifestyle, and started my own business.