

Madison Foursquare

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This issue of *Madison Foursquare* is brought to you by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll (layout/design and occasional contributor), who live at 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704. Scott@unionstreetdesign.com
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This is *Madison Foursquare* #15, created using a Mac Pro with InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop, all CC 2017, and printed on a Ricoh Aficio CL7200 color printer.

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I retired on July 7. Time to begin a new life. Again. I have done it a few times, it's never an easy thing. The last time was almost exactly 30 years ago when I quit my job in Iowa, packed up and moved to Madison. I did not have any job prospects in Madison waiting for me. I moved into Jeanne's smallish two-bedroom Petra Place apartment on Madison's South side, near the beltline. Just after getting unloaded and returning my dad's beat up pickup truck to him in Iowa, we flew off for three weeks on Jeanne's TAFF trip to Great Britain. When we came back, reality caught up with us and I started a long search for another government job.

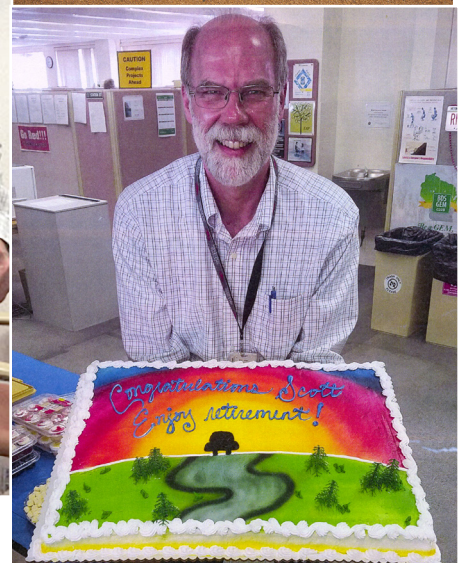
This time the change has been a little bittersweet for me. In some respects I wasn't quite ready to go. I felt I was leaving the people at work without as

many resources as I would have liked to leave them. On the other hand, the situation would not have improved very soon had I stayed longer. It was time to move on. Jeanne and I have things we want to do while we are still in good enough health to do them.

As I write this, about a week and a half into retirement, I can say that I have not established a new routine yet. The days feel like a weird vacation. I have about a million things I put off doing "until I retire" but I'm not feeling the usual pressure to get stuff done every minute "before I have to go back to work." That's kind-of nice, but also kind-of lazy and inefficient, which are things I have to guard against since I am quite capable of being both lazy and a serious procrastinator. Currently I'm trying to set priorities day by day.

Sometimes the weather determines what I should get done. Sometimes prior commitments dictate (in that sense our monthly book discussion group meeting and the apa deadline have been good things for me this month.) I'm sure I'll get the hang of it.

There have been other distractions. In June we went to two high school graduation parties on succeeding weekends, one in Iowa and one in Muskego. Both were good times. We were also in Oconomowoc to see Jeanne's brother and his wife who were making their annual visit back home to Wisconsin from their current residence in Hong Kong.



Scott's co-worker, Nancy Peterson, made a "Retirement Lane" quilt for Scott, with secret messages on the backside

In July, so far, we have seen our first two APT plays, *The Unexpected Man* and *The Maids*, both challenging in completely different ways and neither one likely to make our list of season favorites. *The Unexpected Man* by Yasmina Reza is the story of a woman taking a train trip from Paris to Frankfurt. She is unexpectedly joined by a man who turns out to be her favorite writer and, in fact, she has his latest book in her bag. The play is basically the internal dialogs the characters have as they try to work out whether they want to actually speak to each other. It was an interesting idea and the actors portray the characters with a lot of empathy, but in the end it just did not work for me. *The Maids* by Jean Genet was a highly energetic performance as two maids work out their fury and resentment at being trapped in their social station as maids and plot to murder their employer. This show had deep political messages and the acting was powerful and intense. I joined the standing ovation at the end, but I do not think of it as a pleasant experience.

We went to the Art Fair on the Square for the first time in several years and actually bought a couple pieces. We also attended our first Fete de Marquette festival last weekend. I think we will be attending that event again in the future. I think in June and July we have only gone out to three movies, *Wonder Woman*, *The Hero* and *The Big Sick*. We were both delighted by *Wonder Woman*. *The Hero* starring Sam Elliot is a fairly familiar story of a movie star having to deal with old age and regrets about personal and career choices. The story contains bit of old person angst, clearly, but Elliot turns in a strong, non-sentimental performance and most of the other actors are also fine. *The Big Sick* may be the best romantic comedy I have seen in years. The story feels very fresh and funny and the performances were solid and completely engaging.



From the Madison Art Fair – a print of a painting by Bruce Holwerda and table by Majestic Moonlit Woods



A few comments on #370 Cover (Steve and Darlene)

I have to add my appreciation to all the others you've received on a beautifully rendered front and back cover (and a beautiful t-shirt!) Very nice.

Greg Rihn

I enjoyed your descriptions of activities as always. What most surprised me was your description of the musical version of Beauty and the Beast based on the 1771 opera, *Zemire et Azor*. I didn't realize this story was so old, or that the plot stays so consistent over time. Also impressive that you got to see the live action movie version only about a week later. We also enjoyed the movie. I saw the animated version once, long ago. I remember liking it, too, but honestly could not tell you today which version I liked better.

Catie Pfeifer

To put my 2 cents into your interesting discussion of graphic novels, I would say that I have the opposite view. I largely avoid comic book stores because I fear I would end up spending way too much money in them. I was a fairly avid reader as a kid, but I also watched TV, went to movies and bought lots of comic books (mainly super-hero comics) so I grew up with a taste for visual storytelling that still comes easily to me. I was excited by the rise of graphic novels. I have been impressed with the sophistication and variety of the storylines (they are not limited to super-hero stories.) I have acquired a few graphic novels over the years (ex. Watchmen and Frank Miller's Dark Knight series) but I have largely left graphic novels and comics as something to explore carefully when I have more time. There is a lot I want to read, so I'm only going to make time for the best I can find. Since Turbo 370 came out, a number of people have offered interesting suggestions. Thanks for starting this discussion.

Andy Hooper

I enjoyed your first installment of the Nycon attendee biographies. Reading through them reminded me at times of reading obituaries in the newspaper which I once thought was a ridiculous pastime of old people. Now I see more of the attraction. It is interesting to read about the lives of ordinary people (with the occasional not-ordinary person, like Forry Ackerman, popping up). I think it's impressive what your research has uncovered. It's even intriguing when not much turns out to be known.

Lisa Freitag

Thanks for your terrific write up of *Miss Saigon*, a musical we have never seen. I really appreciated your comparison of the original show with the revival. It has certainly made me much more interested in seeing it.

Joe Leslie Adams

Congratulations on the new grandbaby, Elwyn. Beautiful picture.

Since your happy-ending story of Dolly's adventure to the outside world, I have found myself scanning my garage for a trapped cat every time I'm about to close the door.

Patrick Ijima-Washburn

Yes, well, your stories *are* pretty crazy. But I still get pulled along by them, and find surprises that make me smile ("The man-baby-king known as THE EMPEROR screamed in anger and his skin burned orange-red raising the temperature of the planet. His whiny tears combined with the melting polar caps covered the planet in water.") More please.

Ruth Nichols

I wanted to let you know how much I liked your zine this month. You gave us a rundown on the complicated events in your life that was very nicely written. Good photos, too. I was particularly pleased to read about Mia's return and how y'all are adjusting. Her outlook and prospects sound positive, let's hope she is able to move forward smoothly.

Comments on #371

Lisa Freitag

Your essay on Dismantling Campus Rape Culture was excellent. I was astounded at the observation that in the course of discussing the university's supposed progress dealing with sexual misconduct, the subject of the gang rape of women by the football team never even came up. I think teaching, seminars, support groups and awareness have all been good things, but I agree with you that without a serious commitment on the part of the university to punish criminal acts and hold people responsible, then awareness alone will not succeed in prompting much real cultural change.

Full disclosure here, I was a frat boy myself in college, although my frat was a very non-traditional group. By the mid-1970's the Greek system was in decline across the country (Jeanne says the Greek societies at UW nearly disappeared when she was in college, and they probably assumed they'd never come back.) I was part of a tiny group of guys at a small mid-western private college and we did not fit the classic profile of a campus fraternity and we were proud of it. That was an important social group for me at that time in my life and I don't think I came away from the experience with anything more damaging than a seriously left-leaning political attitude. But from what I see and read about Greek societies on campus today, I would not shed any tears if the Greek system died out forever.

Greg Rihn

Thanks for the report on OddCon 2017. I am glad it turned out well. Can you keep us apprised of plans for next year?

Jeanne and I have apparently lost our local connection to British National Theater productions. Sundance theaters here in town was doing them. We sometimes coordinated with Jim and Diane and others to attend shows. But then they stopped doing them, and now Sundance has been bought out by AMC theater chain. I don't think they will be coming back anytime soon. My impression was the National Theater shows were pretty well attended, at least for the ones we saw. We saw some great performances. Ah well. Or as Trump would tweet, "Sad. USA!"

As a curious side-note, AMC theaters (the biggest theater chain in the US) just bought out the modest Sundance chain. Apparently part of the deal is that AMC cannot own more than one theater complex in a city, or something. How that has played out in Madison is that AMC now owns the 6 screen Sundance theater in Hilldale mall. They had to sell the 16 screen theater (including IMAX screen) they owned (and just extensively remodeled) in Fitchburg. In addition, AMC must be picking up the tab for remodeling costs on the Sundance theater too, since Hilldale was right in the middle of a remodel of that end of their mall. AMC must feel they are getting a better deal at the other Sundance locations, I'm assuming. Looks like they got a fairly bad deal here.

Jim Hudson and Diane Martin

Reading this issue now, I know Diane was about to sail into some rough waters for a while, but hopefully she is improving once again. What I most appreciate is your determination to keep us informed every month of what is happening.

Kim and Kathi Nash

Thanks for the regular Uncle Carl report. He is quite a character.

Thanks also for the fine July 4 party. It was a beautiful day, great food, lovely backyard and nice people. Relaxing for us, maybe not as much for the hosts. We appreciate your doing this.

Cathy Gilligan

You have my sympathy for your frustrating adventure trying to get your apa delivered on your way to a Dr. appointment and stop at a gas station. I have learned that juggling GPS while driving alone can be annoying, especially if you decide to change your plan midway.

YCT me re: speculation that obscurity is (the Trump

administration's) purpose. I think you are quite correct in suspecting that. Whatever anyone thinks of Rachel Maddow, we have been impressed with her practice of not reporting on Trump's tweets, or much on what he says, as what the administration is actually doing. I think that is the best approach to keeping up with what is really happening and what really matters.

Walter Freitag

I had never heard anything about the **xkcd** webcomic phenomenon until your zine. I thought your essay was fascinating.

Andy Hooper

Regarding your comment to Jim Frenkel: thank you.

At the time we rejoined *Turbo*, Jim Frenkel's presence here was an issue for us. I was the advocate for returning and, since time had passed since the blowups at WisCon and since I had no personal beefs with Jim beyond profound disapproval of his behavior, I felt rejoining the apa and reconnecting with this group of friends was ultimately a positive thing. Jeanne was more cautious, but agreed to a limited involvement to see how things went. Like you, I have enjoyed Jim's apa contributions and trading comments.

The blowup at OddCon this last Spring brought it all back again. Part of the reason for my reluctance to write lately has been the fact that we have to re-evaluate our future in *Turbo*. Beyond possibly laying out our zine every month, I cannot ask Jeanne to get more active in an apa with Jim on the roster. I also see the problem we face recruiting new members. We could not in good faith ask new people to join without telling them Jim is a member.

I was considering stepping back out of the apa again, but your comment was a sign that a frank discussion of the issue might still happen. Let's see what Jim and everyone else has to say.

Comments on #372

Greg Rihn

We saw *A Quiet Passion* back in May, I think. We liked it a lot, but also found the going difficult to watch at times (as Georgie pointed out.) While watching it I found myself frequently comparing Dickinson's life story to that of the Bronte sisters. Just a few weeks before going to *A Quiet Passion*, Jeanne and I watched the excellent PBS series on the Bronte sisters, *To Walk the Invisible*, which was a much grimmer story in many respects.

As mentioned above, we also enjoyed *Wonder Woman*. I have to limit myself on super-hero stories because the quality of the stories vary widely. We will almost certainly take a pass on the new *Spider-man*, for example.

Jim and Ruth Nichols

It must be enormously frustrating for Mia trying to find a job when there are clearly a ton of jobs out there. I see help wanted ads all over town as I drive around, but her circumstances are tough ones to overcome, even in a market like this. Best of luck to her. Are there any resources in town to assist people like her in finding work?

Ruth, I also liked your frank tale of disposing of your mom's ashes. It was good that you remained determined and completed the deed. I hope too, that one day you will look back on the incident at Trader Joe's with some amusement.

Jim, I'm looking forward to hearing how your performance went at the class reunion.

Jim Hudson and Diane Martin

Once again, thanks for the detailed update. It has been great having Diane out and about with us to APT and a few other adventures. Let's hope for a steady recovery.

Steve Johnson

Your retelling of your experience at SunCon with David Gerrold forty years ago was a brave thing to share with us in the apa, and I appreciate how you must trust us all with it. That speaks pretty highly of the rest of this little community. I had heard about the *Slave Boys of Gore*, but I had no idea of your subsequent interaction with Gerrold. I think you still have grounds to be upset and disturbed by the encounter, but I think that hoping for an apology from Gerrold all these years later, and him being a celebrity and having probably countless such encounters, successful or not, in the meantime, is maybe unrealistic and might not really help to close the door on the incident for you. It seems to me that working on a way to come to peace with it yourself after all this time might be the better route. Clearly the memory is still a sensitive one for you. You deserve to find some peace of mind.

Catie Pfeifer

I also felt that one of the best parts of *Wonder Woman* was her attitude toward ordinary people getting caught in the crossfire and written off by others as "lost cause" or acceptable casualties. I loved it when she just chose to save that village, even though it did not really contribute to her ultimate goal. She did it simply because she was a super-hero who could help them when no one else was going to bother.

Kim and Kathi Nash

Interesting Antiques Road Show adventure. You may not have ended up with an unexpected priceless treasure, but at least it validated your skills at judging book values. I'd say it was worth it just as a good story for the apa.

Sorry for your loss of Kornelius.

Andy Hooper

It was interesting reading the bios of the people who were at Nycon for obvious reasons, but I kept getting distracted by people like Betty Kost and Franklin Janson. I kept wanting to figure out how they ended up there or fill in the stories for them along with speculation on what happened to their interest in Science Fiction.

YCT me on "vintage Madison". Evidence is everywhere. It used to aggravate me, now it just seems normal. Recently there has been a controversy about our city flag (you knew we had our own flag, yes?) It's a nice flag, simple with clear and meaningful graphics. Trouble is that in the very center is a symbol intended to represent the Capital that turns out to have been a sun symbol culturally appropriated from the Pueblo Indians.

Objections to it were raised. Much hubbub has ensued including a proposal to appoint a city committee to redesign the flag. In a recent essay in Isthmus, former mayor Dave Cieslewicz railed against the idea of appointing such a committee. He insisted nothing good would come of this plan. He recounted his experience, when he was mayor, when he decided to appoint a committee to choose a city song to celebrate our 150th anniversary. He wrote: "Members met for months and then, deadline approaching, they went into their final meeting with four choices. And they narrowed them to five. I am not making this up." We still don't have a city song.



Marilyn Holt

You have had your share of health issues, as have a number of our members in Turbo. It just seems to be that point in our lives where we are all dealing, to one degree or another, with health issues, aging relatives, grandkids, retirement and housing. I suppose in one sense, it's nice to be writing to so many people who face similar challenges.

Julie Zachman

Welcome back.

—Scott Custis
July 2017