

Madison FOURSQUARE

17

Eclipse Hunting in Carbondale

[SC] In early summer, Jeanne mentioned that there was going to be a total eclipse of the sun this summer. After doing some research it seemed to us to be a good plan to travel to the campus of Illinois State University in Carbondale where they were having a weekend-long viewing event and celebration. Jeanne booked tickets to the football stadium viewing event and campus parking. Then she arranged hotel reservations. We left Madison on Sunday, August 20, after breakfast.

Our original plan was to drive directly south through Illinois on Sunday to get to our hotel as quickly as possible, spend Monday viewing the eclipse, and then return to Madison by driving along the Mississippi River and taking in a few tourist stops, like Hannibal, MO and Galena, IL.

Of course, we were not the only ones who thought driving to view the eclipse was a good idea. Tens of thousands of other people thought so, too. When looking for a hotel for Sunday night, for instance, it was impossible to get close to Carbondale without spending hundreds or even thousands of dollars for a room night. We ended up booking a normal-price room in a Holiday Inn in a suburb of St. Louis. All we had to do was figure out how to get to the campus the next morning in time to park and view the eclipse.

Our drive to our hotel on Sunday was uneventful but staggeringly boring. It was all Interstate driving for one thing, plus the fact that we had already just crossed Illinois twice on our hurried trip down and back from Austin, TX a couple weeks earlier following Julie's sudden death. The only plus about the drive was that Jeanne read aloud from one of our book club books (the very wonderful novel, *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* by Natasha Pulley). Reading aloud in the car on driving trips is one of the big pluses for us of travelling by car. The only other event to report would be the occasional slowdowns of traffic due to the heavy movement of people into the eclipse pathway for viewing the next day. The owner of a little gas station where we stopped in Illinois was deliriously happy, however, with the lines of cars waiting to fill up their tanks.

We got to our hotel by early evening and hunkered down. We did not go out to eat; we brought dinner with us in a cooler. We settled in to get an early night's sleep because we

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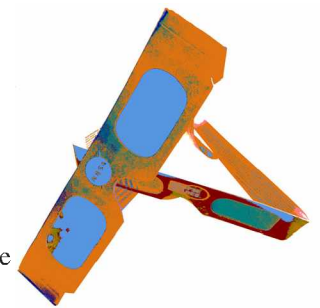
expected we would have to get up early if we wanted to beat traffic into Carbondale.

We got up at 4:30am, checked out at 5:30am and headed south and east in the dark. We decided that travelling by Interstate, or by any other direct route to Carbondale, was likely to present traffic problems before long, so we took a longer drive southeast along the Mississippi River on IL Hwy 3, a two lane road. We were not surprised that traffic was light at first, but it never did build up very much until after we turned east onto Hwy 13 and started to close in on our destination. It was lovely morning and a pretty drive along the hills and bluffs near the river. As we got closer to Carbondale, we drove by one enterprising farmer sitting beside an open gate to his field with a sign that read "Eclipse viewing, \$20.00."

We got to our parking space and strolled over to campus by mid-morning. Campus was a busy place. They had already been celebrating for two days. They had a carnival and food court area just outside a large indoor arena. A short walk to one side of this arena was the football stadium for viewing the eclipse. The air conditioned indoor arena was open and filled with exhibits related to science, space and the eclipse. There were a few cosplayers roaming the area dressed as Star Wars characters. The stadium featured a stage set up at one end of the field and several hours of programming leading up to the eclipse, including the launching on the field of weather balloons that would provide video of the eclipse if clouds moved in. It felt like a combination state fair and SF convention.

One of the issues we faced right away was the frustrating fact that the eclipse viewing glasses we ordered online never showed up. By the time we realized they were not going to appear, the news was widespread that eclipse glasses were getting hard to find and online sources were running out. So, when we left on our trip, we did

not actually have glasses. We decided we would have to buy some from a scalper at a probably inflated price when we got to Carbondale. Turns out that NASA had a big presence at Carbondale and between them and the university, they were pretty determined to insure that no one was going to



get injured viewing the eclipse at their event. By the time we left, we had six pairs of eclipse glasses plus two pair of 2X binocular viewing glasses, all for free. So now we know where all the unavailable glasses went: they were all shipped to Carbondale.

One clue that we may have not planned this quite carefully enough we discovered as we left the parking lot. It was mostly sunny and hot. Real hot. In the mid-90 degrees. I was wearing shorts and a light short sleeve shirt. Jeanne, at least, had long pants on. We both had good hats. When we took our seats in the stadium around 10:30 in the morning, we were in full sun, the seats were gleaming aluminum and there were very few other people. It was something like 3 hours until totality. There was no way we would make it sitting in the stands that long. So, we grabbed some lunch and spent a couple hours in the air conditioned arena, visiting the booths staffed by scientists and attending a couple lectures. We came back out to the stadium about an hour prior to totality.

This time there were a lot more people in the stands. We settled in. Jeanne brought a bottle of sunscreen and I started slathering it on myself, fearing that I was going to burn badly. I was sweating so much that I feared that the sunscreen would not be effective. Jeanne noticed a young woman two rows in front of us who was already starting to turn red, so she tapped the shoulder of the guy in front of her and asked him to pass the sunscreen to the woman in front of him. He did. Then he asked to use it too. The young guy and his girlfriend were from Milwaukee, had just driven down that morning and had not even brought hats. Jeanne was becoming the sunscreen lady of our section, to the relief of several people around us.

The sky was partly cloudy and becoming more cloudy as the morning wore on. We watched the slow progression of the eclipse and the show on the football field as they launched the weather balloons, but at the crucial moment when totality was reached, a big gray cloud covered the sun and moved very slowly beneath the sun. There was an audible sigh from the crowd. The light dimmed and temperature dropped what felt like about 20 degrees. Even sitting in the stadium you could look around and see the horizon all around glowing bright as the shadow of the eclipse fell over us. Everyone was focused on watching the cloud to see if



it would move away in time and it finally did the very last couple seconds before totality ended. To see it at all, you had to be looking directly at it. This was disappointing, but not a complete fail. We did see the eclipse ring for an instant.

After the eclipse, Jeanne and I headed back to St. Louis, taking the river route again, and turned north to Hannibal for our next overnight. Again, we had a much easier drive than the folks who took the major highways. But along the way, we found out that one of Julie's friends in Austin, who was helping to clear out Julie's apartment, had mailed to us some of Julie's art. She'd mailed it late the week before but did not specify that it should have a signature on delivery. We discovered that the package was scheduled to arrive the very next day, Tuesday. We began to ponder the wisdom of letting this package, a large box, sit outside our front door for long. We have had reports of package theft in our neighborhood. In addition to that, we drove into a heavy thunderstorm as we reached Hannibal.

It was gloomy and raining when we arrived in Hannibal. We were both very tired, and I was a mess of sweat and sunscreen. We were desperate for showers. It turned out that Jeanne's iPhone directed us to our hotel downtown through an old and dilapidated section of town. Neither of us had ever been to Hannibal, but it appeared to us as dismal a place as you could imagine. Our Best Western hotel was old and a little peculiar, but fine. We showered and went across the street to the Mark Twain Diner, which was not a fancy place, but the food was good (we were very hungry.) The next morning dawned clear and sunny. We decided to pass on the hotel's complimentary breakfast buffet and instead drove down the street a couple blocks to the Becky Thatcher Diner which turned out to be clean and bright and busy with a nice retro diner atmosphere. Here I found a local tourist brochure with a map and realized that our hotel and the diner were on the very edge of the tourist district of town, which we somehow completely missed on our drive in the night before. After breakfast we took a walk along several lovely blocks to find attractions, museums, shopping, parks, a brewpub, riverboat rides and everything else. It was a beautiful day and we were positioned to take full advantage of it, except for the package that was due to arrive that very day. After talking it over we decided we did not want to risk losing that package, so we jumped into the car and started the long drive back through Illinois, by Interstate. We vowed to return to Hannibal again someday. It's not really that far from Madison and a drive along the river is always attractive. The package was sitting by our front door when we got home late that afternoon.

Julie's Memorial

[JG] We attended my sister Julie's beautiful and cathartic memorial gathering on November 11. About 120 people came together to tell Julie stories and talked together long into a beautiful warm night, amid candles and firefly lights, flowers and Julie's artwork. There were so many good people there; I was so glad that we did this. I put together a slide show, which you can see here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeSyavPphE0>

It played all night in a comfy tv room and even though it was a long show, most folks watched it several times during the evening. There were also songs chosen by her family and friends, but these aren't included in the Youtube movie.

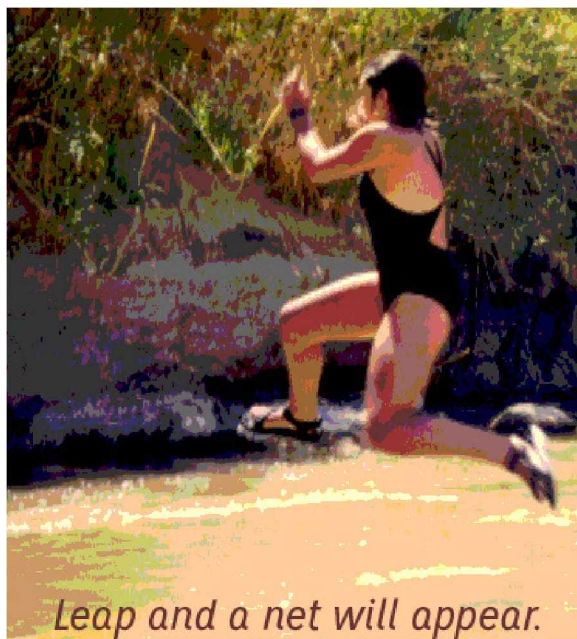
I also scanned some of Julie's "doodles" from her notebooks and made table tents out of them, and invited people to take them home. Some of them are printed here, and I posted all of them to my Facebook page. I think her artwork is remarkable; they express the vibrancy and rule-breaking sense of how Julie's mind worked.

My brothers, Steve and Dan, both told emotional, from-the-heart stories about Julie. This is what I said:

Born in 1962, Julie was 11 years younger than me. I changed her diapers, babysat her, read science fiction to her in the basement behind the washing machine because mom didn't approve, and had weighty conversations with her about whether or not god existed.

I left home to attend UW-Madison in 1970. Julie visited me there many times, and in the early 80s followed me to Madison. She worked as a typesetter, a bartender, and did a very short stint building highways (just one day).

She decided that she wanted to try out a bigger city. In 1985, the North American SF Convention (LoneStarCon 1) was in Austin TX and several Madison SF fans were planning to attend. Julie announced that she would go with us, but surprised me with the follow-up announcement: she would not return to Madison. She LEPT. A behavior that I would gradually grow to expect from Julie. Her plans at the time were nebulous but she was so excited to be starting something new. A friend had offered crash space to her after the convention. She would start looking for work when she got there. By the time we got down to Austin, it turned out that



her friend had moved to San Antonio and she was surprised to find out that the local YMCA did not rent rooms like they did in Madison. Oh well, her friend's father said she could crash on his couch for a couple days. Julie wasn't fazed. I, on the other hand, was freaked out and gave her all my remaining travellers checks before I left. I expected there was a good chance she would need to be rescued.

Instead, I got a call a few days later: "I got a job. And they gave me an advance on my salary to put a down payment on an apartment."

A couple weeks later: "I was just promoted to head of the department."

A couple weeks later: "I'm in love! Wonderful!" What's his name, I asked. "HER name is Rachel."

And so it went. Her email sign-off was "Leap, and a net will appear."

"We've started a business in our garage, the SW Review of Books." LEAP

"I've started a new business, Go Media." LEAP

"I've sold the business to Excite." LEAP

"I'm in charge of community with Halsoft." LEAP

"I'm going to take a solo trip around the world." LEAP

"I've got an idea for a co-working business. It will be called Launchpad." LEAP

Of course we talked about more than the her latest leap. We talked about our mother, books, ideas, our mother, politics, feminism, our mother, friends, lovers, art, our mother, depression, and did I mention our mother?

But the thing that stoked her furnace were those LEAPS.

She left behind several dozen notebooks. Their pages contain a mixture of work planning, diaries, shopping lists, to-do lists, epiphanies, dream journals, doodles (which are reproduced on the table tents you see around you), website wireframes, introspective musings, word games and lists of conversation topics for phone calls. Each notebook starts out strong with pages tightly packed with dated paragraphs, diagrams and doodles. But much of the final pages are blank; Julie tended to abandon notebooks before she'd

filled half of the book, and then immediately started anew. LEAP.

She grew restive when she could predict how something would end, when she could see how a problem could be solved or a new business would become stable. It was the crazy, risky part of starting a new enterprise or chasing a new idea that made life worthwhile to her. She is willing to put EVERYTHING on the table, as she did with her big dream, Launchpad.

I've always known that risk was the essential part of every passion in her life. What I was less clear about was how the lack of risk, the sense of entanglement actually scared her and drained her energy.

A recurring dream: I dream of Julie driving a car through life, speeding through accomplishments, travels, relationships, ideas, conversations. I am a passenger, sometimes the only one, sometimes with many others, but frequently I watch her car zoom past me, her face blurry through the window. When she slows down she looks scared, panicky, and loses energy. When the car slows, she seems to gaze at a spot off the road or off the tracks, out of my line of sight, and only manages to escape whatever monstrous thing threatens her by pressing her foot down on the accelerator. When she is not passionately involved in something or someone, she slows, and she gets in trouble, and the scary thing off the road becomes more frightening and more alluring at the same time. But finally her car stops, right in front of the monstrous thing. Julie turns the key, the motor stops. She opens the door and leaps into the void. (And still she LEAPS. I see now, even her final act was a LEAP.)

She is gone. But still, she LEPT.

A few years ago, Julie called me. It was another one of those momentous phone calls. "I decided to completely change careers and go to culinary school at the age of 50." She had enrolled in culinary school which led to an amazing trip to Ecuador as an intern.

And think about this: in the couple months before she took her life, she was planning two new businesses -- "Room for Improvement" (consulting with individuals and companies to improve their websites) and "You People" (a community website focusing on hypocrisy among powerful people). It was all worked out in that last notebook: the artwork, wireframes, resources, marketing considerations, 5-year plan, etc.

Julie fought depression all her life, and struggled incessantly to find ways to heal herself--therapies, strategies to change the way she thought, incessant reading about how the brain works. Anything to WANT to continue living. But the only thing that worked was to nurture passion in her life.

Now, I'd like to read this poem that I read last night when we scattered Julie's ashes in the park.

She is gone

[By David Harkins, 1982, English painter and poet. This poem was written originally about unrequited love.]

You can shed tears that she is gone
or you can smile because she has lived.

You can close your eyes and pray that she'll come back
or you can open your eyes and see all she's left.

Your heart can be empty because you can't see her
or your heart can be full of the love you shared.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

You can remember her and only that she's gone
or you can cherish her memory and let it live on.

You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
or you can do what she'd want: smile, open up your eyes,
love and journey on.



Art by Julie Gomoll

Pericles

[JG] One of the highlights of our summer was the incredibly wonderful season by the American Players' Theater (APT), especially their production of the Shakespeare play, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*.

Walking up the hill to the newly rebuilt APT stage has been a purely good thing in this very hard summer. The cast and production team seems to have been revitalized by the new facilities. And I think I was more than ready on a few of those August and September evenings to will myself away to a different world. Even without those factors, *Pericles* would have been extraordinary.

I don't know if you are familiar with the plot. Few people are; the play is not done very frequently. But it involves dozens of characters, spans 20+ years, and 7 distinct settings— not different rooms, but different countries—each with its own large cast of characters. The protagonist and several other main characters must each be played by two actors because the characters age dramatically through the course of the play. The play itself is a weird mixture of madcap comedy, melodramatic plot turns, and way over-the-top coincidences. We saw the premier performance, and thus had read no reviews and harbored no preconceptions except for those sparked by what we already knew about the play. My expectations were not high. But from the first moment, when the large trunk in the middle of the stage, opened up, and one after another the cast climbed out, I was enraptured. The cast was TINY, relative to the list of characters. Each actor played multiple roles but was perfectly distinguished in each of their roles by an amazing directorial decision: The Greek nation-states in which Shakespeare set his story were converted to: (1) An evil, pre-revolution Russian court in which the characters spoke with cartoonish Natasha and Boris, Russian accents, (2) A classical, Italian court, familiar to most Shakespearean dramas, (3) Depression-era, dustbowl America, in which the characters spoke with Okie accents and dressed accordingly, (4) The Ascot racecourse in England, in which royalty and the upper class politely applauded jousters rather than thoroughbred horses, (5) the Scottish coast and a few Scottish fishermen speaking in thick brogues, (6) the



Pericles cast as Ascot/Jousting competition



Pericles: ship, Dustbowl America, and bordello owner & virgin

wild, pirate-infested sea, and (7) a Greek temple where all is resolved. There was cross-gender casting and each actor took many roles, some major, some minor. Stage props and costumes were kept to the bare minimum necessary to set the place and identify the characters. It's hard to explain how both entertaining this was and how CLEAR the story was by the way it was told. At the end, there was no hesitation. No one waited to stand in applause. Everyone seemed to leap to their feet, still howling in laughter and admiration for the production and the actors.

As we walked down the hill from *Pericles* we resolved to buy tickets to see it again, quick, before everyone found out how brilliant it was and there were no tickets left. In fact a reviewer for the Wall Street Journal touted APT's actors as the best Shakespearian actors in the whole country. We enjoyed *Pericles* even more the second time. I feel so lucky to live close enough to the APT theater to buy seasons tickets, and am looking forward to another great season next year.

Comments on #374

Andy Hooper

[SC] Thanks for running the Eric Lindsay piece. It was a delightful piece and much fun reading about many folks I've known for years long before I first met them. After reading this piece, Jeanne and I had a long chat about the Seattle fan community from back then. I had no idea there had ever been a Pacific Northwest Review of Books.

Greg Rihn

[SC] In this rundown of interesting activities, I was most impressed by, and envious of, your attendance at a production of *King John*, a Shakespeare play I have never seen or read. It sounded great. APT did it only once way back in 1981, long before I started going. We also liked *Dunkirk* very much. I loved their decision to show us events from the perspective of different time periods, one hour, one day and one week and also over land, sea and air. Terrific film.

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I think I am going to be thinking about your excellent essay on “feeling safe” for a long time.

Ruth Nichols



[SC] Sounds like you had a nice time in Door County. We try to go every year, this year we went in September for most of a week. It was lovely. We have been stopping at Al Johnson’s for breakfast on every trip for years, but I think we are finally ready to make a change and go for Swedish pancakes elsewhere. It’s crowded at Al’s on even quiet post-Labor Day weekdays.

Jim Nichols

[SC] Nice to see that your reunion went well. Also nice to see that you and Ruth have a retirement plan and money set aside. Three years is not so long to wait. You’re gonna like retirement. I personally recommend it.



Steve Johnson

[SC] I appreciated your comments on Julie’s passing. There are several people in the apa who knew Julie well before I did.

Your “It’s Called Acting-(a follow up)” was thorough and very helpful to me for better seeing this experience from your view point. I agree with Lisa that Gerrold’s decision to remove his bid from your art piece was a particularly rude act on top of what had already transpired.

Julie Zachman

[SC] Jeanne and I often like thrillers, but we usually take a pass on outright horror movies. Still, we have seen a couple great ones in recent years, *The Cabin in the Woods* and *Get Out*.

Catie Pfeifer

[SC] Congratulations on the engagement!



Jeanne and I just finished Jemisin’s *The Fifth Season* for a book discussion group last month and we quickly bought the rest of the series. We are looking forward to working through them together by reading them aloud.

Patrick Iijima-Washburn



[SC] Frustration and depression over the political situation here in the U.S. are certainly familiar feelings to me. Somehow we have to muddle through. Not sure I’m ready for Kilgore Trout for POTUS, but, on the other hand, almost any change is starting to look good. Hang in there.

Marilyn Holt

[SC] The experience you reported to us here was just staggeringly awful. I am so sorry you had to go through this. Very tough situation for Erin and Romy as well, but hopefully returning home to New York State will work out. John should not have been able to get by with his past history simply by lying about it. Please let us know if there is any follow up on John or Erin/Romy.

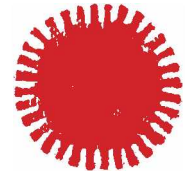
Comments on #375

Cover-Steve Johnson

[SC] A simply awesome cover, Steve.

Lisa Freitag

[SC] I enjoyed both your and Walter’s (in issue #376) eclipse stories. I will be commenting later on Karl’s eclipse adventure. Like Walter and Karl, Jeanne and I also took a trip to view the total eclipse. It is interesting that so many of us were having experiences in common under different circumstances and in different places but all at nearly the same time. It’s one of those moments like 9/11 or the Kennedy assassination (only much less tragic) where everyone ends up talking about where they were or what they were doing when the event happened. It’s hard to resist the urge to compare notes.



Congratulations on the grand nephew. Nice picture.

Jim Hudson

[SC] It has been great seeing Diane up and about at APT, our retirement thing and Hope and Karl’s Halloween party. It almost seems like normal except that we know she is still dealing with health challenges and you are providing great care. I’m still optimistic that elusive answers and effective treatments are coming.

Julie Zachman

[SC] We had a very nice time at your birthday party, despite the weather. It was so great to see your house again after all these years. You have made some terrific improvements. Thanks so much for inviting us.



Kim and Kathi Nash

[SC] Sorry for your loss of Kiwi.



Kim, your *Jeopardy* experience was entertaining. I have precisely zero desire to be on TV, but of all the game shows that I can think of, *Jeopardy* seems to me to be the most fun and genuinely interesting. You could turn out to be a slightly dry and acerbic contestant, which would be delightful to watch.

Andy Hooper

[SC] I learned so much again from your bio on the famous Sam Moskowitz, a figure I have long heard of but knew next to nothing about. I thought your treatment of him was very fair. Thanks also for reprinting the "Norwetcon 2" piece by the wonderful Denys Howard, someone I have been acquainted with for years but whose fan writing I have never read. This article is pre-Corflu, did Denys via this article help start the ball rolling for the organization of the first Corflu?



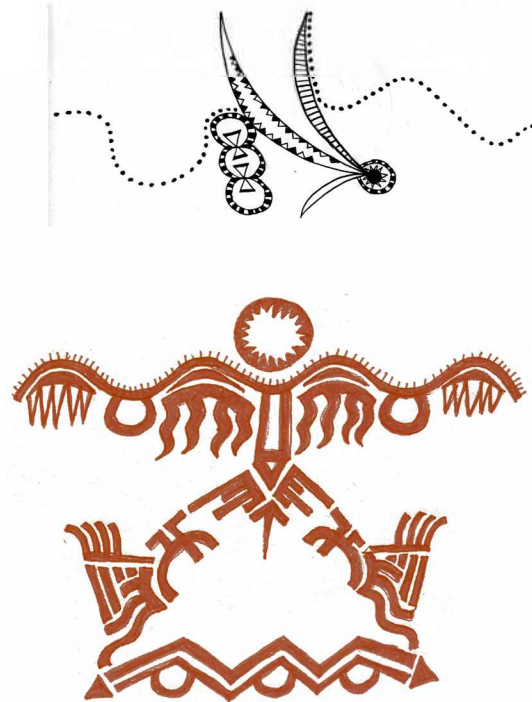
Karl Hailman & Hope Kiefer

[SC] Great write up, and pictures, of your eclipse adventure. Like Evan, we chose to go to Carbondale, IL. We were only somewhat more successful than Evan was, so your approach was probably the best one in hindsight. Jeanne's brother Dan also took off on his own and ended up with a great view of the eclipse just off the road somewhere in KY.



Your lunch stop on the drive out by the motorcycle shop was just outside my hometown, Anamosa, IA. Jeanne and I often stay at the AmericaInn close to your picnic area when we are visiting. Hwy 151 bypasses most of the town these days, had you driven through the downtown, I doubt you would have found it as cute or charming as What Cheer. However, there are a couple features of the town worth taking in if you are ever in the neighborhood again. Driving through town on Main St. you would eventually pass the Jones County Courthouse, behind it looms the massive structure of the Anamosa State Penitentiary (formerly, Iowa Men's Reformatory). It's worth seeing because they don't make prisons like this anymore. It's the second oldest prison west of the Mississippi and it is built of locally quarried limestone. There are few fences or razor wire because it has massive limestone walls instead, including turrets and other battlement-like features. Driving by on North High St. and looking down at the institution from the hill the Warden's house sits on, it looks very castle-like. An odd sight in the middle of ordinary houses, cornfields and pastures. The other item to see would be a pleasant drive through the Wapsipinicon State Park on the south side of town along the river.

Jeanne & Scott
11/21/2017



Art by Julie Gomoll