

Madison foursquare

85

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

Scott@unionstreetdesign.com

Jeanne@unionstreetdesign.com

This is **Madison Foursquare #85**. *Madison Foursquare* was created using a Mac Pro with InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop, all CC 2022, and printed on a Ricoh Aficio CL7200 color printer.

All contents ©2023 by Scott Custis [SC] & Jeanne Gomoll [JG] November 2023 for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal #449*.

[JG] Welcome to this fall-color issue of *Madison Foursquare*. The printer is fixed, the errant magenta smudges are gone, and all is well. Even better, the bill from the printer repair company was surprisingly affordable. Since the repair-guy, Chris, had to visit our house twice, traveled a half hour to get here, and spent about 90 minutes working on my printer, I was braced for a much larger bill, but they charged us less than \$150. Now I'm worried that his company won't make enough money to stay afloat, and in the future, it may be more difficult than it was this time to find a printer repair person. Ah well. That's the future. We will celebrate the win today.

What's New

A Weird Scam

[JG] In early November, I received a notice from a debt collector agency about a very large outstanding ATT bill (\$1,430.20) they claimed I had incurred and was in default of. What a weird thing, I thought. It must be a scam, since we pay our cell phone bill promptly every month. I actually reported the letter to the fraud department of the US Postal Service. The only way this isn't a scam, I said to Scott, is if someone has stolen my identity. So, just to make sure that wasn't true, I contacted ATT via the company's on-line chat helpline. I was quickly handed over from bot to real person, and from the customer service person to a series of people who work in the fraud protection department of ATT. Turns out that debt collector letter was no scam.

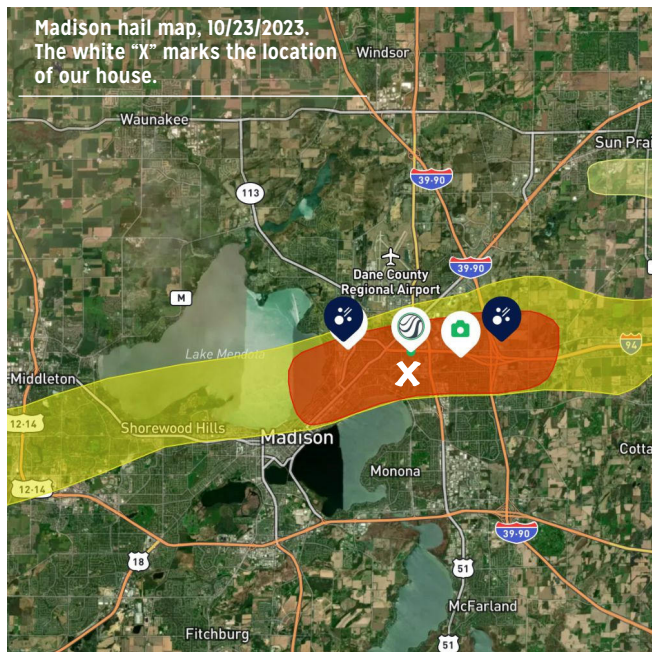
After assuring me that my account was up-to-date and that I was not in default, I asked them to check the account number listed in the debt collector letter, which listed a different account number than my own. Whoops. Turns out there is *another* account under the name Jeanne Gomoll, and that account is most definitely in default. I was asked to prove that I had not lived at the address attached to that account (located in a neighborhood south of Hilldale in Madison), and to prove that I had lived on Union Street during the months in 2022 when the fraudulent account had been active. Easy to do. As far as I know, I am the one and only person named Jeanne Gomoll. At least I am the only person that appears when you Google that name, so this was very peculiar. I was assured that ATT would remove the account from collection and that an investigation would be launched. I will be required to provide an affidavit and a police report at some point.

But now, all I am left with are questions. The fraudulent account was apparently used to purchase "a device" and was billed for 4 months'

service. No charge card listed under my name was used in the purchase, so I have to assume that someone used their own charge card and address, but gave out a phony name. The collection agency must have done some sleuthing and found my address, which is why they finally contacted me. How could someone buy a phone this way? And why? I am really hoping that it doesn't turn out that I know the person who did this.

Hail storm, roof damage

[JG] It was late afternoon on October 23, the day of *Turbo* collation, and Scott and I were chatting on zoom with Andy and Carrie, when the sky darkened and a violent storm began whipping the trees around in our back yard. We watched through the large windows in my office as we continued talking with Andy and Carrie, describing the scene to them as we chatted. We'd already parked our car inside the garage because we'd heard a warning earlier in the day that the weather might turn nasty, but we didn't expect what happened next. Large balls of hail began pounding the back yard, bouncing off the garage roof top, drifting into piles on the sidewalk, and covering large swathes of grass. After the hail slacked off a bit, Scott ran out and scooped up a handful of hail. The photo here is just one of those pieces. I thought it was cool that I could see several



smaller chunks of hail all melted together inside this one.

We didn't think much at the moment about potential roof damage. We were just glad that our car hadn't been exposed during the storm. But the next day, our Facebook feeds were cluttered with ads, testimonials, photos, maps, and stories posted by roof repair companies strongly urging us to invite them over to examine our roof for possible damage. Instead, we called our insurance company, who sent over a claims adjuster to examine our roof. We're waiting to hear whether the adjuster found enough damage to recommend that the roof needs to be replaced.

Chairs for Thanksgiving

[JG] Scott and I will be hosting Thanksgiving for my family again this month. We've done this most years since moving into this house, but my nieces and nephews now have partners and the gathering this year will actually out-strip the number of chairs needed to seat them at the dinner table. We will be celebrating Thanksgiving with thirteen people this year and Scott suggested that we look for a couple chairs to add to our miscellaneous collection of metal kitchen chairs, desk chairs and card table chairs that usually supplement our six good dining table chairs when we entertain a large group. Two extra chairs would save us the necessity to use card table chairs, which are too short and make guests feel as if they have been cast as the little kid in the party. I suggested we look at the offerings in Facebook's Marketplace. This turned out to be an excellent place to look. We actually ended up buying six chairs for \$10 each and donated the 4 metal kitchen chairs to St. Vincent de Paul's thrift shop. Yay. Now the hard (but sort of fun) part: cooking for and hosting thirteen people. We're looking forward to it.



New Covid shot at Costco

[JG] By the time I called Group Health Coop in early October to make an appointment for Scott and I to receive our new Covid shot, the appointment slots were filled through mid-November. The nurse told me that, even in November, they wouldn't be able to guarantee that there would be shots available for us. Apparently, the distribution of the vaccine has been very irregular. We'd already heard complaints from people who tried to

get their shots at Walgreen's but never found them available. The GHC nurse told me that manufacturing problems at the Pfizer plant was causing problems for deliveries to clinics and, apparently, Walgreen's ... but that Costco had lots of vaccine available and so GHC had set up a partnership agreement with them. So that's where Scott and I received our Covid vaccines. A strange place to get health care – but hey, whatever works.



Comments

Cover, Andrea Connell

[JG] Wow, I can't remember the horse Aragorn rode in the movie or any of its backstory. Scott frequently suggests that we re-watch the trilogy, so maybe it's time to do it. Obviously, I have forgotten a lot. I liked that you attached a little story to the cover art. Nice!

[SC] Very nice cover, Andrea. I greatly appreciate hand-drawn art for a cover. I did not see it as a “downer”, at least for those of us who are fans of *The Two Towers*. I liked the biographical information on Uraeus, too. It's a good reminder of how huge movie blockbuster projects actually are, all the people and animals that are involved, and all the stories surrounding the production.

Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[JG] I'm very glad it was possible to rescue and re-set the stained-glass window from Diane's old house. I love the stained-glass windows from old houses. There was a beautiful one in the dining room of the Milwaukee flat my family lived in when I was little. I remember lying on the floor and watching the colored light flicker across the walls as the sun set. I hope, when the house was renovated, that they were able to save the stained-glass window. There is another stained-glass window in Scott's Dad's old house, right next to the stairway. No one lives there anymore and the house is basically decomposing and will collapse soon enough. Sometimes I worry about that stained-glass window and hope that Butch's grandchildren manage to rescue it before it's too late. Scott and I have two stained-glass pieces hanging over windows and a small one

built into the front door. And of course, we display three fused glass art pieces in front of the dining room windows.

We hope that Ariel's wedding was beautiful and happy and that the plane trip with cats is mostly uneventful! We were very glad to hear that Diane recovered from Covid on time to travel to New York.

I have gotten in the habit of responding to your reports of series and movies with our own list. Here are the shows we saw this past month—

Nyad (Netscape) Annette Bening, Jodie Foster. The true story of how sixty-four-year-old marathon swimmer Diana Nyad became the first person ever to swim, unassisted, from Cuba to Florida. As soon as I heard about this project, I got excited. A movie about long-distance swimming! A movie about Diana Nyad! A movie about and starring older actresses, no romantic sub-plot, just swimming and ambition and friendship! I loved the bits about how Nyad's team solved the problem of keeping her going in the right directions during the night (a red, glowing streamer pulled by the boat below Nyad which she followed just as a lap swimmer follows lane lines. Fish apparently can't see red light.) I laughed: whenever someone asks me whether I would like to swim in open water, rather than do laps in a pool, I've always joked that lake and ocean bottoms lack pool lines. Apparently, this is not always true. There were several points in the movie that I *recognized* and understood from my experience as a swimmer. Like Nyad's counting system. She collected and memorized songs with a 4/4 meter (matching her stroke) and counted along with the lyrics



as she sang in her head. (My own system is based on a virtual tour of our house, counting alongside each remembered object along that tour.) I totally identified with how Nyad got lost in her head – half meditating, half dreaming – as she swam. Annette Bening was great. Jodie Foster, as Nyad’s friend and coach was even better. Both of them together were absolutely thrilling.

Denial (Apple TV) Rachel Weisz, Timothy Spall, Tom Wilkinson. In 1993 Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin Books published *Denying the Holocaust*. Two years later the English author David Irving sued her for libel on the grounds that her book had ruined his once well-regarded career as an historian by accusing him of deliberately distorting historical facts. The resulting court case puts the onus on her legal team to prove that the Holocaust did indeed take place. Based on a true story. This is not a documentary, but accurate, nonetheless. If you remember the case, you probably know how this movie ends, but it is gripping and suspenseful even if you are familiar with the story. Very good.

True Detective (Max, formerly HBO) We watched all three seasons. Season 1: Woody Harrelson, Matthew McConaughey; season 2: Colin Farrell, Rachel McAdams, Taylor Kitsch; season 3: Mahershala Ali, Stephen Dorff. This series follows the lives of police detectives as they investigate a difficult murder case, and at the same time, struggle to gain control of their own personal demons. Each season, the events in several time periods are woven together, and the final solution is only discovered after the detectives re-examine evidence several times. The actual stories are unconnected from season to season, but the common thread that binds the seasons is the complicated relationship that develops between police partners. Each partnership seems unlikely at first; it is hard to imagine how the characters will find common ground with one another. But at the end of each season, the detectives have grown closer than most married couples or siblings. And in a really odd, but much appreciated twist, despite the gruesome, inhumane bad

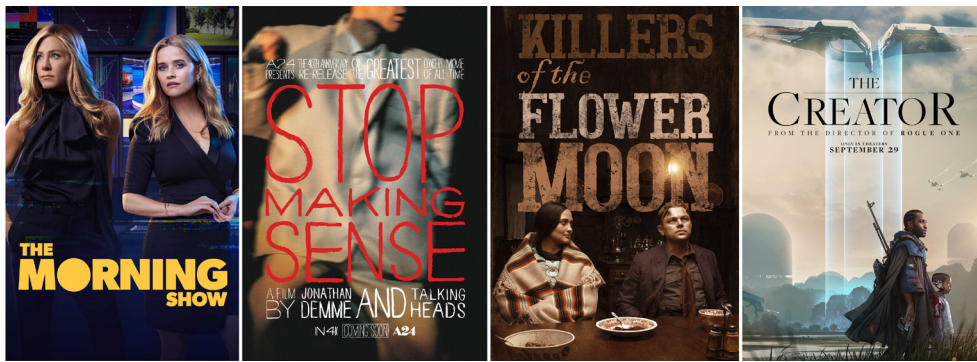
guys they bring to justice, the partners’ relationships end on a positive note. Scott and I loved this series and are delighted to know that a fourth season (with the extraordinary Jodie Foster) will air early in 2024. Obviously, I highly recommend it, but please note that there is a lot of violence.

Full Circle (Max) Claire Danes, Zazie Beetz, Timothy Olyphant. An investigation into a botched kidnapping uncovers long-held secrets connecting multiple characters and cultures in present-day New York City. I recall this being an interesting series, but the plot is not sticking in my mind. I’m sure that a couple years or even months, I might totally forget whether I have already seen it.

The Morning Show (Apple TV) Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon, Billy Crudup, Julianna Margulies. A drama that looks at the modern workplace through the lens of the people who produce network and streaming TV news. There are quite a few powerful, interesting women characters. It is also a soap opera. OK, this may be a guilty pleasure.

Stop Making Sense 2023 restoration (theater) We saw *Stop Making Sense* in theatre and it was absolutely amazing. This is definitely the kind of movie you need to watch on the big screen. Talking Heads of course are a great band, but seeing them performing on stage is equally phenomenal. Combine that with incredible energy from all the musicians and some gorgeous cinematography, and you’ve got yourself a brilliant concert film. We saw the original 1984 film, but this restoration includes songs that neither Scott nor I were familiar with.

Killers of the Flower Moon (theater) Leonardo DiCaprio, Lily Gladstone, Robert De Niro. A brilliant (but very long, 3½-hour) movie in which real love crosses paths with unspeakable betrayal as Mollie Burkhart, a member of the Osage Nation, tries to save her community from a spree of murders fueled by oil and greed. A masterpiece by Martin Scorsese in the form of a dramatized history lesson of genocide that happened about the same time



Elizabeth Matson

[JG] Re your comment to **Steve S**, I think all of us in the SF-Without-Borders Book Club are becoming more aware of the different ways people tend to read and interpret books. Years ago, I was on a panel about book groups and was astounded

and in the same state as the Tulsa Massacre. Oscars will no doubt be awarded.

The Creator (theater) Gemma Chan, John David Washington, Ken Watanabe, Allison Janney (as a tough-as-nails bigoted marine commander). As a future war between the human race and artificial intelligence rages on, ex-special forces agent Joshua is recruited to hunt down and kill the Creator, the elusive architect of advanced AI. The Creator has developed a mysterious weapon that has the power to end the war and all of mankind. As Joshua and his team of elite operatives venture into enemy-occupied territory, they soon discover the world-ending weapon is actually an AI in the form of a young child. Scott and I weren't expecting this movie to be as good as it was. We were really impressed. This may be my favorite SF movie of the year. I don't want to tell you much more about the plot, but I highly recommend that you seek this out. It's not in the theaters anymore but I'm sure it will be streaming soon.

at the large number of different ways that book clubs are organized. Different goals, different organizations, different ways to choose books, different meeting sites, different reasons to meet. I didn't think then, but would add now (if I ever participate in another panel about book clubs) that there are probably just as many different ways that individuals read and want to talk about books. Well, this has always been true, I guess. But I've only recently thought about it in depth, particularly as a result of Steve S's commentary. I am reminded of how people usually assume that their family's behaviors are shared by other families ... until they move out on their own and meet the families of their friends and partners. Suddenly, what we thought of as norms or defaults, turn out to have been choices or learned behaviors.

[SC] Diane, nice job on the memorial poster for your reunion. My dad's farmhouse also has a small stained-glass "church" window, a little bigger than the one in your photo. The old farmhouse is deteriorating and probably past saving, but my brother, sister and I have all expressed interest in preserving that window if the house is ever demolished. None of us really have a good place to put it, but none of us want that window to be lost either. It was a very distinctive feature of my home through most of my childhood.

I'll write more about this in my comment to Steve.

Jim, is there is a story behind that portrait of your mom "as Alice?" Alice in Wonderland? Who painted the picture and was your mom playing the character in a play, or dressed up for Halloween?

[SC] Lovely photos once again!

Regarding your comment to **Luke**, we wish you'd made it all the way back here to Madison, too, when you moved back. Janesville is do-able, but we love to have you and Sir Nick the Greyhound closer. You'd also be closer to Canada and Chez Yurt.

Regarding your comment to **Steve S** about reading, I think I care more about plot than characters. You said you wanted characters who "grabbed" you, I agree. I love it when characters are realistic, complicated, and interesting but I don't need them to be sympathetic or likeable. A story can work for me even if the characters are annoying, stereotypical or one-dimensional if the plot is engaging enough. I have spoken with lots of people who read a story and search for a character or characters who are appealing, or sympathetic. I'm perfectly happy with a compelling plot and no likeable characters. I think *Turbo* is going through a period of very interesting perspectives on reading right now.

Jeanne and I very much enjoyed tuning in to your latest storytelling event. It's been a while since



we've been able to see one. I believe that is the first time I have heard a story from you that was not fictional or a folktale, but the powerful and compelling story of your grandfather's experiences as a soldier in WW I. I also greatly enjoyed the first storyteller's version of the story of Helen of Troy from Helen's point of view. Jeanne and I both were reminded of Madeline Miller's novel, *Circe*, which had a similarly humorous style and feminist perspective.

Pat Hario

[JG] Re *TurboCon*: No banquets! No GoHs! No Dealers Room! *Run Away, run away!* (That was the call of all Minstf members whenever someone opened a meeting.) When I retired from WisCon, it turns out that I also preemptively retired from all traditional-type concons. I will not go back.

Like you, I have also been irritated by the non-stop-but-movable construction sites blocking traffic on seemingly every street in Madison. On the other hand, it might be worse to live in a city without the budget to repair its streets and suffer as the infrastructure crumbles around us and destroys our cars.

I am trying to cheer myself up about a similar situation at the east-side YMCA. A giant renovation began this month at the Y. Well, actually it began sometime during the summer when they did some massive, multi-month work on the roof. Also, they made a huge investment in exercise machines up in the gym. But none of that really affected me because all I do at the YMCA is swim laps. This month through mid-December, all the locker rooms and showers are being renovated—new showers, new plumbing, new tile, new floor, new paint, new lockers. We women are now using what used to be the boy's locker room. (There are four locker rooms: All-ages women, 18+ years women, adult men, and boys.) The men and boys' locker rooms will be closed in mid-December, at which time the pool will also close for an entire month! Aargh! Horrors! They will put in

new floors, new plumbing, and new paint. I heard that the YMCA received a gigantic donation that is allowing them to do a decade's-worth of capital improvements in one fiscal year. Which is good, in that it will be a beautiful place to work out come mid-January. But it is bad too, since I must contemplate a month of not much swimming. I am investigating alternatives, but it's unlikely that I will be able to swim as much as I want to swim from December 19–January 17. I am bummed, but trying to convert that feeling into eager anticipation for gloriously improved facilities.

Happily, I expect to complete the 1,000-lap challenge well before the pool closes. I've done 800 laps as *Madison Foursquare* goes to print.

[SC] I love your zine title.

I have never had much interest in fan fiction, not because I have any objection to it but just because I have no room in my life for it. Far too much other stuff to read. Since I'm not a writer (or at least a fiction writer) the idea of just reading fan fiction seems like wading through a lot of crap to find the occasional jewels. It was nice of **Lisa** to create for us a jewel of a piece without having to wade through a pile of dreck. I also have a limit on how far I'm willing to pursue a fannish obsession. I like the Murderbot stories, but I'm really only interested in stories written by Martha Wells, not any Murderbot story written by anybody.

Regarding your comment to **Greg**, "Looking for a job is a job in itself." Amen.

Regarding your comment to me, I get tired of the construction around town, too. Driving down East Washington and University Avenues this summer has been like weaving through an obstacle course over and over that changes often and unexpectedly. I try to remind myself that it's a sign of a very healthy local economy and we should see it as a good thing. That's capitalism for you. I've lived in small mid-Western cities when they were in decline and that is dismal and depressing, rather than frustrating.

Steve Swartz

[JG] Hilarious alternate commandments from Pennsylvania. It would be fascinating to see lists of weird rules from other states too.

Surely you aren't talking about Rosie, when you refer to the sort of "yappy, wiggling, relentlessly cute, and dumb as a brick" dogs that turned you into a cat person! Rosie was lovely.

I also read Kowal's *The Spare Man* and, like you, thought it was a pleasant diversion. The characters and plot parody detective characters Nick



and Nora Charles (and their dog Asta) from the *Thin Man* movies which were based on the novel of the same name by Dashiell Hammett. I'd love to see a movie version of *The Spare Man* emphasizing the parody, with actors that resemble Myrna Loy and William Powell.

Re your comment to **Andy**, I had to look up the Harry Anderson bit on SNL in which he eats Skippy the guinea pig. I was glad to view a video in which Anderson explained how he did the trick before I actually watched him seem to chow down on Skippy in the show opener. Wow, hilarious. I'm not surprised that it sparked a record number of complaints.

When it comes to reading books, I find that my expectations and focus has ebbed and flowed, shifted and twisted over the years. For me, expectations have an unintentional but huge effect on my experience of any given book. For instance, during the two separate years that I read for the Tiptree/Otherwise Award, I began reading each new story with a question at the top of mind as to whether the story commented on gender, and if so, how well, or how interestingly, it did so. It took a little effort, after the judging was over, for me to shake off that top-of-mind perspective. Nowadays, when I come across a story that says interesting things about gender, I take notice immediately, rather like when I'm browsing in the grocery store and my eye snags on the word "coconut" (yum), but it's no longer something for which I am actively, obsessively, looking. One year, while I was in college, I became fascinated with Australian fiction and how so many of the stories reflected the isolated geography of that continent, and shared an apocalyptic point of view. I have no doubt that I missed stuff in those stories that did not contribute to the theory I was building in my mind. Another year I spent obsessively reading Jane Austin's novels and books *about* Jane Austin, which eventually influenced my reactions to Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin series of sea novels set in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. I became convinced that O'Brian's novels were meant to be read as if they were *in conversation* with Jane Austin. One more data point: After reading

a book containing correspondence between Ursula K. Le Guin and Alice Sheldon, I read a Le Guin novel – I think it was either *Gifts* or *Powers* – and thought I perceived a fictional continuation to a conversation between Le Guin and Alice Sheldon. I even wrote Le Guin a letter asking if my theory was correct. She very kindly agreed that elements of the story *could* be read as part of her conversation with Sheldon, but then said no, the correspondence had not actually inspired the story. But that led to a really interesting couple of letters between the two of us in which we compared notes about how one's interpretation of one book can easily influence the understanding of another book if it is read soon after the first. I sometimes think of this effect when looking at adjacent books on my shelves, all arranged alphabetically by author. It's fun sometimes, to think about what things the two accidentally paired books have in common, and how they might be discussed together.

Anyway, that all feeds into my opinion that every person's reading of every book creates, in effect, a different book. Just as the interpretation of every piece of art creates a new piece of art. We can't help but bring pieces of ourselves into the experience of reading a book. But it does sometimes lead to interesting situations when two people talk about the same book. They may have both read the same book, but given what they individually brought to the book, it may sometimes feel as if they read two different versions. This is one of the most attractive things about belonging to a book discussion group in my opinion. You and I frequently find ourselves in this situation, but I think that's just fine. I enjoy hearing about different perspectives.

Please convey my wishes for a speedy recovery to Allison!

[SC] Too bad about the Annular Eclipse. I've come around to your view since our last experience chasing the full solar eclipse back in 2017. We made hotel reservations and drove south to Carbondale, IL to see it with a big crowd in a blistering hot sports stadium. After money and time were invested, a cloud ended up obscuring most of the show. This experience left me unenthused about doing it all over again next summer. We can see it better at home in the A/C with a cold beer. I think our time and money would be better spent on a trip that won't be affected by a single wayward cloud.

Best wishes to Allison as she recovers. I hope the surgery fixes the problem so she's back on both feet, though I have to admit shouts of "Punch It, Agnes!" are pretty funny.



Fall color photos taken somewhere in the driftless area during the Fall Art Tour, October 22, 2023

Politically Wisconsin may finally be starting the long climb back to sanity. Governor Evers has been struggling single-handedly to keep the state from being pushed over a cliff by the MAGA-heads for years, so a little help from the State Supreme Court is long overdue. We will have to win the gerrymandered maps court case, redraw the maps and then win back legislative seats fairly, which will take time, but at least we can see how to get there from here.

Good of you and **Jim H** to read all the Hugo nominees so the rest of us don't have to. I'm looking forward to someone nominating *Nettle & Bone* as a book group selection.

Regarding your comments to me, Jeanne's case is overstated. I'm perfectly willing to go on a "romantic" carriage ride. You say they stopped doing them in Madison years ago? Oh well.

Were you asking if I got to keep my prostate, like, in a jar? Ick. No. Besides they removed it via small incisions in my abdomen so it probably was not all in one piece. I didn't ask. Good news for me though. My brother had his removed years ago the old-fashioned way and his recovery was longer and far more painful than mine. To be honest, I'm not quite as dogmatic about the Irish drama thing as I sound. I'd be happy to see the movie *Belfast* again, for instance. But we may skip next year's APT production of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, mostly because we've already seen another version of it. BTW have you ever seen *The Banshees of Inisherin*? Before you go all "bad apples in barrels" on me (also pretty funny), you should select a nice afternoon you don't mind ruining, and see it.

Greg Rihn

[JG] Thanks again, Greg and Georgie for telling us about the Grohmann Museum. We really enjoyed meandering through the exhibits with you! And I was glad to finally

pay a visit to the Milwaukee Public Market. Arranging to meet at Kehr's Candies' chocolate counter was *such* an excellent suggestion! Yum.

[SC] More interesting and eclectic adventures from you guys. The northern European painters shows sounded engaging to me, but your update on the circus was fascinating. I enjoyed Kenneth Branagh's *A Haunting in Venice*, too.

We managed to catch the new SF film *The Creator* near the end of its run here in town. We both liked it a lot. I had read a few good things about it, but a movie trailer we'd seen did not really sell me. However, we wanted to be away from home on Halloween night and there wasn't much else showing we wanted to see. The important detail about this film is that the director who made the Star Wars movie *Rogue One*, also made *The Creator*; both films have a similar feel. It's not a perfect movie, but it moves swiftly along with plenty of action and pulls no punches with the plot. It was a treat to see on the big screen because the director avoided using green screen and did a lot of location shooting, adding special effects later. If you liked *Rogue One*, you might like this.

Steven Vincent Johnson

[JG] I smiled at how you anthropomorphized (or is personified?) your house. My metaphor of choice has been to think of our house as an art project, gradually becoming more interesting as we repair and embellish it. Looking good, Steve! I think the back porch really improves the look of that side of your house.

[SC] Houses possessing "living spirits" sounds a lot like haunting to me, but a house spirit like yours would be a handy and welcome thing. I don't think I can point to an example of our house taking such an active role expressing itself as yours, but there is clear difference between our hundred-year-old house



on Union Street and the (then) hundred-year-old house I lived in as a kid.

I have always been a little creeped out by big old houses. We moved into my family’s old farmhouse in Iowa when I was seven. I went on high alert after we moved in because of the hot water heat. From my bedroom on the second floor, the noise caused by hot water running through the pipes at night sounded exactly like someone walking up the stairs or down the hallway. There were several creepy corners and closets, a basement I didn’t like, and an attic I never entered because you needed a ladder to get up to a narrow crawlspace to get there. We lived on top of a hill which was always windy and drafty and we had big trees close to the house which also creaked and dropped sticks and nuts on the roof or blew against the windows. It did not help that the Iowa Men’s Reformatory graveyard was in sight just a quarter mile down the road.

We have none of that in our Union Street house. I have been everywhere in the house and nothing strikes me a creepy or weird. The house makes no untoward noises unless something breaks, plus we have forced air heat. Even alone at night, I feel secure. This old house might not harass a rude contractor, but it makes me feel comfortable. Besides, I’d rather harass the contractor myself.

Kim & Kathi Nash

[JG] I remember how furnace and air conditioning was activated on specific dates in the state office buildings you and I worked in back in the day. I am with you that, at home, we should be guided not by the calendar, but by the actual temperature. We’ve also turned on the furnace, though I am glad for the thermostat that allows us to automatically regulate different temperatures at different times of the day.

What is it about a book that makes it a “difficult” one to sell on Amazon, and thus destined for eBay?

[SC] I’m always impressed at your book sale updates. You really have an amazing number of books to dispose of, and you have been working on this downsizing project for years. I have to ask; do you guys still buy books? I know you still read, so have you switched to electronic books, or audio books or library loans? Or do you still break down and buy the occasional book?

Jae Leslie Adams

[JG] Those of us who drive our cars for years and years before we buy new ones are surprised whenever we upgrade with the technological changes that most people have already gotten used to, but that to us feel SFnal. “The steering wheel? Is a phone?” I feel you.

The photo on page one in our copy of *Alphabet Obsession* looks like a tiny boar. If so, I suspect that this part of its life as a cute animal, is likely a fleeting one. Or perhaps I have misidentified the animal.

You said that you were also a fan of B. Dylan Hollis videos which inspired me to visit YouTube and watch another one of them. Spoonbread, as it turned out. I laughed, as expected.

[SC] What an impressive collection of postcards you have. “Twice as many remain that have never seen the post office. Yet. Does that sound like a threat?” Yes. But not in a bad way. So long as you remember that with great power, comes great responsibility.

Nice photos. We have a baby hedgehog in one and a jaguar in the other, both looking off to stage left. The big cat seems to be considering pouncing on someone.

So sorry about your car, but 22 years and many trips to Duluth is a good long life for a car. Congratulations on your new car, same year as our

current one. Our last one was a 1999, but over the years I occasionally rented newer cars or checked them out of the DOT motor pool, so my adjustment to newer car tech was not as shocking as it could have been. We selected a 2019 car with all the safety equipment options they offered on it. At my age, I can use all the help I can get.

Catie Pfeifer

[JG] *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was preceded by (and maybe inspired by, I don't know) the Philip K. Dick story, "The Father Thing," about a boy who discovers alien pods in a field that are growing replacement people. Eventually he finds several pods planted beneath his house and one of them has already "ripened" and replaced his father. It's one of the scariest stories I've ever read. You can decide for yourself whether I was a good or bad big sister, but I read that story aloud to my little sister (8 years younger than me). Julie had nightmares and Mom demanded that I stop scaring her with my "science fiction nonsense." Julie wanted to hear the end of the story though, and so the next day we resumed reading in the basement, hiding in a corner behind the washing machine where Mom wouldn't hear us.

[SC] I'm a little surprised that I have not seen *Jacob's Ladder*. I should check it out. I have long enjoyed many things Tim Robbins has been in. *Shawshank Redemption*, *The Player*, and *Cradle Will Rock* are among my own favorites of his. I generally avoid horror movies because there are so many bad ones, but now and then something like *The Exorcist* or *Alien* will get me into a seat and it will be worth it. I read in the paper the other day that someone did some research and found the number of "jump scares" in horror movies has been declining in recent years. I think they said they are falling out of fashion with filmmakers.

Lisa Freitag

[JG] I love that you actually met two of the horror hosts that **Andy** wrote about in his zine and that they got to see Andy's article about them. What a coincidence! I hope they contacted Andy. I also enjoyed reading about your encounter with Ryka Aoki.

Re your comment to **Steve S** about AI and your supposition that most people don't really know much about what they are complaining about.... I think you know Michael Whelan. There was an article about book cover artists in a recent issue of *The Washington*

Post (I think, though it may have been *The New York Times*) and a big chunk of the article featured Whelan, who predicts that he will soon be mostly pushed out of the cover art business by AI. He said that people were already using AI to make artwork "in the style of Michael Whelan," and that publishers are flocking to this technology. It makes me unhappy that new artists will have less incentive to develop and sell their work because, even if their work become popular, it will also become grist for AI imitations that could easily outsell their own original work.

I'm also nervous about the havoc that I expect will be caused by a new family of deep fake AI apps called "nudifiers." Here's how they are described on-line:

Have you ever thought of your favorite female celebrities or hot girls in your lives and wanted to see their naked bodies? At times, it is possible that you lack imagination and that is why we need a nudifying tool!

AI nudifiers can nudity any photos uploaded, that is to say, remove unwanted clothes of any people in the picture. In this article, we will walk you through the best 6 AI nudifiers and how to undress anyone online for free.

I've read that these apps are being used most often to convert photos of non-famous women, friends or acquaintances from Facebook, including children. (I don't see any information on whether or not the app is being used to undress male bodies.). So, don't worry so much about an angry ex who might publish nude photos of you. Your next-door neighbor or co-worker can post a fake one. Damn.

[SC] I don't envy you going to Wasteland more than once, but I'm glad you went back for your story about the Mummy and the Monkey. It was great. It made them seem more real, not like ancient history, or something **Andy** might have made up. I'm glad too that you refrained from taking a picture of Harmon without the mask, I'd have felt the same way. That said, spending that much time in a monkey mask is a little bit nuts.

I'm always amused when someone has to explain what an APA is. I've done it enough times trying to recruit new members that I don't think it's as easy as it might seem, especially in the age of the Internet.

Luke McGuff

[JG] What a fine weekend and a really fine telling of it. Thanks Luke. (Is your friends name Joe Wesson?)

[SC] I enjoyed following your weekend adventures with Joe and Polly. I have seen *House on The Rock* two or three times and that is enough to last me forever. It's fun to introduce some naïve visitor to it, but after a few visits, I'm now much more likely to point them in the right direction and wave goodbye.

Speaking as another Wisconsin immigrant, I think you are right about the popularity of fish fry being more about a tradition of getting together with people regularly than it is about the food. In my experience however, the quality of the food does vary and starts to matter after you've had a hundred or so of them. That's why there is always such a lively discussion around the question of where to go for "the best" fish fry with everyone having their favorite, and lamentation about legendary fish fries of yesteryear.

It seems like whenever Jeanne and I are in Baraboo (like just last month during the Fall Art Tour) we end up having lunch at the Village Café on the town square. It's old-fashioned and a bit quirky, but pretty good food. On our way out of town the last time, we drove by the Broadway Diner. That looks like fun. I'm a sucker for diners. Maybe we will try that next time.

Marilyn Holt

[JG] I liked your description of how you wrote the scenes in your novel that referenced child pornography – how you shied away from describing something in detail that you were unfamiliar with. This is an aspect of writing that I sometimes think about when reading a novel – that choices about character and setting sometimes have more to do with the author's expertise or lack of it, than to an overarching theme or attempt at metaphor. I can think of several instances in my play when I included information about an event via a third person for similar reasons. It also reminds me of how Jane Austin restricted herself to places and events that she had personally experienced.

I'm glad you're doing well Marilyn!

[SC] Thanks as always for the updates. I'm always glad to hear from you. I hope you are doing okay with the infusions and chemo pills.

I don't think we usually see quinces around here, or I simply haven't noticed them. I understand it's better to cook them rather than eat them raw, but they are supposed to taste like a combination apple/pear, which sounds nice.

Carrie Root

[JG] I've been enjoying your baby and grandmother photos on Facebook! **Jae's** too! And I really liked your haiku, "one day..."

I wish I could have been there for Nicola's reading. I had decided to re-read Nicola Griffith's *Hild* before starting *Menewood*. And then Scott said he was interested in reading *Hild* too. That's when I remembered someone recommending the audiobook of *Hild*, Was it you or maybe Luke? It turned out that *Hild* has somehow disappeared from my Kindle app's memory (*damnAmazongrrrr*), and I would have had to buy another copy anyway. So, I bought the audiobook instead and we're going to start listening to *Hild* soon and maybe start *Menewood* afterwards. [I keep wanting to type "Memewood," but that would be something else entirely – from pre-Internet days, when memes were distributed as wooden carvings.] Maybe some of us who read both novels could eventually get together for a special zoom book discussion.

I dealt with Space Mountain in exactly the same way you did, with my eyes tightly closed. I didn't actually realize that it was a roller coaster until we were inside the building. It was fine, I didn't get sick or scared, but I had no interest in repeating the experience.

[SC] Congratulations on the 50th anniversary of being a mom. Funny haiku. Lovely photos once again.

The hailstorm that hit while we were on the (belated) Turbo Zoom with you guys last month was one of the worst such storms I'd ever seen. I have experienced brief episodes of heavy hail during thunderstorms, of course, but this was much worse. The hail was the size of nickels and quarters and came down in sheets that covered the grass like a heavy late fall snow shower and lasted quite a while.

Andy Hooper

[JG] Sorry for not sounding the alarm about the vertical black box on page one. When we were collating, I made a joke to the effect that Andy was mirroring *Madison Foursquare's* usual page-one layout design. If I had taken a closer look and noticed that colophon was absent, Scott and I would probably have compared it to the pdf and tried to reprint the page. I still do not understand why your pdf (which was correct) printed in the way it did. Device-independent-printing is the whole point of pdfs. The only thing I can think of is that the software you use to make pdfs is outdated. I

remember old versions of PageMaker reversing artwork in the same way. But once the software was updated, the problem disappeared. It's possible that I could have opened your pdf with an up-to-date version of Acrobat and printed it correctly.

Thanks for your excellent comments on Eileen Gunn's collection, *Night Shift*. I like your comparison of its contents to a very good fanzine. I bet that Eileen would love to see your review if you sent it to her as a letter of comment. I also enjoyed your contemplation of the original things that attracted you and Carrie to the Northwest. Why do you think Eileen's choice of a title reveals "magnificent hubris"? Are you referring to the movie, the TV show, or something else?

I'm so glad that you enjoyed Laurie Marks' *Dancing Jack*. She's been a favorite author of mine for many years. I don't think I realized how relatively unknown she was to general SF readers before we talked about it during the book discussion. Marks was a well-known and much-admired attendee of WisCon. (I nominated her as GoH a few times and am sad that we never honored her.) She was (and is?) part of a friend- and writers'-group with Ellen Kushner, Delia Sherman and others in the Northeast. She sustained a major back injury many years ago (in the early 2000s, I think) when she fell backwards off the front porch of her house. I don't think she ever fully recovered from that accident. Laurie's life partner, Deb Mesinger has dealt with liver disease as long as I've known them. There was a fund-raiser for a liver transplant for Deb in 2010, and as far as I know, she is still with us. But the financial and emotional toll of those health issues made it difficult for Laurie to write much in recent years. Neither of them had good health insurance. I was delighted that Small Beer Press finally published the final book from Marks' *Elemental Logic* series – *Water Logic*. Tor published the first two books, *Fire Logic* and *Earth Logic*, and then decided not to publish the rest of the series. Small Beer Press published *Water Logic*, and most recently, *Air Logic*, and has also republished the first two books of the series. If you liked *Dancing Jack*, I think you would like the *Elemental Logic* series.

Every couple probably has a few "custom" vows or promises. For you and Carrie, it's "in sickness, health, and ... spiderwebs." For me and Scott it would be "in sickness, health, and ... arched bridges and twisty roads."

Summer camp activities, storytelling, and pies sounds like a delightful recipe for a *Turbo* gathering. I really love the idea of a story-telling session. I volunteer to make a couple pies. How could I resist the chance to win a Roscoe Ribbon of Excellence? There are quite a

few other good bakers in this group, so I'm sure we could get a few more pies. I've participated in two big pie-making events – Spike and Tom's wedding reception, where friends and relatives baked dozens of pies. And CroneCon – Jane Hawkins', Debbie Notkin's, Donya White's, and my 50th birthday party – for which I baked 23 pies.

[SC] Very fine reviews of *Night Shift* and *Dancing Jack*, thank you. I liked Gunn's stories very much and I look forward to tackling her collections *Stable Strategies* and *Questionable Practices*. It's kind of astonishing to me that it took a book group selection to finally prompt me to read her fiction. I was always going to get to it "soon." One of the good things a book group does is push us to read stuff, ready or not.

Dancing Jack, on the other hand, I thought I'd read. I've been very hit or miss when it comes to reading (what were once called) Tiptree books. In the early days, I read more of them than later on and *Dancing Jack* was talked about a lot the year it was short listed. I was sure I'd read it; I just couldn't remember it. Turns out, I had not read it but that was okay because we got to read it now and I really enjoyed it. Marks is a very skilled writer of a fantasy story that felt real and mature. *Dancing Jack* had a plot that had me engaged yet uncertain as to how it would resolve and was filled with rich characters. And at 253 pages, there was no wasted space.

Regarding your comment to **Elizabeth**, you wrote, "You have events built around tea-cakes and a magical ash tree, while all we ever did was build a beer can tower to the moon." Don't forget human pyramids! You remember those, I'm sure. Where is Spike when we need her to inspire (or wrangle) us into doing something "elegant"?

