

Madison FOURSQUARE

30

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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Scott Custis [SC] and Jeanne Gomoll [JG]

April 2019 for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* #394.

What's Up (Scott)

[SC] After one more extreme weather episode (a near-miss by another “bomb cyclone” storm system) we seem to have resumed our march into spring. A week ago today (I’m writing this the Monday before deadline) I went on my first bike ride of the season, around Lake Monona. It was a bright and warm day and a very pleasant ride. Today I went for another ride, this time a longer trip across town through the Arboretum. It was another clear, sunny day but much colder than last week. I had to wear jeans instead of shorts and a light sweater, a fleece jacket and real gloves instead of bike gloves. But the lakes are clear of ice and beautiful in their pre-algae bloom glory. There are no bugs to speak of yet, trees are budding out and it feels like winter is finally going to let go of us.

Comments on #393

Greg Rihn

[SC] I appreciated the description of your visit to the Milwaukee Art Museum for the *Bouguerreau & America* exhibit and the photos. All new and very interesting to me. Thanks for sharing that.

We also saw *Captain Marvel* and we liked it. I think Brie Larson did a good job and Jude Law and Annette Benning did the best they could. I thought making Samuel L. Jackson appear as a “young” Nick Fury was an annoying distraction for the most part (make up or some new CGI tech?) and the plot felt overly convoluted which leads to the sort of issues you pointed out. Jeanne and I have become very careful about choosing super-hero movies these days and we tend to skip them unless the reviews are very good. This movie was good, but I doubt we will see many more this year unless they are way more inventive, like *Spider Man: Into the Spider-verse* was.

[JG] Sounds like cupids were the cute kitten meme of Bouguerreau’s time

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] Thanks so much for doing the Lytherian Halloween History. Also, pictures! Wow, what a list of themes and, so



Photo by Scott

far, no do-overs. I loved the stories about your encounters with the kids and the weather. You must have a million memories. What a cool project.

[JG] Thank you for the Lytherian gallery! It’s an amazing community accomplishment. One of the Wonders of Southeast Wisconsin. I love the lessons learned: What one or two boys won’t do can be accomplished by 3 or more goading one another on. Don’t denigrate pink princesses. And thanks for the article, “Fun House” I had been wondering if the local media covered doings at Lytheria.

Walter Freitag

[SC] I think I am in the camp where streetlights that periodically go off can best be explained as something they just do. I don’t spend as much time out walking the city streets at night as I did when I was younger, and some cities such as Madison have cut down on the number of streetlights they actually light at night, but they still go off from time to time for no apparent reason. I always thought that they were activated by photoelectric sensor and sometimes the sensor gives a false signal or stops working. Your zine ended mid-sentence. Are we missing something? Was there more than one sheet? It sounds like you put in a couple essays and a story after page 2?

[JG] I’ve noticed a similar phenomenon to Street Light Interference (SLI) that affects me: Watch Stopping Ability

(WSA). Well, I don't think that's actually an accepted term, but let's go with it. I thought for a while that it was only me. The technician at the watch store looks at me like I'm insane when I've complained about it and has no suggestions as to how to fix my problem. When I strap on a watch, whether electronic or a manual winding, it will soon stop dead. If I remove the watch and strap it onto Scott's wrist, for instance, who is not afflicted with WSA, the watch will start up again, and keep time with no problem. But if I try to wear it again, it stops. Again. The only thing I could think of that might account for my spooky negative power was the large amounts of iron supplements I take daily, because my body is unable to metabolize iron from food. I mentioned that theory to the aforesaid technician. That's when he looked at me like I hailed from the loony fringe. I explained that I recognized that my theory sounded insane, and that I would be grateful for any more plausible theory. But he had no suggestion. Since realizing that I simply cannot wear any watch, expensive or cheap, I've discovered that my experience is a fairly widespread phenomenon. There doesn't seem to be any explanation for it, but I've read a few articles linking it to the failure of other kinds of mechanical and electronic devices that come in close proximity to certain people, so maybe someday, someone will discover a phenomenon that will explain all our weird super powers.

Jim Hudson and Diane Martin

[SC] Thanks for the nice cover photos, the glossy paper on the front really made the artwork pop.

Thanks also for the photos in your zine and also the quick tour of your refinished basement you gave me after I dropped you off from the airport last month. Since the flood, I have only had one or two chances to see the actual basement, aside from the photos you posted. Going down for that little tour last month was impressive considering the mess that I vividly remember you started with. Great job and congratulations on all the progress you've made.

[JG] Thanks for printing the pictures of the Rotsler Award display on the cover.

I love the flip down crampon on Diane's cane! What a smart invention.

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] RE YCT Lisa, I cannot say I'm surprised at the news that WisCon has not made any further public statements on the "Killable Bodies" fiasco. I can't imagine what more they would say. They just want to be able to kick out anyone who says something they don't like or agree with. It's a simple policy once you get past the academic language. Jeanne and I plan to attend this year, though it may be our last one.

[JG] I liked the interview with the proton. I am imagining a rumped, very confused Columbo trying to trap the proton into an admission.

Catie Pfeifer

[SC] I have seen *The Thing* all the way through only once, and I saw it on TV several years after it was made and not in a theater. I liked it a lot. But I loved *Alien*, which I did see in a theater. I think of *Alien* as one of the most terrifying and utterly riveting experiences I ever had at the movies. I have seen *Alien* many times. So in my book, *Alien* is the better film but a lot may depend on first impressions. I don't share your opinion of Kurt Russell. I have liked him (though not everything he's done) since his early days in Disney movies. I have been enjoying him very much recently in films like *The Hateful Eight* and *Death Proof*.

[JG] I totally agree with you about the reasons *Alien* is a more successful horror movie, compared to *The Thing*, despite the latter film's unforgettable extrapolation of a core human fear. The other day I listened to an *Alien* spin-off novella -- an Audible Original production called, *Alien: Out of the Shadows*. It was a pretty good story, but might not have been without the voice actress, Laurel Lefkow, who played the role of Ripley. She sounded EXACTLY like Sigourney Weaver, and brought with her voice all the emotional attachment that the original movies have built for that character. As in most books by Stephen King, I admire authors who are able to make me care deeply about their characters.

Shoveling two feet of snow off your parents roof. Wow. I can see why you've had enough. Nevertheless I'm laughing, remembering one of our guides in Hawaii who expressed the same sentiment about the snowfall at the top of Haleakala. "I've HAD IT with this snow!" There were a couple of not-so-big piles of snow visible from the rim, which meant either that a huge amount of snow had melted within the 24 hours that had passed since the snow had fallen, or that Hawaiians think that a pile of snow that could be vanquished with a couple shovels-full, is a startlingly large amount.



Jim and Ruth Nichols

[SC] I'm looking forward to reading about your upcoming train trip. Jeanne and I also like to travel by train sometimes and it's true that the train ride is a big part of the entire vacation experience and not some brief unpleasantness one

has to endure before the good stuff happens (like plane travel.) I like to travel by car, too, but as you said it can be boring (especially Interstate routes) and it can take a lot out of you by the time you arrive. Have a great trip.

Jim, good news about the retirement plan. It helps to have a date in mind for those last months of bureaucratic idiocy (like tracking your time in 15 minute increments.) The level of scrutiny at my old job was becoming ridiculous as my last day approached, too. Helps to have the finish line in sight and approaching.

[JG] Our most interesting train trip was the one we took to San Francisco, on our way to CroneCon—which was the celebration of a 50th Birthday that I shared with Debbie Nokin, Jane Hawkins and Donya White. Scott and I were planning to stay in the Bay Area for about a week, and then fly back to Wisconsin. It turned out to be a really good thing that we decided to travel by train first and then fly back, because the planes were still grounded after 9/11 when we left home. We had a sleeper car, but talked with a lot of folks during meals and in the observation car -- many of them refugees from the East Coast who had been stranded after the planes hit the towers. There was a persistent burnt odor in the train cars, and an amazing feeling of community among all the travelers. Flying back was weird though: lots of armed military people in the airports, lots of empty seats in the planes. People were still afraid to fly.

When I was much younger and much more poor, I also did a fair amount of solo traveling via train, which is another great way to have interesting conversations with new people, some of which you might wish to avoid, but others that turn out to be very memorable. Like the Japanese guy who sat next to me on the trip between San Francisco and Chicago. He was actually traveling a circuit around the US (Los Angeles to San Francisco to Chicago to New York to Washington DC to Miami to New Orleans to Houston to Los Angeles. How exhausting!) I may have forgotten a stop or two, but it was a long time ago; I was in my early 20s. He didn't speak any English at all and I had (have) no Japanese. So we "conversed" with drawings in my sketchpad. He drew a map showing his route; that's how I knew where he was going. We developed some symbology, like: sun=a day; moon=a night. My favorite drawing of his was of a theater and a stick figure of himself operating the lights pointing at the stage. I'm pretty sure that was his job. He was most impressed by the open spaces of Wyoming and Kansas. I mimed sleep to express my boredom with the views. He laughed. He and other Japanese passengers got really excited during one of our stops in a mostly abandoned western town (lots of dust, unpainted dilapidated buildings). They all snapped their cameras frantically as a person walked through some swinging doors down the street. They excitedly proclaimed, "Matt Dillon!!" I ended up giving my sketch book to my companion when we parted. I'm glad I did, but it would also be fun to see those Pictionary conversations again.

Jim, I agree with you about the craziness of spending time tracking your time, which ends up wasting time. I did a lot of this back at the DNR too and is probably one of the top 2 or 3 things I am happy to have left behind.

Did your mother have to deal with flooding this Spring?

Joe Leslie Adams

[SC] I also like to get out for regular neighborhood walks. I'm not doing it for exercise so much as curiosity about new developments. I'm becoming a nosy old retired guy, I guess. I like to see the progress my neighbor is making building his big new garage himself and I made a habit of checking on the progress of larger commercial construction projects in the area. It's always interesting to see new businesses and open and others close. There was a snazzy little barware and smoking supply store that also sold a small, but carefully curated, selection of liquor on Atwood Ave. It was called Degoba. One day I walked by and could see through the window that the store was a mess, no one was in there, the counter was cluttered with papers and empty cans and bottles. A plant was knocked over and dirt was sprayed across the floor. It was left like that for weeks. Some drama played out in there one day? Suddenly the space was transformed into a beauty shop. Interesting.

[JG] I thought of you the other day when Scott and I visited a local gallery, Tandem Press—it's sort of hidden away off Commercial Avenue near Manna's Cafe. This was the second time I visited. The thing that I find most interesting about the place is that it isn't just a gallery, it's also a workshop with enormous pieces of equipment, whose use is awarded to a different artist periodically (one a month? Not sure). The artists who are chosen have free access to all the equipment, and are helped by interns provided by Tandem Press, which also displays and sells the prints created by the artist-in-residence. My hands got sort of itchy with desire to play with the machines and art supplies. I bet you would like this place. It's a little too far away for a walk, but it would be worth driving to see it.

Andy Hooper

[SC] In my opinion, you can never go wrong devoting a significant portion of your zine to anything Civil War related. I have not immersed myself in the details of the war, so I find most articles about different aspects to be informative and interesting. Your grandfather's paper was all of that, and your supplemental material was very helpful, too. Thanks for running it. I also greatly enjoyed your reprint of Patrick Nielsen Hayden's piece. I could so clearly hear his voice in my head as I read it.

[JG] I read the Willis excerpt and thought how much I miss him. "Death where IS thy sting? ...Well, where did you see it last?" Love it. And I remember reading Patrick's wonderful piece from Zed. And now I'm recalling all those earnest,

passionate conversations of what true fandom was and who was REALLY a true fan., using self-referential definitions that pretty much guaranteed never-ending arguments. What fun.

What's new (Jeanne)

[JG] Well, we bought a new furnace and had it installed a couple weeks ago. There was no emergency. Our old furnace did not fail. But we knew that it was operating on borrowed time, and that we could very well find ourselves in an emergency situation within the year. Rather than wait for that to happen in the middle of the night on a holiday during arctic vortex event, as one does, we thought we'd replace our furnace with less drama. So, done.

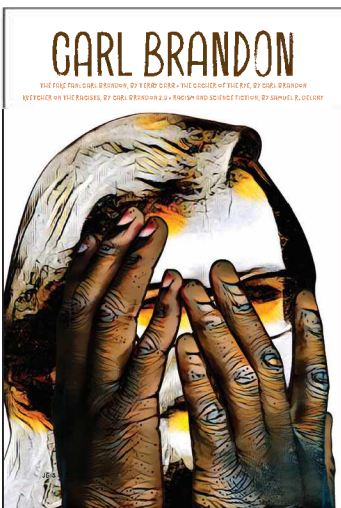
We saw two extraordinary movies, *Us*, and *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*, which I expect we will talk more about eventually. But at the moment, my time is mostly spent working on several design projects:

1) Actually this one is finished: an 18-month **CALENDAR BOOK** (July 2019-December 2020) showing 2 weeks per spread below one photo. The pictures are all from the Hawaiian part of our vacation. We presented the book as



a gift to Kafryn and Craig, our traveling companions. I think it turned out really beautifully.

2) **CARL BRANDON**. Terry Carr recounts the invention of an imaginary black science fiction fan named Carl Brandon, one of the field's most (in)famous hoaxes. In addition to Carl Brandon's complete history, this volume includes his J.D. Salinger parody, "The Cacher of the Rye;" a more current parody by Carl Brandon 2.0/Nisi Shawl, "The Kvetcher on the Racists;" and an essay by Samuel R. Delany, "Racism and Science Fiction." Part of this book is actually reprinted from an out-of-print book I designed in the pre-electronic year of 1982, the year Terry Carr was Guest of Honor at WisCon. So I



had to OCR my copy of the book and make corrections. Along the way I discovered that OCR technology has made amazing strides in accuracy. The application I used, Cisdem PDF Converter, is very spiffy. The book will be released as a print-on-demand book in May, with all proceeds donated to the Carl Brandon Society.

3) **THE LÁADAN DICTIONARY**, which has been out of print for many years, originally edited by Diane Martin in 1988. Since Suzette's withdrawal from public life (she has Alzheimer's). I've heard many people ask if there was some way we could honor her, and it occurred to me that it would be great to bring her dictionary back into print. As with the Carl Brandon book, I hated the fact that something we published long ago might be completely lost. So, Diane and I are getting together to bring it back. I OCR'd the text in January, and let me tell you, spell check is virtually useless in a project like this with a made-up language, not to mention one that includes lots of accented words! Also, the formatting of the book, with uneven columns and wavy gutters, really confused the OCR interpreter. Nevertheless, I typed in all the accents, made corrections, laid out the text, created a new cover art and sent a pdf to Diane to look over while Scott and I were in Hawaii. [Cue ominous music here.]



But it turns out that we have some problems to deal with before publishing the dictionary. Diane discovered that there is a Láadan website, mostly dormant. Its dictionary page was last updated in 2009. Ideally, I'd like to incorporate additional words and possibly the grammar lessons from the webpage into our print dictionary, but there doesn't seem to be any way to contact the web page's owner, or to even identify who that person is. There is supposedly a "LáadanLanguage.org Support Team." But there doesn't seem to be any way to contact them.

<https://laadanlanguage.wordpress.com/>



4) And lastly: a tribute book in memory of Vonda N. McIntyre, as yet untitled, though it may end up being named, simply, **VONDA**. This is the project in which I am most deeply involved right now. We have set a submission deadline of May 11, so if you have any Vonda stories or memories you'd like to contribute, please let me know. There's still time to submit something. Stephanie Ann Smith is the editor. I am helping to gather material, running down

permissions for photos, and will be designing the book and doing the cover art. We want to have it out asap—maybe on time for Vonda's memorial gathering in Seattle early this summer.

So this is retired life. OK, I like it.

Jeanne & Scott
April 2019