

# Madison four square

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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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This is **Madison Foursquare #94**. *Madison Foursquare* was created using a Mac Studio with

InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop, all CC 2024, and printed on a Ricoh Aficio CL7200 color printer.

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## Feeling hopeful again

[JG] Ever since Joe Biden stepped back from his campaign for the presidency and endorsed Kamala Harris, the despair I'd been feeling since the debate has lifted. I feel joy and hope because...

- ◆ Biden decided to drop out of the race for the good of the country, which he valued over personal ambition. I don't believe that Trump is capable of understanding such a motivation. Trump and most MAGAnS describe Biden's withdrawal as a coup, something that was forced upon Biden, because it is the only way they can imagine themselves giving up power. They are livid that Biden's action not only short-circuited their post-convention bump, but earned him massive praise from Democrats. Biden will go down in history as one of the great presidents, not only for making this decision, but for all he accomplished in his term.
- ◆ Biden continues to work. Being free from campaign duties gives him the opportunity to continue to accomplish great things. Even as I write today, Biden's administration concluded a prisoner swap that freed four Russian dissidents and four Americans from Russia, including *Wall Street Journal* reporter Evan Gershkovich, about whom Trump recently bragged he would get freed as soon as he was elected. Trump heavily hinted that his chummy relationship with Putin would guarantee Gershkovich's release. Turns out that kissing ass wasn't necessary. Biden will also be able to continue work on the Gaza-Israel conflict, and has made a start in reforming the Supreme Court. I have so much respect for Joe Biden.
- ◆ But it is Kamala that fills me with joy and hope, so much so that I've discovered that reading campaign news is fun again. Her campaign team stepped up in a flawless process and was buoyed by incredible celebrations, financial contributions, and volunteers. The massive welcome she received from Democrats immediately turned all her potential Democratic opponents into supporters of her campaign. A few prominent Republicans have endorsed her. Within days, the polls started shifting in her favor.
- ◆ I loved the Zoom calls – Black Women for Harris, Black Men for Harris, White Dudes for Harris (including Jeff Bridges, The Dude himself). I was so impressed by what the organizers said about their reasons for doing White Women for Harris – that white women need to step up and address the uncomfortable fact that



white women were instrumental in electing Trump back in 2016. That hit home. Yes.

- ◆ The humor! The memes! Kamala's laughter! I love it when smart candidates use humor in their campaigns. Remember Russ Feingold's senatorial campaign ("This is my hand; this is Wisconsin.")? So much of what Trump says deserves snorts of derisive laughter, and even more delightful: people laughing in his face actually seems to bother Trump quite a lot. Kamala's supporters obviously enjoy getting in on the fun too. Personally, I love this typographic pun on her name:
- ◆ I am impressed with Kamala's qualifications, strength, clarity, and wit. I think her political skills have grown substantially during the last four years. But also, people in this country have changed too, and now find her gender, capabilities, and point of view, much more attractive.
- ◆ I am excited to vote for Kamala in November. I am feeling hopeful.

,la

## Comments

[JG] My comments come first this month. I'm not trying to disorient anyone; it's just that, for the first time in many years, I wrote my comments before Scott.

## Cover

[JG] Nice first-contact cover. If the alien asked to be taken to the cat's leader, what would happen? And what is the orange creature cowering behind a rock? A hairy turtle?

[SC] Lovely cover, Ruth.

## Georgie Schnobrich

[JG] Thanks for the review of Jubber's book! I don't think I started paying attention to authors' names until I was 14 or older. I may have thought about artists as individual people (whose lives influenced the work they did) before I considered authors in the same way. But it's a wonderful thing to contemplate how a story results from a chain of ideas transported between cultures and people. The availability of Everything-All-At-Once on the web probably poses a roadblock for some young folks to focus on historical perspective. I really appreciate your summary of *The Fairy Tellers*. Thank you!

[SC] Thanks from me also for your review of *The Fairy Tellers*. I had only the haziest idea of where

some of these stories came from and how old they are. I will be interested in **Elizabeth's** comments on the book. I did not grow up with much familiarity with folk/fairy tales except when mentioned in, or filtered through, other media like TV, so I mostly did not read them until I was an adult. I came to them with a skewed idea that these stories were only for children. This is all very interesting.

Regarding your comment to us, welcome to the *Little, Big* party. The more the merrier.

## Greg Rihn

[JG] Thought-provoking questions about the painting, *The Money Lenders* ... to which I have no answers, but would love to know more.

I agree with you about the pointless difference between a simulated vs. real world, as well as between a pre-determined world and a world in which free will operates. It makes no difference to the people who live in those worlds, however they are governed. I've never identified with stories in which people succumb to despair when they conclude that they have no free will, because how can anyone tell the difference?

Re your comment to **Andy** about stories with all-male societies, I thought first of Frank Herbert's *The White Plague*, which I recall as being about an engineered disease that killed all the women in the whole world except one. But it's been a long time since I read it, so I googled the title and discovered that Wikipedia's plot summary doesn't at all resemble my memory. The main plot points seemed to have more to do with IRA and middle east terrorism than gender. Odd. Well, I disliked the novel intensely, so I guess I forgot many of the details.

[SC] Wonderful summary of the Optimist Theater shows. What fun! I think I would have liked all of it except possibly the Shakespeare games, since I'm not nearly as well-versed in the Bard as I should be to engage in competitions based on his work. Otherwise, who could resist puppets with knives or a send-up of Romeo and Juliet (and, yes, **Georgie**, I've seen R & J about as many times as I care to, too) or a short but serious one-person Macbeth?

Re Bastille Day, Jeanne and I have somehow managed to miss most of the festivals in Madison so far this year. I hope we are able to be available for something yet, but the summer has only so many weekends and they fill up.

Re the Republican Convention, what a circus that was. I think the rise of Kamala Harris has largely

erased whatever boost in the polls their convention might have given them. As for the plot to substitute Vance for Trump via the 25th Amendment, I'm more worried about an attempt to interfere with the election results in an effort to push the election into the House or the Supreme Court. With Joe no longer running for re-election, I hope he's prepared to use the vast power the Court just gave him to stop any attempt by MAGA to negate the choice of the voters.



A giant plant thrives in a giant pot. Scott calls him Hector. "Feed Me!"

### Elizabeth Matson

[JG] I'm glad you were able to sell back the land so quickly after you made your decision. Good luck on selling the yurt!

Sounds like you are having a busy summer at the library. I sure hope that some qualified library-lovers find their way to your interview room.

Re your past comment to **Andy** about *Warhoon*, next time you are in town you can take a look at my copy or borrow it.

[SC] I'm sad that you have to leave behind your dream of retiring to a custom earth-friendly home on your own piece of rural land. I remember how excited you were about this plan when you first moved back to Wisconsin and told us about it. Times change and I'm sure you made a wise choice, if hard. I'm not sad that your new plans involve moving back to Madison. Let us know how we can help.

You would think most people would view a job at a library as such a rare and desirable employer they would put in an effort to look nice and come prepared for the interview. Sadly, I think your experience is not uncommon for a lot of employers. I hope whatever Eric has in store for your area are changes you approve of.

Old Nick is really a handful to manage these days. It must be hard to see him struggling now after being such a powerful and graceful animal for so long. Best wishes to you both.

I wonder if APT is experiencing a drop in attendance generally. I saw an ad in this week's Cap Times where they were offering 20% off tickets to the newest plays, *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *King Lear*. Weather issues may be a challenge this year.

### Jeanne Bowman

[JG] What a "tasteful" Hawaiian trip report! I remember seeing many roadside fruit stands when we went to Hawaii. You make me wish we'd stopped and tried more of the native fruits. I wanted to see a pineapple plantation while we were there because I was reading James Michener's novel, *Hawaii* during our trip and was fascinated by the scientific advances that enabled Hawaii's pineapple industry to thrive, as well as the carefully restricted export regulations and abusive labor practices that propped

up the business. But we weren't able to arrange a tour. I don't remember exactly why, but I think it probably had something to do with the fact that the industry had long been in decline in Hawaii because corporate spies had managed to steal cuttings and establish plantations in the Philippines and Costa Rica, where conditions are actually better for pineapple. Did you ever visit a pineapple plantation?

Hmm, menacing monk seals.... But they look so cute in photos, and not at all menacing.

[SC] On both of our trips to Hawaii, we spent time on the Big Island. On our last trip we stayed on the same side of the island as you in Kailua-Kona, south of the airport. Our hotel was right on the beach but we were also near the center of town, an easy stroll for me to coffee shops and Kona Brewing.

Chilling monk seal story. I loved our two visits to Hawaii, but it's not Disneyland. We came across warnings from time to time that Hawaii was willing and capable of killing us.

### Steve Vincent Johnson

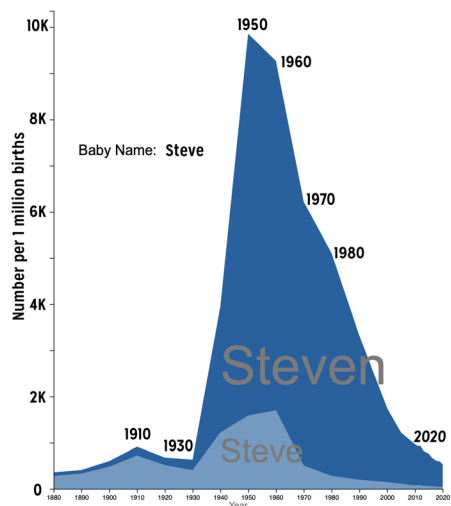
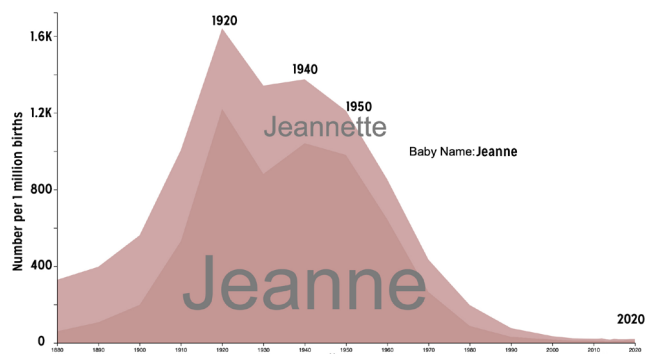
[JG] I have avoided peeking down the AI rathole because I really dislike the outright theft that underlies its capabilities. I suspect that avoiding AI would damage my career as a designer if I were still in the midst of a career as a graphic designer, and that familiarity with AI tools will eventually become as essential for young designers as high-end graphic software has been for me. But I'm retired now, and although I always enjoyed upgrading graphic software packages and learning new graphic techniques throughout my career, I've decided to let the AI revolution pass me by. Nevertheless, all the Adobe products keep trying to entice me to change

my ways. But so far, I prefer making art using my seemingly “old-fashioned” skills.

I’m glad you enjoyed *The Rise and Fall of D.O.D.O.* I did too, as I recall, but its plot didn’t stick with me....

As for the problem of too many Turbans named Jeanne, I present evidence that this is a sort of freakish accident. The name was actually pretty rare in the general population through the last 50 years. “Jeanne” enjoyed its peak popularity in 1905 but was never hugely popular. The abundance of the very popularly named Steves in the apa, however, is less surprising. You can check other name-charts which show the years in which a given name was most and least popular. <https://engaging-data.com/baby-name-visualizer/>

[SC] Congratulations on the success with your



hernia operation. Healing first, cartwheels and jumping jacks soon.

## Jeannie Bergmann

[JG] Re your comment to **Pat** about the advice column in which a person complained about *other* people making noises in the bathroom while she was trying to make a phone call: I also saw that column (it was

*Miss Manners*, July 19, 2024). It was so ridiculous (but hilarious) that I suspect it might have been a hoax.

### Dear Miss Manners:

*I have a very stressful job. I am connected to my phone almost 24/7, and I take all calls regardless of my location. I frequently take calls from clients and staff while using the ladies' room. I am distressed when others using the same restroom flush toilets and use loud hand-dryers while I'm on the phone. It must be obvious to them that I'm talking, and yet they make these noises, which interrupt my calls.*

*How can I politely ask others to refrain from flushing or using the hand dryer while I'm on the phone?*

### Miss Manners replies:

*What did you have in mind? "Please stop going about your business while I'm trying to conduct my business?"*

*Miss Manners suggests instead that you get yourself some boundaries – and go apologize to all of the poor women you annoyed.*

I liked “Moonlighting” a lot – god as artist.

[SC] It’s too bad you have to wait for the cardioablation, but great news that there is a safer alternative coming. Good for you. Thanks for the tip on the plate tectonics theory of alien civilizations, I see a lot of hits on Google I can check out.

Re your comment to **Lisa**, our current car is also our first one with heated seats and we love them in the winter, which only makes sense. I had a co-worker who got a new car a few months before I retired and her car was the first she’d ever had with a heated steering wheel. She loved it so much she said it would have to be pried out of her dead hands. Not sure I understood why as clearly as a love for heated seats, but if I ever get one of my own I’ll let you know.

## Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[JG] Thanks for doing the APT rundown of shows that our group has seen so far. It has been a very good summer of theater so far! I think the Chadwick Bosman film version of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* was superior to the APT staged version, partially because the music, which was central to the story, was done so much better in the movie. And Chadwick Bosman, of course. *The Virgin Queen Entertains Her Fool* was my favorite APT play hands down. I thought it was

brilliant – beautifully written, staged, and acted, and so thought-provoking! The writing was so tight! I hope I get to see it again when I can pay more attention to the foreshadowing in the text. Minor things mentioned earlier in the play are mirrored and expanded later – like how the question of whether or not the broth has been poisoned is echoed later in a lethal manner. And how the escape-hatch is played as a joke early on, but becomes a tragic entrance-hatch later. Oh, and Tracy Michelle Arnold’s portrayal of Queen Adalia, a woman in constant pain, who is never able to sit or stand comfortably, was awesome. Jim DeVita was great as her minister and former lover. After thinking about the play for a few days, I remembered the series, *The Regime*, a miniseries aired on Max, starring Kate Winslet as an authoritarian leader during the last year of her reign in a modern European palace. *The Regime* and *The Virgin Queen* have very little in common with one another in terms of tone or plot, but both stories focus on a leader and those closest to her, who rationalize their ambition and actions – at least partially – as being what’s best for “the people,” when in actuality, they have no idea what the people need. Power is the only thing that matters.

[SC] Jim, thanks for the Life Updates including the family dramas Up North, which you laid out clearly enough to make quite interesting reading. Sorry for the sudden loss of Chris, but I hope everything turns out as well as possible for everyone else. I expect I will be reading *Translation State* at some point but I will need to review the previous Imperial Radch novels before jumping in. Thanks for doing all the reading so I don’t have to.

Jeanne and I are together in how we feel about *The Virgin Queen Entertains her Fool* but this has been a very strong APT season so far. I’m looking forward to all the rest.

Diane, re your comment to **Greg**, I laughed at the image of break-the-rules Kirk doing a performance review with follow-rules-to-the-letter Spock, or better yet, Kirk trying to critique hot-headed Bone’s performance. There’d be some shouting.



## Andrea Connell

[JG] What an epic struggle! I hope you manage to entirely vanquish the poison ivy. I cheer you from afar. What about the plastic liner that turned into a concrete barrier? Are you going to be able to dig up that stuff?

[SC] I think you have this “*Turbo* routine” well in hand. Your zine perfectly captures your energy and sense of humor. It probably doesn’t hurt that you have spoiled us for treats when you “dessert bomb” the apa collations. I am now in the habit of asking **Jim** when we arrive for collation whether you have been there yet. He’s been answering that you’ve come and gone and left something delicious.

I have no interest in gardening, but now and again I have to mow the grass and pull some weeds. A few weeks ago I yanked out some weeds along one of our fences and ended up with a rash on my hands. I grew up on a farm and spent a lot of time crashing around in the woods behind our place, but I never got poison ivy (and the woods were full of it). Nothing along my fence looked like your photos of poison ivy, so I think it must have been something else. No matter, I just wear gloves now. I have no doubt that you will defeat your poison ivy, I think you are something of an unstoppable force. Good suggestion about the paper bags for mulch. I’ve heard of people laying down plastic, but I never thought that sounded like a good idea. Great pictures (and captions!)

## Jae Adams

[JG] WHICH big colorful wall on East Washington Street did Matt’s friend Bill paint?? There are several. Sadly, I missed seeing Bill’s artwork on your garage.

I love the idea of someone (Eddie) reading an atlas as if it were a novel, page by page from beginning to end.

Scott also mentioned that there was a character in *Little, Big* who uses a memory palace. Scott has promised to read it to me.

I see you mentioned wanting a garden tour to happen during TurboCon. (Does this mean that you are planning to attend TurboCon? You haven’t said.) Just a reminder here: so far, there is no garden tour scheduled in the chart/schedule. For that to happen, someone(s) has to propose a plan and volunteer. Another reminder: all TurboCon planning is happening via email, which is easier for me to keep track of than collecting random

comments in the apa. **TO EVERYONE:** if you are not receiving the monthly TurboCon updates from me, check your spam folders or let me know and I will send you the current version. I've been sending the updates out in the middle of the month, during the week before the *Turbo* deadline.

Thanks for reprinting *North*. What a story. I remember reading it soon after it was published, either before or after a trip that Scott and I took, driving from the east end of Lake Superior. We didn't plan on circumnavigating the whole lake like you and **Steve** did, but we were advised frequently by locals not to drive after dark because of the moose. We were glad that the B&Bs we stayed at served dinner so we didn't need to test our luck. Reading your story today, it occurred to me that, even then, the fates were urging you toward Duluth....

[SC] Thanks for reprinting *North*. I must have read it when it came out, and I remember that we talked a lot about your accident, but I simply forgot you guys pubbed this piece. It may not have had the same impact on me then that it does now because we have subsequently traveled through Canada several times and my memories of those trips are clear. I have first-hand experience driving there now. I remember that we carefully heeded the warnings about driving in rural areas after dark because moose eyes do not shine and we remembered your terrifying experience. You guys were lucky, but a lot of credit goes to **Steve's** excellent driving and reflexes and his choice of a tough car.

### Carrie Root

[JG] I'm pretty sure I saw the movie, *Heartland*, and liked it a lot, though without the recognition you experienced.

All 19th-century women's dilemmas, as portrayed fairly romantically in *Bridgerton* (though Cressida's situation in the most recent season was less romantic and no doubt most realistic), is what makes the character Eloise most interesting to me. She and Penelope are the only ones who really seem to get angry about the unfairness of gender expectations. Eloise seems most likely to attempt to circumvent the marry-or-live-in-misery-rule and so I have high hopes for the next season of *Bridgerton* which will feature her story.

Re your comment to **Greg** about universal, regular MRI scans requiring an army of skilled MRI technicians: As you said, the only practical way to make this happen would be to employ AI to do the analysis. This is one of the ways (of many, I'm sure) that I hope AI technology will be employed – doing things that people cannot do. As opposed to taking fulfilling jobs away from people who already do them well. On the other hand, interpreting MRI scans for everyone would also pose an enormous risk of privacy invasion because I have no doubt that lots of people will argue that the only way to pay for this very expensive technology will be to use and sell the data for other uses than monitoring people's health.

What cute waterbabies!

[SC] I liked your review of *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*. I think it might interest me as well. Something I may look for when I get more caught up with my To-Read Shelf. Thank you.

Lovely photo of the deck staining. Re your comment to **Jim and Diane**, I look forward to hanging out on your deck when we visit for Worldcon.

The waterbaby pictures were adorable.

### Andy Hooper

[JG] Thanks for the Howard Waldrop piece. I'm so glad you had such a wonderful relationship with him.

Robert Taylor asked me (through Spike) for photos to display during Howard's memorial last month in Austin. Sadly, I never took any photos at Armadillocon 1, where Howard and I were both GoHs, but I did send Robert a story which was set at that con and featured Howard. ("Jokes and Poison Gas," previously published here in



Howard Waldrop & Trina Robbins



Howard Waldrop

*Madison Foursquare*). I also sent a bunch of photos of Howard from 1992 (a little later than you guessed) when he was GoH at WisCon 16.

I was intrigued by your comments on Waldrop's interest in the "evolution of a shared narrative." I think one could use that phrase to accurately describe what goes on in "Am-I-An-Asshole" stories. Over time, they all seem to repeat and elaborate on popular stories written by earlier writers. I think the idea also applies to all sort of conspiracy theories that get spun by a succession of people, each taking up the kernel of an idea and elaborating upon it.

*Turbo* is the only apa I contribute to right now. I have mostly been a serial apa contributor, leaving one apa not long after joining another because the deadlines overwhelm me. You, on the other hand, really seem to want to be a genzine editor, so much so that you have converted *Captain Flashback* into a genzine-apazine hybrid. My apazine bibliography follows in chronological order:

*Obsessions* [A Women's Apa, 1976-1983] Nos. 1-29  
*Shoreline* [CRAPA, 1978-1981] Nos. 1-11  
*Alcheringa* [Anzapa, 1982] No. 1  
*Allargando* [Turbo-Charged Party Animal apa, 1986-88] Nos. 1-16  
*Union Street* [Turbo-Charged Party Animal apa, with Scott Custis, 9/1989-6/2003] Nos. 1-144  
*Grayscale* [Intercourse apa, 9/1996-2/2004] Nos. 1-34  
*What Spare Time?! or Secretary No More* [for Turbo-Charged Party Animal and Intercourse, 2003] Nos. 1-2  
*Jornada Post* [Turbo-Charged Party Animal apa, with Scott Custis, 7/2003-8/2004] Nos. 1-10  
*Madison Foursquare* [Turbo-Charged Party Animal apa, with Scott Custis, 6/2015-current] Nos. 1- current

I enjoyed William Breiding's review of *The Mammoth Book of Short Science Fiction Novels*, and that's a good thing because it convinced me not to read the book. I am also curious about the editors' motives for publishing this collection....

[SC] I thought your tribute to Howard Waldrop was wonderful. I met him just once at a WisCon, but we were in an opening ceremonies skit together, so I got to speak with him enough to appreciate what a pleasant and funny guy he was. You're lucky to have been friends with him and we're lucky you shared your memories of him with us.

Periodically I have to take a moment to tell you how much I look forward to the comments you write to everyone in the apa. Always thoughtful, always interesting, I do not want you to ever think I take your attention for granted.

I also liked William Breiding's column this month. One more collection of old stories I can safely avoid. His summaries of the stories he didn't like were particularly fun to read

### Hope Kiefer & Karl Hailman

[JG] Sounds like you had a lovely day at Governor Dodge State Park. In spite of the fact that it's a really big state park and so close to Madison, I don't think I've visited more than once and briefly.

With all the rain, I expected this to be a bad mosquito year, but at least around our house, it's been surprisingly pest-free. My theory is that the Monolith house has something to do with this state of affairs. The Monolith house replaced a very run-down house and garage that had been abandoned and was rotting in place for many years. There were probably many pools of stagnant water offering mosquito-breeding space on the grounds and in the garage with its semi-collapsed roof. That's all been cleaned up now. Yay. But we got dive-bombed with hundreds of mosquitoes at American Players Theater on the paths.

Hope, I'm sorry you had such a bad time earlier this month, but thank goodness you had a consultant on hand, Dr. Griffith, to help.

Karl, thanks for the comment on our zine. It really meant a lot to me.

[SC] Karl, I enjoyed your hiking adventures as always. Hiking with you must seem like having the family's own naturalist along for the trip. Nice license plates. I like how we went from having one politically explosive license plate design (remember Gov. Tony Earl's fateful decision to change the state's license plate?) to offering many different designs for personalized plates. If you don't like the standard plate, buy something you like. End of political hot potato.

I hope getting off the antibiotics has actually helped you, Hope. But sometimes it's not the drugs. Sometimes life just is one damn thing after another.

### Pat Hario

[JG] Wow, I hadn't heard anything about the Karen Read trial before reading your zine. I think I could have become engrossed in the story if I'd begun to watch, especially this last month, i.e., since Biden's awful debate. For weeks, I had been feeling so depressed and was tending to avoid reading the news as much as usual and, frankly, I was beginning to despair. The Read trial would have made a good distraction. But

since Biden withdrew from the campaign last week and Kamala Harris exploded onto the political scene, my mood has shifted to hopeful, even joyful. In that spirit, I hope Kamala wins the election, the House and Senate are won by Democrats, the Supreme Court gets reformed, Trump's trials proceed, and – to bring the conversation back to the topic – that the feds investigate the hell out of what is going on in the Canton police department and that Karen Read gets on with her life.

Check out the letter to Miss Manners that I reprinted in a comment to **JeannieB**, re extracurricular bathroom activities.

Thanks for your encouragement for my movie/TV reviews. Actually, thank you **Everybody** for the positive comments. I enjoy writing them but it makes it more worthwhile knowing that I'm not wasting space writing something that most of you skip reading.

I had not read any of the trolling aimed at the *Bridgerton* actress, Nicola Coughlan, who plays Penelope Featherington. But I am not at all surprised that the trolls trolled. I was glad, when I watched this last season, to discover that Penelope's "make-over" (which the star of each season of *Bridgerton* gets) involved hair and make-up, not a weight-loss plan. The show's makers seem to have adopted the ignore-trollers-and-move-on plan. Excellent.

[SC] I want to thank you for going to the work of laying out the Karen Read murder trial in your zine because you once tried to explain it to me in the car on the way to bowling, but I was having trouble focusing on all the details while driving so I got lost at some point. It all makes more sense now, the case is still a shitshow but that's real crime in America. I assume you chose the title for your piece as a declaration that if a dead body ever shows up on your lawn with bite marks on it, they won't be from your dog. As good a reason as any to not have a dog, I guess.

Re your comment to **Carrie** for issue #455, I liked what you wrote to her about friends. I feel much the same way. I know I tend to be a bad long-distance friend. I have kept very few friends who live far away from me. I lose touch with people when I don't see them occasionally. The apa has helped with that but lately I've been trying to have more regular contact with people who are physically closer. Hence the bowling, the apa collations, the book group, the bike rides with **Luke**, etc. "I don't have so many friends that I want to lose them by taking them for granted or ignoring them." Yes.

## Luke McGuff

[JG] Thanks for the purple martin primer. I loved the story of rehabbing the gourd homes. But I have to ask: If no natural housing for these birds exists in our area, does that make purple martins (technically) an invasive species? Sometimes the idea of what is and what isn't an invasive seems irrelevant, except when the so-called invasive thing damages some native plant or animal that we value. How long does a plant or animal have to live in an area before it is considered a non-trespassing part of the biome?

I remember biking home after work and feeling exactly like you say you do – relaxing immediately upon coasting down the hill to the start of the bike path, the wind in my face. I used to love that ride, even in the rain, and hated having to switch to a bus commute when the weather turned cold.

[SC] Your talk before the Master Naturalist class sounded to me like a fun time. Does this sort of activity count toward renewing your own Master Naturalist certification, or were you and Julie invited to speak purely because you were managing purple martin houses?

I will attest that your birthday bash at the Terrace was another success. Friday afternoons at the Terrace get busy in the summer, and the musical interlude was annoying, but a little rain scared some folks away and we all got to sit in the shade. All good.

I'm really enjoying our weekend bike-rides. I'm glad you're a morning guy. Bike trails get busy on the weekends in Madison.

## Kim & Kathi Nash

[JG] Hope they fix your knee and you recover quickly Kathi!

[SC] Kim, I hate drought so I personally welcome the rain. I like full reservoirs, healthy water table, and lots of green plants. I'm very concerned about the heat waves that have swept across most of the rest of the country. We have largely avoided really high temperatures this year, but it's bound to come our way sometime. We just have to deal with each season as it comes.

Sorry about your knee issues, Kathi, and I wish you the best and quickest recovery.

Kitsune and Kalliope look like they are posing for graduation pictures.



## Steve Swartz

[JG] I liked your comments to **Lisa** about fandom. Interesting theory, especially when applied to the parts of fandom that especially values fannish history. But I was unable to fit your narrative onto my understanding of what happened to local Madison fandom. Certainly, the several generations of WisCon's new runners are younger and obviously critical of the people who used to run WisCon, but I think they see themselves as rescuers of an important community. It never seemed that they perceived veterans as having tried to exclude new participants, just that we were unworthy guardians.

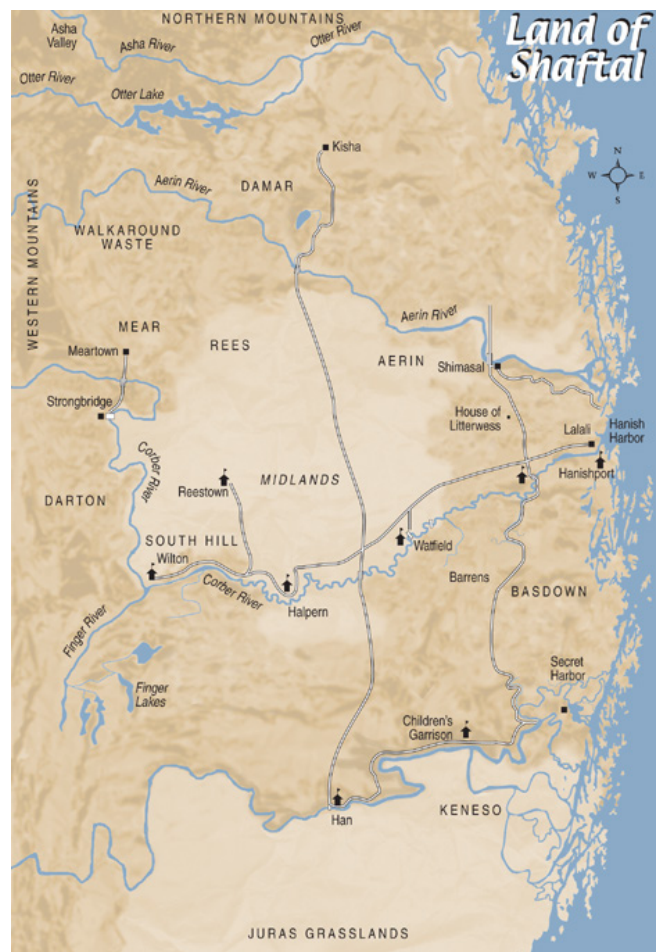
Did the Mr.-Ding-A-Ling artwork cover up a paragraph of text? Your comment to **SteveVJ** about his Kepler interview on the previous page seems to have been cut off.

I think I will not try out the Wonder Bread recipe you recommended. But I will check out the book you mentioned, *The Innovator's Dilemma*. Sounds interesting.

I disagree with you about WisCon's lack of exit plan. Years before things fell apart, I had been openly talking about retiring after WisCon 40, telling people it would be my last year on the committee, and I wasn't the only concom member talking in this way. We veterans were all trying to be as encouraging as possible to new folks joining the committee. I remember the year (2013, WisCon 37) for which we elected Jackie Lee and Gretchen Tru as co-chairs. They sat across from me at a picnic a few months after WisCon 36 and smiled: "So," they said, challenging me, "what do you think about having WisCon chaired by two people who weren't born at the time of WisCon 1?" I exploded with laughter and everyone at the table laughed, and the laughter changed to cheers. We were delighted and relieved to see a large contingent of younger fans step up and take the reins. We experimented with strategies for how committee meetings could be made more welcoming to a younger and more diverse contingent of fans. We invested in tech tools to help people participate in meetings who lived outside of Madison, and took steps to encourage GoH choices and programming to reflect cutting-edge topics. It really felt to me as if this plan was working well ... until it didn't, and the transition plan was smashed on a battleground. We obviously had some problems that needed to be addressed, but demanding that younger fans respect older members on the committee and do things the way we used to do them – that was

not one of our problems. Even the people who were most critical of WisCon couched their criticism in their assessment of the *importance* of WisCon's role in gender and diversity issues in science fiction. They clearly believed that the wrong people were in charge. Sadly and ironically, most of the folks most active in attacking WisCon veterans didn't stick around to do the work on WisCon after they "won" the battle.

The absence of a map in a book is not necessarily due to the author's decision not to provide one. I was commissioned to draft a few maps for publication, after that first one I did for Laurie Marks' *Logic* series (below). Editors told me that the decision to include a map is usually a budget issue. I did the Shaftal map for Laurie's books for free, because we are friends. The other maps (6-8 maps?), I did for payment, but they were mostly mystery or action-adventure books with a large enough budget to afford an extra frill. There was very little about those books, in my opinion, that made them more in need of a map than other books. (Two of my maps that I can recall off-hand were published in: *The Mirage*, by Irving Wallace, and *Arabesques*, edited by Susan Schwartz) I was told that if an author provides a map and it is good enough quality to print, it will often be included. But if the author's map needs to







## Movies and TV

[JG] **Babes** (Movie, Prime) I watched this without Scott while he was out bowling. I thought I might not like it enough to watch to the end. I'd seen Jon Stewart interview the comedian, Llana Glazer, who with Michelle Buteau, stars in the movie as longtime friends Eden and Dawn. Jon was wildly enthusiastic about how funny it was, but on the other hand, I'd heard it compared to the movie *Bridesmaids*, which I didn't like much for its overly crude humor. Nevertheless, I watched *Babes* to the end and laughed most of the way. It's certainly woman-positive and female-friendship-positive and definitely views pregnancy from an almost totally women-centric perspective, without familiar movie clichés. (The father of Eden's child dies the day after they have sex, which conveniently disposes of 90% of all movie pregnancy clichés.) The movie finds humor in some less talked-about and some fairly unpleasant aspects of pregnancy, so yeah, some people will probably consider those moments gross. But I ended up feeling positive about the movie, and very impressed by the comedic chops of Glazer and Buteau. Recommended.

**Black Snow** (Series, Prime) Scott and I see a lot of police procedurals which is ironic from my point of view because I don't generally read mysteries. But police procedurals in TV series are fun to watch with someone; there's lots to talk about. Anyway, this police procedural takes place in a small, north Queensland town in Australia after a time capsule is unearthed at a local high school, revealing information about a cold case – an unsolved murder of one of its former students. Most interesting, the small town contains a large community of South Sea Islanders, descendants of slaves, forcibly transported to Australia to work in the sugar cane fields. Also interesting: we see characters (as high school students) in flashbacks, and also as adults. The detective, played wonderfully by Travis Fimmel, frequently reminds us that the biggest challenge with cold cases is finding out who people were back then. Recommended.

**Chevalier** (Movie, Prime) Based on a true story of composer Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, the illegitimate son of an African slave and a French plantation owner. Kelvin Harrison Jr. plays the role of the Chevalier, who rises to improbable heights in French society as a celebrated violinist-composer and fencer, complete with an ill-fated love affair and a falling out with Marie Antoinette (Lucy Boynton) and her court. His work was ranked with Mozart, but few people know his music today. After Napoleon took power, the emperor went to great lengths to erase Chevalier de Saint-Georges from history when slavery was reinstated by Napoleon in the French colonies. This is a gorgeous and a lavishly romanticized telling of the Chevalier de Saint-Georges' story. Seeing it sent me searching Wikipedia for more information on Chevalier de Saint-Georges. His tragic romance with La Guimard may have been mostly fabricated, but to my surprise, Marie Antoinette had indeed been his patron.

**The Decameron** (Series, Netflix) This jaunty medieval black comedy was loosely inspired by the 14th century Italian short-story collection *The Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio. As the Black Death ravages Florence, a group of nobles and their servants retreat to the countryside Villa Santa. As they attempt to wait out the plague in the hills of Tuscany with wine and sex, the protagonists eventually must fight for their survival. Modern music is used in the soundtrack and characters speak in modern slang with various American and European accents (only one of which is Italian). Though slapstick scenes at times seem like they were plucked from Mel Brooks' *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, this series explores themes of class systems, power struggles, and survival in a time of pandemic in interesting ways.

**My Lady Jane** (Series, Prime) Now this is a fun series. It reminds me of *The Decameron*, as well as the Apple TV series, *Dickinson* and Netflix's *Bridgerton*. All these sort-of historical comedies use modern idiom and slang with a modern soundtrack. But the thing that



sets *My Lady Jane* apart from those other series, is the very imaginative way that the writers portray the Catholic-Protestant wars that raged during the 16th century. Actually, there is no mention of religion in this chronicle of the very short-lived monarch, Lady Jane Grey, (She was known as the “Nine Days Queen,” appointed by King Edward VI (King Henry VIII's son and heir), and beheaded almost immediately. But the show's narrator assures us first thing that this version of the story will end differently for Jane, and it certainly does.) This period of history was all about the Church of England vs. Roman Catholicism: wars, beheadings, violent repossession of churches. But none of that happens in *My Lady Jane*, or not exactly. Instead of religious wars, this series substitutes a metaphorical and fantastic conflict between Ethians (humans who can take animal form), and ordinary humans, known as Verity, who are attempting to drive Ethians out of society. The fictional Mary is just as virulently anti-Ethian as the historical Mary was anti-Protestant. I thought the metaphor worked fairly well. Elizabeth's portrayal worked somewhat less well. The romance and marriage between Lady Jane and Lord Guildford Dudley reminded me of *The Princess Bride* a few times, which I certainly do mean as a compliment. As I said, this series was fun. A few dangling plot ends remain untied in the story, so a second season may follow.

***Presumed Innocent*** (Series, Apple) Did he kill his lover or didn't he? We don't learn the answer to that question until the very last episode of this suspenseful 2024 series based on Scott Turow's novel, *Presumed Innocent*. While I thought Jake Gyllenhaal was very good as Rusty Sabich in this new one, I'm interested in seeing the 1990 version starring Harrison Ford, because I think the story's portrayal of women was dramatically changed. I've seen references to Rusty's murdered lover in the 1990 version as having manipulated Rusty in order to further her ambitions. In the 2024 version, their love affair seems to be fed primarily by Rusty's obsession with her – eliminating the need to portray her as evil. It's fascinating to me how cultural changes

have the effect of altering the way art portrays heroes and villains. Also, I understand that the new series adds an additional twist at the end, so I'd like to see how the 1990 film ended.

***Ridley*** (Series, PBS) Another police procedural, this one set along the coast in Lancashire in northern England. Retired Ex-Detective Inspector Alex Ridley, played by Adrian Dunbar, is enlisted by his former protégé DI Carol Farman, played by Bronagh Waugh, to assist on a complex murder case. Carol asks for help from Ridley because of his involvement, years ago, in similar case, so Ridley agrees to rejoin the police force as a consultant. There are four cases (played out in 4 double episodes) and one arc case involving the murder of Ridley's wife and daughter that is solved during the final episode. I never got very engrossed in this series, and was not enchanted with actor Adrian Dunbar's singing chops. His character co-owns a nightclub where he sings after solving a case. I doubt that I will be very interested in watching a second season if one is made.

***Twisters*** (Movie, Theater) Before we retired, I used to pick up Scott on Friday afternoon after work and we would celebrate the weekend with a movie and dinner. We jokingly called the kind of mindless, exciting movies that sometimes appealed to us after a stressful work week as “Boom Movies.” Well, *Twisters* is a perfect Boom Movie. The science is more accurate than in the 1996 movie, *Twister*, but both movies follow similar groups of risk-loving tornado hunters and center on a romance spawned in the midst of all the death-defying exploits. Glen Powell (of *Hit Man*) stars as Tyler, a charming but reckless social-media superstar who thrives on posting his storm-chasing adventures; and Daisy Edgar Jones co-stars as Kate, the traumatized scientist whose friends died working on her tornado-taming experiment several years ago. Of course, there is chemistry between Tyler and Kate, and the special effects are astounding. Boom!