

# Madison foursquare

43

This issue with a slightly enlarged type size, *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]  
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## What's New

[JG] It seems like people are getting better about wearing masks at Woodman's. But the place I feel safest doing my grocery shopping is Willy St. Coop, where someone is always stationed outside the door to keep track of how many shoppers are admitted, (sometimes there is a line of folks waiting their turn), and sanitizing shopping carts after each use. People shopping there generally seem to be more courteous about giving each other lots of space than at the big box stores.

We go out for supplies once a week; that's our big weekly outing. Actually, limiting ourselves to a weekly shopping expedition isn't much of a change from our pre-pandemic habits. For many years, on Friday night, we made out our menu for the upcoming week and then did all the grocery shopping on Saturday morning (including a stroll around the farmers' market during summer months). We posted the week's menu on the refrigerator and rarely had to run back to the store during the week. Now we write up our menu on Monday night instead and shop mid-day Tuesday, which turns out to be a fairly slow day at many stores.

The in-person Dane County Farmers' Market has been cancelled for 2020. That's been replaced with an order-and-pay-on-line market ("What's Good" app, used by many farmers' markets this year). Shoppers drive or bicycle or walk to the coliseum grounds on Saturday morning, arriving in their assigned timeslot, display their name on a placard through a window, and watch their purchases loaded into the back of their car by the farmers. We're glad that we can continue to support local farmers this way.

Our other outing involves walking; the YMCA is closed, so I'm not swimming. Scott takes much longer walks than me (sometimes around 4 miles) and he has begun bicycling too. But he also joins me on shorter walks (1 mile or less); my replaced knee is taking a long time to heal unfortunately and my so-called "good" knee should probably be replaced soon. But I think it's good for me to do that daily walk. Generally we walk in our own neighborhood or drive a short distance to other interesting neighborhoods. Bike trails tend to be rather crowded and social distancing is problematic.

Since returning from Corflu in Texas in mid March, we've taken only one long trip—to Iowa, to return a couple boxes of photo albums to Scott's brother. One of our pandemic projects was to have several hundred old Custis photos scanned. I cleaned them up in Photoshop and loaded all the corrected scans onto thumb drives for Scott and his brother Jon. We printed quite a few of the pictures onto photo paper for Scott's sister Bonnie. When we finished the project, we delivered the photos to Bonnie and the albums to Jon and sat (10 feet away) from Jon and Donna in their driveway chatting. It got rather chilly, so we didn't stay too long, but it was nice to visit. I realize now that I can't remember WHEN this happened. Days are blurring together.

My family got together recently for a Zoom session. I used the phrase "Zoom party" in a text message to my brothers, nieces and nephews, and within minutes one of them said that if it was going to be a party, we should play a game. And the game my family plays most often when we get together is "Mafia." It took



Seen while walking Madison neighborhoods

a while to figure out how this could work, but it did, surprisingly well. My niece Rachel took the role of narrator and texted us each individually to tell us what our secret roles were: simple villager, mafia or police. Then, each “night,” we each texted her back in our roles as mafia or police. Simple villagers also texted amusing comments or cat photos to Rachel or pretended to text her in order to disguise their roles (so no one could figure out who was a simple villager based on who was NOT texting). Since we all were able to watch each another text, we based some of our “daytime” comments on what we noticed. It turned out to be quite a lot of fun. The part that didn’t work very well was WHEN we did this party. Since my brother Steve and his wife Linda were calling in from Hong Kong (12 hours difference from central time), we ended up doing this at 9 am Sunday morning. We will make Steve and Linda take the morning slot next time.

Steve and Linda, by the way, are attempting to make plans to return to the US. Steve will officially retire in June. They are having belongings shipped back home, but have been told that much of it may not arrive back in Wisconsin until 2021. They originally reserved plane tickets in early June, but last week were told that their flight had been cancelled. Next possible flight is in late June. They are crossing their fingers. But most of the family hopes that they are able to stay in Hong Kong as long as possible since that city is handling the pandemic far better than almost anywhere else in the world.

My other brother, Dan and his wife Kelly, are both working from home. Dan has worked from home for many years now: he designs software for online primary school education (so as you can imagine, his company’s services are in high demand). Kelly is an administrator for Alverno College; she specializes in on-line training, so her skills are also in high demand and quite adaptable to at-home work.

We worry much more for Scott’s family, many of whom work in front line, in-person, dangerous settings—correctional and care facilities. Scott’s niece and her husband have tested Covid positive.

**Diane** and I finished work on Suzette Haden Elgin’s *Låadan Dictionary*, but we have been stymied in the process of actually getting it published. Just as I was about to hit the finalize button, Lulu.org set in motion their site redesign. There has been a huge uproar on line about this among people who use Lulu print-on-demand services to publish their books. It has been several weeks since the new site went live, and there are so many glitches that no one is able to access their files or create new work. In addition, Lulu decided to drop several large format sizes, which has been particularly bad for me, because I was in the midst of designing a photo book for my brother Steve (now titled, *Our Trek to Everest Base Camp*) using one of those large format sizes. Well, I think I’ve found another print-on-demand company (Blurb) that I can use for that book, but it took a while and several panicky days to find it. I’ll also, eventually, need to find a new publisher for *The Tiptree Quilt Story*, which was another Lulu, large-format book that Lulu has simply dropped from their catalog and will no longer print or sell.

I’ve returned to reading through some of my old apazines, looking for material to add to my collection, but my focus isn’t quite there yet. I really want to finalize the Dictionary, and get a rough draft of Steve’s photo book done first.

Scott and I have really enjoyed seeing the National Theater productions, streamed for free (for one week) on YouTube. So far we’ve seen them all: *One Man, Two Guvnors*, *Jane Eyre*, *Treasure Island*, *Twelfth Night*, *Frankenstein*, and this weekend: *Antony and Cleopatra*. We’ve watched them on the Saturday night after they became available. It was sort of nice having this to look forward to each week; we’re hoping that more National

Theater productions will be streamed. I suppose as Britain loosens its lockdown, they may stop. We'll see. Our book discussion group (Science Fiction Without Borders) met last month via Zoom and it worked very well. In fact when a former member, who'd moved out of the area a couple years ago, joined us, it suddenly became apparent that there was actually at least one ADVANTAGE to doing an on-line book discussion. We will do it again this month; we'll be discussing two short novellas—*A Dead Ljinn in Cairo*, and *The Haunting of Tram Car 015*, by P. Djéli Clark. That will happen a couple days before the May *Turbo* collation. But if anyone wants to join us for the June 16 book discussion (6:30 pm central time), where we will be discussing *The City in the Middle of the Night*, by Charlie Jane Anders, just let me know and I will add you to the Zoom call list. There's also talk about scheduling an extra Zoom discussion about Martha Wells' new Murderbot novel, *Network Effect*.

## Comments on Turbo 406

### Covers

[JG] Stunning cover, **Steve**; thanks! Very phallic, or possibly felt-tippy.

[SC] Beautiful front cover, Steve, and a back cover that speaks for all of us.

## Georgie Schnobrich

[JG] Yeah, I've been thinking about the invisibleness of Covid too. A purple sheen identifying carriers would be nice. Terror in zombie movies rests on an impossible-to-miss visual signal: the horrific, decomposing bodies of the afflicted. Without any definitive identifier on the faces of those who are positive Covid carriers, too many people seem confident in believing what they want to believe...that the danger of infection is unreal, exaggerated or simply won't affect them personally. It's hardly surprising: These past few years, it seems, we've repeatedly expected/hoped that THIS tweet, or THIS betrayal, or THIS monstrous act, or THIS crisis, would finally focus us all on the real threat and enable us to agree on what needs to be done. So, now, I don't know if I believe there is any hope that we will ever be able to come to consensus on reality.

Scott and I read *Fall; or Dodge in Hell* by Neal Stephenson last year. I really liked the first part. (People into massive multiplayer online role playing games may like the whole novel quite a lot.) But I have

been thinking a lot about the first part of the book which takes place in the real world, before Dodge is cryogenically frozen after death and his electronically stored consciousness creates a complex virtual world for everyone who dies after him. Before that happens, before we even get to Bitworld, a nuclear bomb apparently wipes out Moab Utah, and even after this is shown to be an Internet hoax, conspiracy theorists continue to insist on its reality for years. The country becomes divided between those who believe Moab still exists and those who do not. The US literally becomes divided geographically—into communities with entirely different perceptions of reality. Stephenson seems to think that we may never get back to a time when consensus, scientific view of reality is a thing.

I think Scott and I will survive this in the short run. We are certainly among the very lucky: Scott and I are not forced to choose between starving or paying our rent and getting sick. We have a big, comfortable house with good exercise machines and lots of books; we have plenty of supplies; we have a good amount of savings; we have each other. But long term, I don't know. The decision to "open up" the economy has nothing to do with real safety: When I hear about plans to open things up with no vaccine or treatment protocol yet available, I hear this: "Go out and live normally. You still have a good chance of catching the virus and may very well get very sick and die ... but now we have enough hospital beds and ventilators for you if you do get sick." That's not enough for me.

I now know four people who have caught Covid—Scott's niece and her husband, and two British fans, Lilian Edwards (who is mostly recovered) and Farah Mendelsohn who caught it in hospital when she was recovering from gallbladder surgery.

I don't know that Republicans consider voting something to die for. Rather, I think Republicans consider voting by Democrats something to die for. Maybe that's why Republicans lost the Spring election; they stayed home and expected more Democrats to do the same.

You know, I don't remember even considering asking the librarian for help with my quest for information about sex. Odd. I think I may have been all too aware that my research was illicit in many ways—simply in terms of the subject matter, for one, but also because I was playing hooky from charm class, but also because I was using a library for which I had no library card. So I saw myself as a sort of spy in the adult world, and of course librarians were adults....



[SC] I liked your poem.

Since you asked, I think Jeanne and I are managing well, under the circumstances. I have a hard time envisioning being able to do much better than that. I don't think either of us is wholly an introvert or extrovert. We are both more prone to be in, or not in, a social mood. I'd never describe myself as gregarious, but I like being around people. I like going to bars and coffee shops, events and festivals, marches and markets. I may not reach out to introduce myself to anyone, but I like being in the crowd. One of the things I love about living in Madison is the feeling of life and energy that hums along in a youthful college town. There is always stuff going on in Madison, whether it's stuff I personally want to be involved in or not, is not the point. It all contributes to a sense of activity that I like to be close to. So, I'm not loving the city being so shut down and spending so much time at home. I lived alone for several years off and on before I met Jeanne. I was fine living on my own, but I often hung out where people were and I worked in very people-oriented jobs. These days I have no shortage of things to do at home, but I get out when I can and when it makes sense. I'm just happy we are going into summer now rather than a long, cold, dark winter.

Your comment about human intelligence being the result of a viral infection from microbes with their own agenda sounds like the seed of a bitchin' SF story.

## Greg Rihn

[JG] Geneva Steam Con 2020 happened on the same weekend as Corflu 37, which Scott and I attended in College Station, Texas. Yeah, I suspect those cons were the last fannish cons of the year. The attendees of Corflu also lucked out and have all been Covid-free since returning home from the convention.

[SC] The story of your "proving" relativity in High School was very amusing. Clearly a sign of hidden talents.

I enjoyed your Geneva Steam Con rundown, sounded like great fun. I hope that TeslaCon goes smoothly in the fall so I can look forward to your report. Thanks also for the book reviews. Jeanne and I delve into horror stories only occasionally but on a long drive to Iowa and back recently we listened to the first story of Stephen King's new collection of novellas, *if It Bleeds*. *Mr. Harrigan's Phone* kept us pretty wide awake for much of the nearly 5 hour round-trip drive.

## Steven Vincent Johnson

[JG] On the subject of multiple Steve Johnsons, I was aware of the photographer Stephen Johnson around the time I met you. Googling the name, I see there are quite a few photographers with that name, but the one I was most impressed by was and is a landscape photographer (famous for extremely large format, very high res. images) who has published many highly technical essays about his work. In fact, I've thought a few times about the similarities between his and your own very technical approaches to artwork. If you want to check out his work, go to < <http://www.sjphoto.com>>

[SC] I'm relieved that medication was helpful in responding to your anxiety issues.

Regarding your comment to **Jae**, Jeanne and I have also been trying to help out local restaurants by ordering take out from a different restaurant every week. Since I prefer to go and pick up the food myself, we have tended to stick to eastside and near westside places. I also have been favoring local coffee places when I can, specifically Café Britolli and Victory on Atwood Ave. and, very recently, Cargo Coffee's drive-thru over here off East Washington.

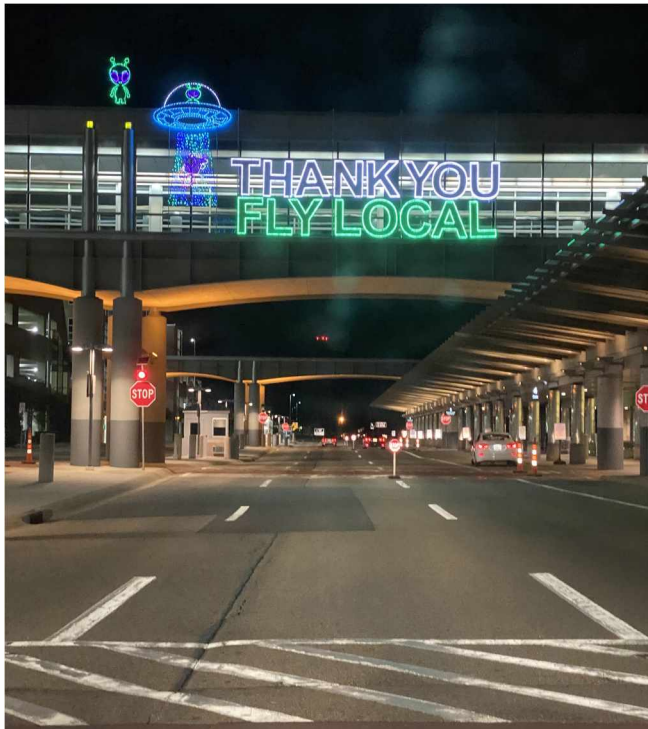
## Marilyn Holt

[JG] Fascinating stories about your encounters with Papadopoulos and Mondale!

[SC] Thanks for recommending the Avi Shiffmann site. He now features a survival calculator where you enter a little information and it estimates your Covid-19 survival chances. Very interesting. I see from this that I am definitely in an "at risk" category. I have been keeping track of local Covid-19 numbers via a feature on one of my weather apps that gives me the latest infected and death numbers for Wisconsin and Dane County. I think we have been doing much better locally than the rest of the state at large, because we have taken the threat and social distancing measures much more seriously here in Madison.

Re: Paul Samuelson, in a recent NYT column, economist Paul Krugman wrote about the stock market's recent rise when all other economic indicators were falling off a cliff. Krugman's point was that the stock market is not the economy and he quoted his old colleague from M.I.T., Paul Samuelson's famous line, "The stock market has predicted nine of the last five recessions."

Interesting and troubling stories of your experiences



One of the drive-by art displays—"Flight of Lights," presented by the Dane County Regional Airport, April 18–May 10.

with Papadopoulos and Mondale. I remember Mondale as unexciting, but capable.

Any idea what blasting was once done on your property, or why? Finding old blasting caps in the woodshed must have been a surprise and a thrill, not in a good way.

## Andy Hooper

[JG] I miss going to movies too. For many years, Scott and I have been in the habit of going to see a movie every Friday evening if there was one that interested us. And there usually was, except for the movie-desert weeks during the late winter and early spring. While Scott was still working, I'd pick him up at the end of his shift and we'd go out to dinner and see a movie afterward, or visa versa. We continued the tradition after he retired, though we changed movie-night to Tuesday in order to take advantage of \$5-tickets that day. Well, it's been months since we saw our last movie in a theater. At the time, of course, I wasn't aware that it was the "last time:" *Emma*, a fine movie.

So many last times...The last dinner out—in Texas at the Italian restaurant next door to the Corflu hotel. My last swim—I don't know! The last in-person book discussion—February's meeting, discussing C.A. Fletcher's *A Boy and His Dog at the End of the World*. The last theater play attended—Forward Theater's *Every Brilliant Thing*. The last time I met friends for

tea—probably late February. At the time I never realized these were "last times."

Anyway...missing movie night is a little easier to deal with because Hollywood has basically stopped releasing films. It would feel more tragic if we were missing new movies. And Scott and I have set up a few private viewing traditions: As I mentioned above, we are enjoying British National Theater productions. And we watch Chris Hayes and Rachel Maddow every weeknight on MSNBC, which feels both depressing but necessary; sometimes I feel like amuch abused punching bag after the daily list of atrocities and horrors has been described, but I can't look away. It would be worse not to know what is going on. In addition, on Thursday nights, we have begun watching "Broadway's Best," a weekly one-night-only "Spotlight On Plays" series benefiting The Actors Fund. Plays are read aloud by actors from their homes via Zoom or something like it, though they are so dramatically presented, they hardly feel like readings. Last night we saw David Mamet's hilarious play, *November*, read by John Malkovich, Patti LuPone, Dylan Baker, Ethan Phillips and Michael Nichols. Mamet directed. Set a few days before the election, *November* follows the misadventures of a day in the life of a Trumpian U.S. president.

And our newest tradition: once a week, we're going to choose an old movie to watch. We started with *The Long Riders*, because of your essay. We streamed *Lone Star* next. We had seen that film many years ago and several times when it was first released, and ever since have periodically said to one another, "we should see *Lone Star* again." Actually, that movie could easily have been titled *Who Killed Charlie Wade*; it rather erily parallels the plot of *Who Killed Liberty Valance*. Both movies involve the mystery of who (long ago) killed an infamous bad guy, and both movies end with the decision not to challenge the myth with the truth. *Lone Star* is one of Scott's and my favorite movies; it is so perfectly constructed, with every line of dialog revealing essential information. And what great actors too! It's one of Chris Cooper's best roles for sure, and I liked Elizabeth Peña a lot, though advertisers focused on Kris Kristofferson and Matthew McConaughey.

A digression: I highly recommend Mary Doria Russell's two novels about Doc Holliday—*Doc* and *Epitaph*. These beautifully researched novels may be my favorite of Russell's novels, even more interesting than her Tiptree-winning novel, *The Sparrow*.

I agree with you that the visuals and music of *The Long Riders* is the most appealing part of the movie. I became frustrated in the course of watching the movie because

I could not get a handle on Jesse James' character or motivation. During his conflict with the younger Cole, Jesse seemed focused on leadership and was viewed by the rest of the gang as someone more self-controlled and calm during crisis. That sure didn't hold all the way through the story. His marriage and determination to settle down didn't seem to connect with anything Jesse had said or done earlier. He was just a cypher whose motivations shifted with each scene. I did like the actor brothers cast as sibling characters.

Thanks so much for your comments on *IAFForensics!*

I wrote "Nancy Drew Finds Out About Sex" many, many years ago; crediting it to 2020 was definitely a mistake. I think I published it in my first perzine, *What Spare Time?*—of which I no longer have any copies, damnit. I don't remember how many issues I did. They would have been published sometime before 1978; I typed those zines while I was working as a Kelly temp worker.

rich brown's faanfiction piece reads so well, I would almost like to hear it performed. I love how he demonstrated the way faanfiction can function as an essay-in-disguise, all the while disparaging personal essays in favor of faanfiction. Very meta. Thanks Andy.

[SC] Thank you for the thoughtful and thorough dive into *The Long Riders* and one of my favorite fiction genres, Westerns. With the vast number of western books, movies, plays and TV made over the decades, even in light of Sturgeon's Law, that leaves a lot of good stuff. Strangely, I have never seen *The Long Riders* and after reading your article, Jeanne and I summoned it up from Amazon Prime. I don't exactly know why I missed seeing it way back then. I know I wasn't going to as many movies in those days as my life was in some disarray at the time.

Seeing *The Long Riders* today, I had a mixed reaction to it. The dialog sometimes sounded a bit stiff to me. I was mystified by James Keach's performance as a remote and sometimes blank Jesse James, hardly the picture of an engaged and charismatic gang leader. He sometimes seemed to be paying more attention to the voices in his head than to the gang members around him. Some of the other characters seemed to act with confusing or poorly established motives. I read later that scenes were cut in post-production that may have better explained the gang's interrelationships. It just felt to me like something was missing that could have helped pull the whole enterprise together.

On the other hand, it's beautifully shot and the music was excellent. The scenes where the groups of brothers

appear together were fun and there are some great scenes (I liked the shootout in the barn) and really fine performances (Keith Carradine's dapper but expressive Jim Younger, David Carradine's cynical Cole Younger and Fran Ryan as the James brothers' ma).

## Carrie Root

[JG] I wear the over-the-ear masks and Scott has chosen to go with the shoestring-type, tied behind his head. I ordered a couple of those ear-saver straps, though, for times when I have to wear a mask for a long period of time—though, now that we've tried them, neither of us like them at all. We bought our first couple masks from a neighborhood woman, and several others from an Etsy craftsperson.

## Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[JG] It seems to me that student neighborhoods—Spaight and Jennifer Streets, for example, are where I see the most people less observant of sufficient distancing. But like you, I try to avoid heavy traffic areas, especially bike paths where it's sometimes impossible to put enough space between me and them. I like to walk through the grass in parks, rather than use the paths for that reason.

I love your idea of trying to find a copy of the breakthrough novel in my sex investigation: *Westward Vikings*. **Kim and Kathi**, are you reading this? Could you find it for me? I read the book sometime in the mid- to late 1960s, though the book might have been published quite a bit earlier and may have been acquired by my school library as a donation. All I remember was that it was a hardcover and cover image was of a statue of a Viking, presumably Lief Erickson, pointing west with a blue sky behind him. Sorry, I don't know the author.

[SC] Regarding the lockdown protests in Madison, the protest we had here in Madison drew 1,500 people but was not as harrowing as the one they experienced in Michigan, largely because we did not allow the armed protesters to enter the Capitol building and intimidate personnel. I did read about one mildly amusing aspect of our incident. Because of the lockdown, the protest was denied a permit. The governor wisely allowed them to protest anyway, but the organizers were denied permission to bring in porta-potties. Of course the city is on lockdown, so none of the downtown businesses or public buildings were letting people in to use their restrooms. So, if a protester was shouting and marching around with an assault rifle and happened to need to pee,

the options were extremely limited. I like to think this state of affairs may have contributed to a less animated event and maybe a lot of long, smelly drives back home.

We have continued enjoying the National Theater plays Jeanne mentioned last month in her comment to **Greg**. Last night we watched Benedict Cumberbatch play Dr. Victor Frankenstein in a dazzling production of *Frankenstein* that we missed seeing the last chance we had. On TV we have been tuning in to *Killing Eve* and *Better Call Saul* both of them keep us awake and make us laugh sometimes at shocking things.

## Kim & Kathi Nash

[JG] So, you guys play WoW... Have you read Neal Stephenson's novel, *Fall; or Dodge in Hell?* I wrote a bit about it in my comment to **Georgie**. I'd be interested to hear what you think of it.

[SC] I was wondering, how is Frugal getting fresh books now? If the store is closed, then people are no longer bringing them in. Do the Frugal owners go out to garage and estate sales to find them?

Jeanne and I have been going on almost daily short walks, usually under a mile. We have been sticking to neighborhood sidewalks because they are often quieter than bike trails and parks, but sometimes we will check out one of the quieter neighborhood parks or a stretch of parkland along the lakeside. We have been looking at houses a lot. Not to buy, but to critique a little and maybe steal an idea or two.

## Walter Freitag

[JG] I think we should be showing our appreciation to essential workers by awarding them hazard pay. Applause and songs are nice, but hazard pay should be a no-brainer.

I found your week-by-week, by the numbers, chronicle of Covid days interesting. The days and weeks have all blurred for me; the only way I can get a handle on the daily or weekly changes is to look at the bar charts. The development (and ignoring) of new hotspots around meat-packing plants, nursing homes and prisons is what really worries me. We're concentrating resources on wrong places it seems. I've heard that the drug, remdesivir, is going to small suburban clinics, not to big urban hospitals. Stupidity is going to do more damage than the actual virus.

[SC] The way Jeanne and I are looking at the



IT'S A QUARANTINED-COUPLES-BREAKUP TOURNAMENT. YOU STILL HAVE TIME TO FILL OUT A BRACKET.

(Nick Galifianakis/for The Washington Post)

pandemic is that probably not much will change with us unless and until we get a vaccine. The risk factors are just too great for us even if social distancing guidelines flatten the curve enough to back off some of the business and event closures and "get the economy going again." From our point of view, it doesn't really matter if the hospitals have lots of beds available again, we can't take the risk of catching the virus, so we will need to continue to take the same precautions.

## Cathy Gilligan

You agreed with Marilyn that social isolation is having only a minimal impact on your lifestyle, I think you are lucky in some ways. Certainly I'm not faring so well. Even doing a project around the house becomes onerous when I come to a point where I need something that I once would have jumped in the car to fetch right away. Now I have to decide if I need it now (and take the risk of going after it) or later (ordering it to be shipped). If I need it now, deciding if the store is open, donning a mask and gloves, negotiating 6 ft. social distancing with anyone else at the store and figuring out the sometimes complicated check-out protocol. Is it worth the trouble? I admit that in the grand scale of bad things happening right now, this is pretty petty, but it's the sort of annoyance that can make social isolation tiring after a while.

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The story dredged from the archives this month may possibly be familiar to some of you, because it was published right here in Turbo Apa many years ago. It was jointly written by Scott and me.

—Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Cusiis, May 2020



## From the Vault

### A Close Encounter

By Jeanne & Scott

By Jeanne Gomoll [JG] and Scott Custis [SC], *Union Street, Turbo-Charged Party Animal*, 1992

[JG] Scott and I treat one another to a dinner out on each of our birthdays. Last Thursday—September 10th—was my birthday, and I chose The Blue Marlin, a seafood restaurant about which we've both heard good reports. The reviews were accurate: Our dinners were exquisitely delicious. The Calimari (squid in tomato basil sauce) was the best I've ever eaten—an amazing thing to say about a restaurant so far away from the ocean. And the soup was out of this world.

(SC) The Blue Marlin is a small, cozy place located in one of those curious triangular corner spaces on the Capital Square. We arrived early on a Thursday night. The place was practically empty so we were seated at one of the two window tables, at the very front of the restaurant with an excellent view of the Capital. The legend in Madison is that restaurants secretly interview their customers to insure that window seats are occupied by people engaged in intense conversations. So, when seated in window seats, patrons are obligated to live up to the expectation and look interesting even if they are merely discussing a backed up sink.

I ordered sturgeon and it came with a light bacon breading along the top and a dollop of spiced mayonnaise sauce. (Sorry, I forget the specific spices in the sauce.) It was delicious. The fish melted in my mouth and had only the slightest flavor of fish. A good choice for someone who doesn't really like fish because it resembled a very moist and tender chicken breast. The soup was outstanding: A spicy oyster bisque, full of chunks of fish and a single oyster that was cooked and still in the shell. I am convinced it was the best restaurant meal I've ever had in Madison.

(JG) I chose blue marlin for my entree, suspecting that this restaurant would not have been casually named after this dish without some good reason. Indeed, the pepper marinade and tender fish provided ample reason. I savored every bite.

As we waited for our after-dinner salads, we resolved to become outrageously wealthy so we could eat regularly at The Blue Marlin restaurant. What a wonderful birthday dinner, I thought, running out of adjectives. I asked Scott if he was planning to "pay me back" for the embarrassment I caused him last year

at his birthday, when I tipped the entire wait staff of the restaurant to sing happy birthday to him as they brought him a slice of cake.

"Damn it! I forgot! I should have.... Oh well, you wouldn't have been embarrassed anyway," he said.

"No, probably not," I said. I sipped the last of my wine and sighed. It was a lovely evening and would have been memorable even if nothing else had happened—even if Russ Feingold and his wife hadn't chosen that moment to walk into the Blue Marlin.

(SC) Russ Feingold had just won an upset victory in the Democratic primary two days earlier for the chance to run for U.S. Senate against the incumbent Republican Sen. Bob Kasten. The primary race pitted three candidates against one another: Feingold, Jim Moody and Joe Checota. Through most of the campaign I had supported Moody. He was already a U.S. Representative and right with most of the issues and I felt he stood a better chance of beating Kasten in the general election than a liberal firebrand like Feingold. Checota—a millionaire Milwaukee businessman—was trying to buy the election as Herb Kohl had done four years ago. Checota's shady past and history of questionable business practices dogged him through the whole campaign. Feingold had little money and ran in the back of the pack for most of the campaign until near the end when Checota and Moody engaged in a classic mudslinging duel. Suddenly Feingold—entirely free of scandal—surged ahead in the polls and won a devastating victory. In the voting booth, I pulled the lever for Feingold, figuring that he was an excellent candidate who had earned a shot at the Evil Kasten. Bob Kasten is a notoriously dirty campaigner. Six years ago he accused his opponent—Ed Garvey, a former professional athletes' union rep—of stealing money from the Player's Union in the last week of a close Senate race. The charge was false, but Garvey was unable to clear himself until after the election was over. Feingold's squeaky clean reputation may be the best defense against Bad Bob.

(JG) Feingold could afford few TV commercials in prime time, so Scott missed seeing them and I would describe them to him when he got home from work in the morning.

"You should have seen the Feingold ad last night, Scott! What a hoot!" The first ad parodied Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous. Russ guided the TV audience to the locked gate of Checota's northern Wisconsin mansion. A wolf howled in the background. Then he showed us



Moody's posh Georgetown digs. Finally, he gave us a tour of his own, quite mundane, suburban home. ("This is the hall closet.") Feingold was simply saying the same thing that all underdog candidates say about their big-spending opponents; but the humor employed in his message won me over.

Several other ads followed while Checota and Moody slung mud at one another. Feingold made us laugh, and he rose in the polls as his opponents sank. In one ad, Feingold held up a doctored *National Enquirer* cover to the camera. It showed an admiring Elvis endorsing the candidate, with his arm slung around Russ. ("You don't believe everything you read, do you?" asked Feingold.)

All the ads featured Feingold and his own voice, no anonymous voice-overs typical of "attack ads." Feingold almost got hit with an actual glob of mud in his last ad; he ducked, grinned and said, "Gosh, I must be rising in the polls." My hero: Someone with admirable ideals and a sense of humor.

As we ate our post-entree salad, Scott leaned across the table.

(SC) "Russ Feingold just walked in," I said. The restaurant had filled up during the course of our dinner. Clean-cut Russ came in dressed casually in slacks and white shirt. No tie or jacket. He had a female companion with him I took to be his wife and no entourage. Clearly riding high on the crest of his fresh victory, he stopped at several tables near the door to shake hands and accept congratulations. I generally avoid meeting celebrities because I can usually count on my razor-sharp wit failing me as soon as I open my mouth. Fortunately, we were almost finished with our dinner.

(JG) Lacking Scott's genteel manners, I swiveled around and watched Russ Feingold and his probable wife stroll to the back of the restaurant and sit down at the bar. "They're waiting for a table," I guessed as I surveyed the other tables in the room. All were occupied. But the couples on either side of us were leaving. "I bet they're going to be seated next to us. They will certainly qualify for a window seat! Let's wait and congratulate him."

"Oh ... let's not," suggested Scott.

"Don't worry, I won't embarrass you, sweetums," I assured him. "After all, I didn't order the kind of fish you hate—the kind that stares up at you, did I?"

(SC) I reminded Jeanne that famous people disrupt my digestion and leave me feeling gaseous and insignificant.

(JG) "I am going to congratulate him. Eat slowly. We don't want to miss him." A few moments later, the table next to us was set and Feingold and his dinner companion were being led in our direction. "Here they come!" I said. Scott groaned.

But just as I might have caught Russ Feingold's eye, he swerved suddenly toward another table, where he'd recognized someone he knew. The woman with him paused, said a few words to them, and then walked ahead and let the waiter seat her. I watched Feingold, waiting for him to turn around, but then became conscious of the woman looking at me. I turned my gaze towards her, smiled an Aren't-You-Glad-He-Won smile, and was about to politely turn away when she said, "Aren't you Jeanne Gomoll?"

Her question hit both Scott and I like a bombshell. That Feingold's companion would recognize one of us was the very last thing we were expecting, and we reacted accordingly.

"What?" I gasped.

"Huh?" mumbled Scott.

"Aren't you Jeanne Gomoll?" she repeated.

Completely flabbergasted, I nevertheless nodded as she stood up, smiled, and dragged her chair around to our table. Dimly I began to realize that she looked a bit familiar.

"I'm Mary \_\_\_\_\_, CJ's friend!" And then suddenly I recognized her. I had known her 17 or 18 years ago: She was a friend of my next door neighbor, C.J. Paterson. I became less inarticulate but no less shell-shocked.

"CJ's friend!" I said. And then we talked about the wild turns CJ's life had taken.

"So, she's recovered from being 're-born'? What a relief!" And we both laughed, and I began to recover my equilibrium, though not my manners, because I entirely forgot to introduce Scott. Later on I would tell myself that I would have eventually remembered to introduce him, but at that moment, events got out of hand again...

(SC) I was staring at them trying to make sense of the scene in front of me when I became aware of a silent Presence next to my left shoulder. I turned slowly to see the grinning face of Russ Feingold. He stuck out his hand. "Hi, I'm Russ Feingold," he said cheerfully. I shook his hand, mumbled my name and a congratulations. My brain turned to tofu. Absolutely nothing came to mind to say. I was aware of the ladies across the table chatting it up like old war vets and here I was with the Biggest-Headline-Maker in Wisconsin, our David against the Philistine Bob, the

next U.S. Senator. I was speechless. There could only have been a moment or two of silence, but the moment seemed endless. We turned our attention to Jeanne and Mary's conversation.

"Don't I know you from somewhere?" he asked Jeanne. "Do you work out at the Madison Athletic Club?"

[JG] The bottom dropped out of my stomach and I mumbled something, and then made the mistake of trying to be witty. I took off my glasses and said, "No, but I used to work out at the YWCA, and if I met you in the pool, you'd have to look more blurry than you do now for me to recognize you."

Confusion reigned. Neither Scott nor I could maintain a volley of more than two sentences of conversation with these two people without hitting a foul chord. And finally, amid smiles and laughter they returned to their table. We finished our coffee and tea, paid the bill, and strolled around the square talking about the incredible evening.

I apologized for not having introduced Scott. He anguished over the conversational topics he might have introduced.

"I should have recommended the Surgeon! I should have told him that it was your birthday!" he said.

How embarrassing. But wow, what a wild evening.

"Wait a minute. Wait just one minute!" said Scott, a note of irritation growing in his voice.

"What?" I asked.

"You embarrassed me on my birthday, remember?" he started.

"Oh, oh..." I could see where this was heading.

"It was supposed to be my turn to embarrass you!" he said. "Oh well. Happy Birthday. I'll try again next year."

## 2019

[JG] And now I've embarrassed myself. I have re-told this story many, many times over the years, simplifying it quite a bit, and *apparently* embellishing it and gradually changing the whole story into one in which Feingold directly approaches me at our dinner table and claimed to know me from the YWCA, where we both swam together. Wow.]