

# Madison FOURSQUARE

19

## Comments on #378

Catie Pfeifer

[SC] Nora is very cute. The story of the anonymous donor(s) is also amazing. Congratulations and best wishes to Becky and Thad.

[JG] I'd love to know the backstory for the anonymous donor. I'm sure your sister- and brother-in-law would too! Seems like the seed for a good novel.

Greg Rhin

[SC] Your zine was chock full of interesting events. Probably the play *On the Verge; Or, The Geography of Longing* was the thing I would have most liked to see. You gave us a fascinating description.

We skipped the *Justice League* movie. Jeanne and I are easily burned out by superhero movies and we tend to be extremely selective. Last year we were happy with our choices, *Logan* and *Wonder Woman*.

We managed to make it to the Chazen, here in Madison for the Korshak Collection that you described. It was definitely worth the visit for us, on an otherwise cold and snowy Sunday.

We also saw and both enjoyed *Coco*. It is a visual and musical delight. Jeanne and I were also amazed at the care taken in their depiction of an afterlife that had no Gods or deities and lacked the usual religious hallmarks. I'm still a little surprised there has not been more controversy surrounding that aspect of the film. It was all about family, which I did not find to be an objectionable theme at all. Yours was the first comment I had heard that the buildings in the Land of the Dead were inspired by the city of Guanajuato. Jeanne, Julie Gomoll and I visited Guanajuato some years ago for a long weekend and this observation makes sense. Guanajuato has a very European look and feel to it. It is built up along steep hillsides that were the site of a long and prosperous silver mining industry. Some of the city's streets are fully or partially routed underground by silver miners. It's a beautiful city, well worth a visit.

[JG] I would have loved to have seen *On the Verge* and hope I don't forget the title, in case, someday, I get the opportunity! Women explorers! Time travel! Wow. Sounds great. I checked to see, just in case, if it was still showing at the Helfaer

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

Scott@unionstreetdesign.com

Jeanne@unionstreetdesign.com

This is *Madison Foursquare* #19, created using a Mac Pro with InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop, all CC 2018, and printed on a Ricoh Aficio CL7200 color printer.

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Theater and wasn't surprised that it has gone, but I did notice that they are doing *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* in April. Do you plan on seeing that?

After hearing the reference in *Hamilton* to the song, *The World Turned Upside Down*, I checked out the music. Very different tune from the one Lyn Manuel Miranda used. But it made me think about the apocalyptic sense of the age, from England's perspective. The museum exhibit sounds wonderful. Again, sadly, it looks like we've missed it. I should really keep up with the apa a little better I guess.

We did see the Korshak exhibit at the Chasen, as Scott mentioned. I was not surprised to find lots of familiar work, and happy to see SF cover art treated as serious works of art.

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I liked your take on the Impressionists. I was not accustomed to thinking of them as DANGEROUS, but your point was well made and vivid. I was amused by your views on the BVM. I mostly just thought of her as a Catholic obsession. I was unaware that there were stories about her that cast her as almost an action heroine. She clearly deserves more attention.

[JG] I think that we are witnessing the same kind of blowback experienced by the Impressionists, in some people's reaction to recently unveiled Smithsonian paintings of the Obamas. The idea that portraits are to function as a sort of painterly photograph is, I think, the basis of some people's immediate dislike of the images. And certainly Impressionist painters were tripping that same response in their audiences.

Marilyn Holt

[SC] I enjoyed your Christmas letter. You guys keep pretty busy throughout the year, even without travel. So the building that collapsed was not storing anything at the time? What use will you be putting it to once you have it rebuilt?

Walter Freitag

[SC] Although I thought your parable was clever, I was not moved to substantially change my view that Materialism is the correct, if imperfect, direction, whereas Spiritualism is the wrong path, even though valid lessons may be drawn

from it. I read and enjoy some fantasy stories, but I mostly look to them for insight into ourselves. I don't expect fantasy to seriously inform me about the true nature of the reality of the world or the universe.

I was delighted by your gift and wonderful letter to your grand-nephew. Very cool.

[JG] I too loved the "Universe Sphere" as an idea and a gift. I wanted to see one of them, so I googled it. Very cool. And a very cool uncle.

## Julie Zachman

[SC] I think that it's pretty crazy that poor Lennon is allergic to all sorts of grass, weeds and trees, but not cats or fleas. Even with treatment, don't you have to keep him inside most of the time?

Jeanne and I greatly enjoyed *Wind River*, hope you do too.

[JG] After subsidizing the care of my sister's dogs (until they were adopted), and from stories like yours, I am constantly amazed at how hugely expensive these pets can be. Do many people have health insurance for their pets?

Julie did get restive when she saw how a project could be completed – but not scared. She got bored and wanted to be off to a new challenge. But, yeah, I'm right beside you on the opposite side of the spectrum. When I understand how I can complete a project, that actually inspires me to dig in and finish.

## Ruth Nichols

[SC] Sorry for the loss of your friend, Pam. Jeanne and I are discussing a spring driving trip to Vermont to visit an old college buddy of mine who is also struggling with cancer. I agree with you that a cure soon would be a great thing.

We had a very quiet Christmas, just the two of us at home. Jeanne made a very nice dinner of rack of lamb on Christmas Eve. Christmas day we went out to a movie and dinner. We had only one family event scheduled, we were set to meet Jeanne's younger brother, Dan, and his family for dinner at a steakhouse and a movie on the 26<sup>th</sup>, but just as we were about to leave to meet them in Pewaukee, our car refused to start. We had to cancel and stay home. It took over a week to get the car's problem figured out and fixed.

## Cathy Gilligan

[SC] Re: your question to me about what made the Best Western in Hannibal seem peculiar, good question. The structure was a bit dated, but not old in an historic sense. It was probably built in the 70s or early 80s and had possibly been remodeled once, I think. It was built on a hillside, which required inconvenient unloading and parking, but I think the feature that most struck me was inside. A rather tight check-in counter was located right inside the front door; after checking in you walked to an elevator bay in

the center of an open atrium area. The hotel rooms looked out onto the atrium. The elevators and walkways divided the space. Half the ground floor level was taken up by the open swimming pool/Jacuzzi and the other half by a comfy seating area around a fireplace and large TV. What made it odd was that if anyone was using the pool, the whole area sounded echo-y, and smelled like an indoor pool or gym rather than a hotel. Even though the hotel was getting fairly busy, judging by the parking lot, no one was relaxing by the fireplace/TV. The only activity was in the pool. It felt like the pool users had unintentionally driven out everyone else. The one night we were there, it almost felt to me more like we had a room at the Y, rather than a hotel.

## Andy Hooper

[SC] I did not expect your piece on the Life and Death of Alfred J. Oakey to turn so gripping. One of my favorite non-fiction reads in recent years was Eric Larson's *The Devil in the White City* and to find that Alfred had his practice right across the street from Mudgett's chamber of horrors was fascinating. But it was your depiction of the Iroquois Theater fire that was really engrossing. What a tragic, but amazing, story. Thanks for sharing this with us.

[JG] What a compelling and fascinatingly detailed story!—especially for how you were able to focus on individual victims of the Iroquois Theater Fire. I was thinking about the historical genre of disaster chronicles as I read your piece. Scott and I have read several of them -- a few covering tragic Mt Everest climbs, the Peshtigo fire, Shackleton's ordeal, and Amazon jungle exploration stories, among others.

## Jim Hudson

[SC] Thank you for the updates. Our own travel plans for 2018 are beginning to take shape. There is the aforementioned trip to Vermont in April to see my old friend. We are imagining that as a car trip. We will stop at East Lansing and drop off some books to the James Tiptree, Jr. Award Special Collection at Michigan State University, and then stop at the Shaw Festival on the way out, but, sadly, only for one play, since the more interesting ones won't be performed so early in the year. We're going to return via a more northern route (coming back to Wisconsin through the Upper Peninsula). We will also be going to Iowa for a visit or two, Door County again, and WisCon. Beyond that, nothing definite. Plans subject to change.



[JG] Did you like *Discovery*? I was really impressed by the carefully planned arc of the season. Many things called out by critics early in the season (the captain's un-Federation-like attitude, especially, but many others too) turned out to be precisely explained by the actual story. (I'm trying not to spoil the story for those who haven't seen it yet.) I liked the acting, and the darker and more adult storylines of this new version of *Star Trek*.

I envy your plans to see the Stephen Fry plays at the Shaw Festival. I wish our trip east would have coincided with the dates for his plays. I hope you manage to get tickets. I was stunned at how few tickets were left for the mid-week matinee of *Stage Kiss*, which we will see in April. We were lucky to get them.

My brother Dan and I are both interested in going to Austin for the 2024 eclipse. But we'll see what life is like then.

## Comments on #379

Julie Zachman

[SC] Nice cover. Whenever I needed to find the apa, I just had to follow the trail of sparklies it left behind.

Greg Rihn

[SC] I agree with your comments on *The Last Jedi*, plenty to like, but plenty to be annoyed by. Still, it was mostly entertaining which will keep me coming back. I think the Rey and Kylo Ren characters are my favorites, and both actors are excellent. Vice-Admiral Holdo's dithering was maddening and the low point for me. We also enjoyed *The Darkest Hour*.

In your comment to us regarding the "Science Fiction Without Borders" ad we included in our January zine, you are right that we failed to explain. When we made the decision to stay in the apa we rather hurriedly threw together our zine in January and it seemed like a good idea to include the flyer. Many (many!) years ago (1994), Jeanne and I started attending a science fiction/fantasy book discussion group getting started up at Madison's original Borders Bookstore on the west side. Gerald Schoenherr and Elisabeth Matson were Borders employees who started the group at a time when Borders was actively encouraging book clubs to meet at their store. There was a good turnout and we met a bunch of people including some who have remained friends for years. In those days, the bookstore even provided cookies.

Over the years we maintained our involvement in the book club. We followed it to the new east side Borders when that opened up and Gerald and Elisabeth transferred out there. In the meantime, the original Borders west moved to a new and



much bigger building and a parallel science fiction/fantasy book club started there run by Parrish Johnson. About the time Borders company started to run into trouble, Gerald and Elisabeth decided to move to Virginia. Jeanne and I and the rest of the east side book club decided to move back to the west side and join Parrish's group. There we stayed until both Borders stores closed in Madison and we ended up moving the book club to the Frugal Muse bookstore, where we have been since the end of Borders.

A few years ago, the Madison Public Library started a campaign to promote book clubs and raise funds for the library. They commissioned an artist to create a bench for the library. The design for the base of the wooden bench would be carved out as a row of books with bookend armrests. The library invited book clubs to contribute some money in order to get the name of their group inscribed on the spine of a book in the bench. We took up a collection from our members but realized that in all the years we had met, we had only ever referred to ourselves as the Borders (science fiction) Book Club. We needed a better name. Science Fiction Without Borders was what we came up with and it is now immortalized on the bench (now 2 benches because the promotion was so popular.) Our group's membership numbers have been declining lately, so Jeanne designed the flyer to be distributed around town. We included a copy in *Turbo*. Want to come? We meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month. The book for March will be *Borderline* by Mishell Baker.

{JG} I like your clone theory, Greg, for *The Last Jedi*. Yes, I bet you've nailed it.

The thing I liked best about *Darkest Hour*, was how it made me appreciate what it must have been like for most people in England, knowing that they were almost certainly about to be invaded by the Nazis. When viewing or reading WW2 stories, we always know, generally, how things turn out, and don't actually feel anything close to what those actually living through it felt at the time. I thought the movie did a great job showing us what it must have been like ... which made people's response all the more astonishingly brave.



I have several versions of *La Boheme*, including the two you mention. A wonderful opera. I do like Puccini.

### *Kim and Kathi Nash*

[SC] I certainly agree that 2017 sucked in many ways. The worst news for us, of course, was Julie's passing. The seemingly endless drumbeat of scandal, misery and bad news from the media makes it hard to face the world every day. Sadly I don't see an end to that in 2018 until possibly the mid-term elections, but even then, it may only mean the start of a protracted political fight into 2019 and the beginning of the next Presidential campaign (oh God, already?) Grin and bear it, I guess. Try to savor the good things that come our way. Making plans is a good idea.

[JG] That 2018 began with Ursula Le Guin's death was not a good sign....

### *Jim Hudson*

[SC] You and Diane produced a lovely holiday letter, and pictures. Thank you especially for the update on Ariel. Any chance she can salvage her Ph.D plans, or is she done with that? She seems to like New York.

[JG] Thanks! I always look forward to your letters.

### *Darlene Coltrain*

[SC] Welcome aboard. Good to have you with us. Nice studio photos, a good reminder to the rest of us that there must be place where you are actually doing the cool work. I was reading a piece on Jasper Johns in the NY Times the other day and they ran shots of the artist in his normal work attire in his studio. I'm always curious about the work spaces where artists create beautiful things.

### *Steve Johnson*

[JG] I believe that the WisCon concom did the correct thing by banning Jim from the convention. My personal conflict with the committee was not about this decision. I objected to how concom members were thrown under the bus for an earlier decision on the matter. Once the committee learned about Jim's behavior outside of WisCon, those who based their decision on the WisCon episode alone (which was exactly what the committee had originally instructed them to do), were publicly shamed. That's why I resigned from the committee. But I was and am totally supportive of the committee's final decision. Jim is responsible for the horrible financial situation that he imposed on his family, not the WisCon committee.

Jim has ignored pressure from colleagues, convention committees and friends to apologize for his behavior. He has not done so, and in fact to this day, maintains that all credible reports against him are lies. (Sound familiar?) So I

don't believe for a minute that joining a men's group would have a different effect.

### *Andy Hooper*

[SC] Lots of great stuff packed in your zine once again. I enjoyed reading about Milton A. Rothman, "Jack" Speer and the mystery of Margaret Skiffington. Terrific piece on wanderlust and living in Seattle by Linda Blanchard, thanks for including it. Hard to imagine anyone giving up the Pacific Northwest, one of my favorite regions of the country, to move to TX.

[JG] You were very discreet in your overview of the WisCon conflagration in *FLAG*. Thank you. I've been mightily frustrated over the last couple years, hearing so many people assume that since I fell out with the WisCon concom right after the Frenkel episode, that must mean that I had been defending him. I expected to be able to explain why I had resigned from the concom a year and a half after the fact, at the WisCon program, "What Happened" (with Debbie Notkin). But three concom members who were among those most angry at me added themselves as panelists, and the particular "what happened" story that got told at that panel focused on entirely different aspects of the previous year than I had hoped. I think those concom members assumed that I was planning to attack them and decided to go on the offense. The thing that had bothered me most the previous year was how concom members had thrown other concom members under the bus, so I was obviously not interested in doing the same. I wanted to talk about how, in my opinion, an ideal concom worked and had worked (sometimes, often) through WisCon's long history. But instead, I felt like I had volunteered to stand in front of a firing squad. That disheartened me to such a degree, that I've avoided signing up for programming since then, other than the Tiptree judging panel after my most recent stint as a judge in 2016. My participation in WisCon is now limited to Tiptree activities—the auction, the Gathering, and the ceremony. However, I'm feeling less sad and have definitely moved on; I've found many interesting things to do with my time. I'm still very proud of the work I did with WisCon, but I still regret that I'd been able to carry through on the big plans I had for WisCon 40. Ah well.

It was lovely to hear Linda Blanchard's voice again! Thanks.

### *Jae Adams*

[SC] Regarding your comment to me on Duluth, five hours and 40 minutes to Duluth is way better than I'd have guessed. I should ask for any tips (besides Norske Nook, of course) should we decide to head north again to visit the Duluth and the North Shore. Maybe we will finally make it all the way around Superior someday. Do you turn up Hwy 53 at Eau Claire, or drive over to MN to pick up I35? It may not matter after all since we tend to meander over to Ashland and Bayfield when we are in that neck of the woods.



[JG] When you're visiting in Duluth, have you ever gone north a bit to the Naniboujou Lodge on Lake Superior, near Grand Marais? It's got a spectacularly colorful dining hall, and serves a delicious high tea. (picture above)

What do your neighbors think about your sidewalk chalk art? Do you get compliments? I love the "Walk" image. You could sell a sidewalk decorating service: people who host parties might like a welcome sign in front of their house. OK, I'm kidding. Well mostly.

Quite a horror story re Frenkel during Karen's move. Wow.

## Patrick Ijima-Washburn

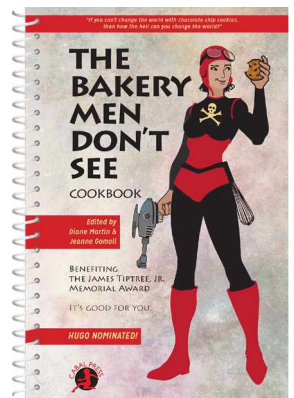
[SC] Thanks for the update, Patrick and best wishes to you that your plans for a more regular income work out. I fully expect that I would find your lectures fascinating, as I found the samples of research you shared with us. Please keep us posted on developments, particularly the gallery opening/comedy routine if it happened.

## What's New



[JG] Over the past few months, I've become totally obsessed with a series of drawings based on the Tiptree mascot, Space Babe. I've spent many, many hours working on this new project. If you recall, Space Babe is the Tiptree Award's registered mark that I drew many years ago—a cartoon super-hero, shooting her blaster into the void. I've wondered over the years about our retro-styled white woman mascot, and whether alternate, diverse portrayals might be useful and fun. So, recently, I've drawn 18 new Space Babes of different ages, ethnicities, body types, and occupations — beginning with the cover of the 2017 edition of *The Bakery*

*Men Don't See*, which featured a Latina Space Babe, armed with a whisk and munching a chocolate chip cookie. You may have seen that one already. This character is also printed on Tiptree merchandise — t-shirts, hoodies, mugs, smartphone covers, shower curtains, and quite a few other items. The Tiptree Award is trying to diversify more than its mascot: we think it's important not to rely too heavily on a single source of income, the auction at WisCon.



So now there are more Space Babes: an Indian SB mom with her SB-in-training, two hijab-wearing SB friends, an author of color SB writing the story of SB sisters defending a clinic against anti-clone terrorists, a teen-aged Asian SB engrossed in a book, an eskimo interstellar cabal leader, a Paralympic SB runner, a SB protestor at a rally, a scuba-diving SB, SB with her hero Ursula K. Le Guin, a large rock&roll SB, a Scandinavian Antarctic-exploring SB, and a senior spray-paint-can-holding artist/tagger SB. There will probably be a couple more before I am through.

Sorry, no images here. I don't want to show them anywhere until they are unveiled at WisCon. I'm going to display full color versions, printed on glass, in the art show.

In addition, I'm working on the *James Tiptree, Jr Coloring Book*, which will highlight the expanded Space Babe family in B&W outline form. For sale at WisCon and print-on-demand through Lulu.com. You have no idea how much fun I am having. As I said above, I have found some interesting things to do with the time I used to spend working on WisCon!

— Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis, February 2018