

Madison foursquare

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Comments Covers

[SC] **Hope**, clever collection of Covid 19 signs and scenes accumulated, I assume, since last March and also from your trip out west. Thanks also for the helpful key on the back cover. I think my favorite is the “Introverts Unite...” sign.

Marilyn Holt & Clifford Wind

[SC] Nice letter with photos. I have read that coyotes are rapidly adapting to human population growth. We occasionally see postings in our online neighborhood group about coyote sightings and I know that packs have been spotted in several of the city’s larger park areas. I figure any pet that gets out and is “lost” for more than a day or two has probably been hit by a car or poached by a coyote.

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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Cliff, the duck eggs sound like a lucrative plan to me. Duck eggs are rather exotic around here, and pricy. Are ducks more difficult to manage than chickens?

Marilyn, congratulations of the book publication plans and moving forward with your new website.

[JG] Do duck eggs taste different than chicken eggs?

Lisa Freitag

[SC] Congratulations on your excellent contribution to the letter to the Minneapolis City Council. Let’s hope it results in better policies and actions.

Regarding your comment to us about my sister, Bonnie’s, lack of a Covid test. You may be correct to some degree, but there was no question that the IA governor had a role in restricting testing in IA by claiming the state had a shortage of tests and should only be using them when truly necessary. Ultimately the hospital was in the best position to decide when to give a test on a case-by-case basis, but it appeared to me that they chose to narrowly define what symptoms justified a test in order to stay in line with the state’s policy.

[JG] I’d like to see your letter sent to every city in the US that is considering measures to redirect mental health calls away from the police department. Bravo, Lisa.

Elizabeth Matson

[SC] Having worked in institutions for many years and then having relatively low seniority at D.O.T. for many years, I know how hard it can be sometimes to get specific time off work that you desperately want.





Holiday lights!

Especially when it's a popular time of year for people to want to be off like the Christmas holidays. That said, I was sad to read that you would not be able to finally spend Christmas with both your mother and brother this year because of Covid. I hope the Skype visits worked out.

I enjoyed your recollections on Christmas Stockings. We had stockings hung on an actual fireplace mantel when I was a kid and it was magical waking up to the filled stockings on Christmas morning, but that was only part of the dazzling scene in our living room with many more presents scattered under the tree than had been there the night before. Of course I lived for Christmas morning as a kid. Your lovely piece had me reliving those sweet memories of my own childhood.

As you know over the years we have planned a number of individual projects in our old house. Enough projects that I can hardly imagine the amount of planning, and the number of details, you will need to deal with to build a whole house. Very exciting! A genuine Mongolian yurt is a cool idea.

Regarding your comment to **Georgie**, I always think of you as Canadian and I like the perspective you bring to discussions, particularly of U.S. politics. I did not realize you lost your legal claim to Canadian citizenship. As the U.S., in recent years, appears to be going into decline, a Canadian option would be a comforting thing to have as a fallback.

[JG] My family hung stockings for a few years when I was very young, until I was 7 or 8 years old I think. But we did it on St. Nicholas Day Eve, not Christmas Eve. I just Googled St. Nicholas Day and see that it is observed on December 6, which fits my memory. Our stockings were filled with candy and little toys and, like your family's tradition, a piece of fruit, usually an orange, in the toe of the stocking. At some point we just stopped doing it. I remember asking why but I don't remember what the answer was. I suspect that no one or few people in our neighborhood observed St. Nicholas and my parents decided to delete the holiday from our family's calendar when they forgot one

year. This would have been fairly easy in those days because of my father's Post Office job which kept him on the road two weeks and then home for two weeks. Christmas was a moveable feast when my brothers and I were little kids: Christmas was scheduled when Dad was home. I wish I'd thought to ask Mom and Dad about it as an adult and get their story about what happened with St. Nicholas Day.

My family switched back and forth between opening presents on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning. Dad and us kids liked to do it in the morning; Mom preferred doing it on Christmas Eve, followed by attendance at midnight mass. She wanted to sleep in and have plenty of time to do all the cooking and cleaning she was responsible for on the holiday, for which I can certainly sympathize. But at the time, the arguments about whose "turn" it was (for Christmas Eve or Morning presents) got rather heated. That's one of the reasons I don't have particularly fond memories of my family's Christmas traditions. The other is that getting the right present for Mom became an emotionally fraught task for all of us. If she was displeased in any way, things became very tense. *sigh*

Yes, I think "Tyme Machine" is rather a Wisconsinish term in much the same way as "bubbler," in that both terms elicit confused reactions from the uninitiated.

Greg Rihn

[SC] Your statement regarding your Thanksgiving, "So, the experience was all right though the mood was a bit more somber. Even if you are doing what you would have wanted to anyway, there is a bit of difference if that is your only choice—" So true for us as well in the case of Christmas. Jeanne and I nearly always spend Christmas Eve and Christmas on our own. Sometimes we will choose to go out for dinner one of those days, but just as often Jeanne will elect to make a fancier-than-usual dinner. This year on Christmas Eve she decided to make a standing rib roast for the first time with wild rice, cranberry and hazelnut pilaf and asparagus. It was a fantastic meal. We opened



our modest presents and later watched a broadcast of *All Is Calm*, which we have been trying to see as a live performance for years. But as you said, it all seemed a little more somber than usual since we really had no other practical choices for spending the holiday this year, in the shadow of the Covid plague.

We saw *Mulan* and *Tenet* over the Holidays the old fashioned way—We rented DVDs. 4 Star Video is still (barely) in business here in Madison. Since the plague, Jeanne and I have been paying more attention to options for streaming movies and it's not always easy, cheap or even possible to stream everything we want to see, so we've been branching out for options. Turns out, we still have a local DVD rental option in 4 Star and they have a very deep catalog of films. We both liked *Mulan*, but I felt its power was greatly diminished on a mere TV screen. If some local theater elects to run it again on a big screen, I would be tempted to see it again as it was meant to be seen. *Tenet* was a whole other thing. Our rental was for 10 days. We needed it because we watched the film the first time, then spent several days talking about it and checking out sources online to help us figure out how the plot and timelines worked then we watched it a second time along with the included 2nd DVD of special features. It all helped. I think we have it mostly figured out. I would not say it was my favorite Christopher Nolan film, but I enjoyed seeing it twice, especially the 2nd time when we had a much better idea of what was happening and why, and I'd happily see it again.

[JG] I did something similar with our turkey as you and Georgie did, but instead of cutting it up BEFORE cooking, I cut the bird up after it came out of the oven. Actually I spatchcocked it and applied a rub on Tuesday night and then baked it Wednesday. After it cooled down, I cut it into 6 pieces: two breasts, two leg/thighs and two wings. We froze all the pieces separately except for one of the leg/thighs, which I warmed up in a slow cooker on Thanksgiving with a little turkey broth. Came out tender and juicy. I cooked the defrosted pieces for meals in the weeks that

followed in the slow cooker. Turned out well. I've used this method for the last few big family pre-pandemic Thanksgiving meals that we've hosted. Keeping the oven available for side dishes on Thanksgiving day (while the turkey warms up in the slow cooker) is pretty convenient. I agree with you about the difficult-to-detect difference between free-range and factory-farmed turkey. However, I DO prefer the taste of never-frozen turkey. We usually reserve one for the Tuesday before Thanksgiving (to allow time to apply the rub and day-before cooking).

I met Richard first as Perri Corrick's friend, and eventually her husband, at which point she became Perri Corrick-West. I remember Perri telling exasperated stories about Richard's very picky eating habits, made memorable because Perri loved to cook and experiment with exotic recipes. One day he told her that he liked spaghetti, which thrilled Perri, who knew there were lots of ways to make spaghetti. But the first time she made it for him, she noticed that he was sort of picking at the food, not really eating any of it. "What's wrong with it?" she asked. Richard replied, "I said I liked spaghetti...but I don't like sauce." No wonder Richard was so thin!

I never attended any of the Tolkien Society meetings, though I did contribute an article to the last issue of *Orchrist*. Richard encouraged me to write up an idea that had occurred to me upon first reading *The Lord of the Rings*: I proposed a solution to the mystery of the Entwives. By the time I read *TLotR*, everyone else in the world had no doubt read it several times over, but Richard was very kind and respectful, and engaged this newbie in a fantastic conversation.

I liked the ending of *Mulan*. She has been presented with choices; that alone was thrilling. As to which future she eventually chose, I didn't care. I was just happy to see her escape to a future in which all her choices weren't made by others.

We are very glad that we heard about the Milwaukee Rep's zoomed production of *Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol*. It was so good to see APT alumni, Lee Ernst, again.



Kim & Kathi Nash

[SC] In the next month or so we will probably sign up for another short-term membership with Disney+ so we can see the next season of *The Mandalorian*, the movie *Soul* and maybe a few other things. Looking forward to it.

Andy Hooper

[SC] Once again, Andy, you have introduced me to a subculture I had no idea existed. I have heard of none of the horror surf bands you listed but it was all fun to read about just the same. I am, of course, familiar with Dick Dale. His music was part of the music mix my older brother (and, due to unavoidable proximity, me too) used to listen to back in the '60s and I occasionally encountered it in the beach blanket movies my sister liked. But it largely fell off the musical radar for me until...*Pulp Fiction* brought it blasting back in 1994 with *Miserlou* as the theme song. Wow. That movie, one of my very favorite films of all time, and that music are now forever linked in my mind. I regret now that I never took the opportunity to see Dale play at one of his several visits nearby at the beautiful, old Stoughton Opera House.

Three cheers for Penny Dreadful XIII! Thanks for the profile.

In answer to your amusing comment to us about finishing our house in time to move into assisted living, I rather doubt we'll make it. This two-story, nearly 100-year-old pile will never run out of projects. It can always be made better. We've barely started on the outside of the house. The driveway and garage need some serious attention along with deteriorating fences, a low stone retaining wall in the front that I have never liked and maybe some modest landscaping. We could do something with the basement, too. We'll never make it. But we've come to love the old place anyway. And the rest of you are doomed to have to read about it, which amuses me.

[JG] I'm positive I never published the Tyme machine story before. **Diane Martin** happened to mention having heard me tell that story, which reminded me that I actually began to write it for a future issue of *Whimsey* that I never finished. So I completed it for the apa (exclusive!!); luckily I have told that story so often that I remembered most of the detail, even after all the years that have passed since it happened. I drew the artwork just before we printed *Madison Foursquare*. I suppose I should offer the story to a fanzine editor.

We've approached house renovation, by financial necessity, one project at a time. When we moved into our house in 1989, I wrote up a list of all the things I wanted to fix/change/add. I figured it might take a couple years to complete. I was so naïve! I know people who renovate their house all at once, but I bet they don't have as much fun as I have had, carefully planning out smaller projects. The unexpected thing to me has been to discover that, over the years, the house I originally thought of as a "starter house," has become my dream house, my dream home. It's actually been very satisfying, made possible of course by finding our dream contractor.

Yes, PLEASE, write a fannish play featuring the characters in *Little Women*!

Carrie Root

[SC] Nice photos.

Speaking of sidewalks, Jeanne has been avoiding walking on anything remotely slippery but now that it is winter here in Wisconsin, slippery sidewalks are common. I wanted to come up with some sort of walking destination where slipping on ice or packed snow would not be an issue. I came up with walking around the Capitol Square. One thing about our state government buildings you can count on, they clear their sidewalks and they do it as soon as possible. The distance around the Capitol on the sidewalk (on the Capitol grounds side of the street) is a little over ½ mile, which is about all we are up for in cold weather. Being at the top of a hill, the Square can



also be breezy, so we need to bundle up. Yet, we have had a lot of very nice, winter days. The thing that strikes me as most weird during the plague times is how quiet the Square is these days. On weekdays, there are still lots of cars parked along the streets, but very few people walking around. In the old days, tourists, students, shoppers from State Street, office and government employees on business or on breaks were always bustling around. Not now. We can walk for long stretches on the sidewalk and meet very few other people. Weekends the place is positively deserted except for dog walkers and a few homeless folks, even though we know lots of people live in condos and apartments that surround the Square. Glancing down State Street as we pass, it is also very quiet compared to “normal.”

For a couple of days over the Holidays there was a bit more activity because some Trump protesters were marching closely around the Capitol building (not out on the sidewalk along the street that we were using.) There was a dedicated group of about 20 bundled up protesters each day, flags waving (Trump 2020, Women for Trump (WTF?) and a couple different versions of U.S. Flags). On the Saturday after New Years Day, the Trumpers shared the scene with a mob of Anti-Abortion protesters, looking a bit desultory since the building and the downtown were empty, there was no press coverage and it was cold. They dragged their signs along but did not bother to hold them up. Meanwhile in the street beside us there was a caravan of cars going around the Square sporting very professional, uniformly produced and mounted signs on their roofs protesting the Chinese Communist Party. It was the oddest thing. All the drivers appeared to be Asians, but too old to be students. The cars were nice, late model sedans and minivans including one Porche SUV. It was hard to imagine it was a coincidence they were there at the same time as the Trumpers, but I failed to see the connection. Much later I saw an article where Trump claimed Biden won the election with the help of the Chinese Communist Party. Maybe that was it.

[JG] I love the photos!

Re your musing to **Andy**, I read the article and all the sidebars on a given page before proceeding to the next page of his zines.

Joe Leslie Adams

[SC] I talk to my sister on the phone every week since the plague lockdown because she is isolating at home with just her cat. Recently we were talking about getting vaccinated. In Iowa they have divided people up into Tiers of eligibility. She was vexed that she was stuck one Tier lower in eligibility because the cutoff is age 75 and she is only 74. I told her to look on the bright side. When was the last time she could remember anyone telling her she couldn't do something because she was too young? She did not see the humor in this observation.

[JG] I'm glad to hear that you are feeling well enough (or were feeling well enough in mid December) to go out walking again. I push myself to go walking once a day, but I am still having back issues, so my walks are piddly little ones compared to yours.

What do you draw on your postcards to the kiddies? I imagine they must love getting mail addressed to them personally! I remember feeling sooo excited about mail addressed to myself when I was a kid, even to the point of sending for information in order to receive snailmail spam in return. But perhaps the online generation doesn't feel the same thrill about getting old-style mail as my generation did.

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] I was anticipating a significant national stress-level reduction after Biden won in November, yet here I am (writing this on January 7) one day after Georgia generously gave the Senate to the Democrats and Trump has us all freaking out yet again over an attempted take-over of the U.S. Capitol. I think if the new Democratic Congress votes to give us another

stimulus payment, they should include a free Xanax for each of us.

[JG] I hope you are right that we will cautiously shift to a more socializing life, while still keeping our masks available. I fear though, that a lot of people will immediately decide they are 100% safe and will not wait to find out how effective the new vaccines turn out to be in preventing the spread of Covid.

It's been interesting to see some of the side effects of anti-Covid behavior—especially the incredibly dramatic decrease in other contagious respiratory diseases. 2020-21 has recorded the lowest number of flu cases in forever, though they say that once people begin socializing without masks again, there could be a really severe spike in all those artificially suppressed case numbers.

Jeannie Bergmann

[SC] Regarding your comment to me, I don't remember my first drink either. In my comment to **J.J.**, I was talking about my first *legal* drink, where I fearlessly bellied up to the local bar with my drivers license in hand ready to prove I was legal. I remember that moment. When I ran the A.A. program in one of the correctional institutions I worked in, it was generally accepted that alcoholics always remembered their very first drink. I never believed that was true.

[JG] You may not have actually *wanted* to understand the origins of the Atwood Avenue ice cream wars, but here you go anyway! I originally favored Chocolate Shoppe because it had been forced to move out of its corner wedge-shaped building (because their rent was jacked up sky high) by a rival ice cream seller—The Atwood Scoop, which nonetheless planned to buy and sell Chocolate Shoppe ice cream. It tickled me when the Chocolate Shoppe folks decided to move two doors down the block, opened a new, larger and better Chocolate Shoppe, and then decided *not* to sell their ice cream to Scoop. So now there are two ice cream places on that block, *quel dommage*. It turns out that I am a fickle stander-upper for ice cream grievances: When The Atwood Scoop began selling Coconut Explosion ice cream, I conveniently forgot my briefly proclaimed loyalty to Chocolate Shoppe, because, well, coconut with dark chocolate and almonds!

What a lovely, delicious ode to tea! Thanks.

Ruth & Jim Nichols

[JG] Spending more time procrastinating a certain task than it takes to simply DO it. Ah yes, I've been there. Sometimes I can jumpstart myself by creating a list or a sub-list of things to do in a day, or in the next hour. Sometimes it just takes enough mental rehearsals, imagining how the task can be best done, until one day I finally just do it. But the best method, for me, has always been to simply start it, all the while assuring myself that I do not have to actually finish the task right away. All I need to do is start it, even if that only means to write an outline of a plan, write one sentence, or clean out one file. Then one of my other neuroses kicks in and I find myself unwilling to do anything else until it is DONE.

Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] Regarding activities, I aim for doing a workout on my (smallish) commercial grade elliptical machine about 3 times a week as a baseline. The winter so far has been mild enough that Jeanne and I have gotten outside for walks most days, but I've also often gone out on my own for at least two or three miles. However recent weather forecasts are saying the Polar Vortex up north that has protected us from most arctic cold is getting unstable, which will mean more really cold air pouring into the lower 48 states. So, pretty soon, I will likely not be doing frequent longish walks outside anymore either. The walls are closing in.

[JG] Thank you for having kept me on the invite list to your annual holiday cookie baking marathons. It's always entertaining to examine Jim's amazing spreadsheet reports on the extravaganza. It's been many years since I stopped participating, mostly for dietary reasons, but also because with so many participants and so very many cookies, it just felt like... too much. I think I've finally figured out the best way to bake holiday cookies in a way that works for Scott and me. We picked out three small-batch cookie recipes (and later added a fourth when one of the original three didn't turn out well). Beginning in early December, I baked the first batch of cookies and we ate them over the course of a week. Then I made the second batch of cookies and we ate them over the course of the next week. Etcetera. We're finishing up the last of the fourth batch now. This year the clear winner was Walnut and Five-Spice Thumbprint Cookies; we loved them and I will definitely make them again. I may not wait till the holidays. The Lemon and Cream Cheese Cookies

were also very good—they reminded us of **Hope's** Lemony Wonders. The cookie that failed was Oatmeal Coco-Nutters. I blame the recipe for a much too vague description of the step in which butter, sugar, chocolate powder and milk are cooked together. It turns out that too much heat resulted in the contents of the saucepan solidifying suddenly into a brick of hard fudge, and that is not what was supposed to happen. Anyway, I made a favorite standby in its stead, Pecan Fingers, which I think must be very similar to **Ruth's** Pecan Balls/Moonbeams.

I expect that Scott will probably request a pecan pie the next time I make a dessert, so that's probably the end to cookie-making for now.

Re the godlike manipulation in *Station Eleven*, this is how I thought of it: The story was told from the point of view of all the folks who ended up in the

airport/museum, tracing their paths backwards to the beginning of the plague. I bet that among any large group of people who find themselves together in one spot, that, if you interviewed them, you'd find plenty of coincidental connections. So that didn't bother me much. Now, remembering the book, I like thinking about what things I might want to preserve in a pandemic museum display. If I were teaching this book, I'd be tempted to ask students to plan their own displays. Also, I thought about **Hope's** wonderful apa cover this month and how it would have had a place of honor in the museum.

We are also enjoying the current, very dramatic season of *The Expanse*, feeling a bit like the folks who'd read *Game of Thrones* before the HBO version got to the red wedding scene. But my favorite show of the year so far is Netflix's *Bridgerton*. So much fun!

WHAT'S NEW

Apa Cover

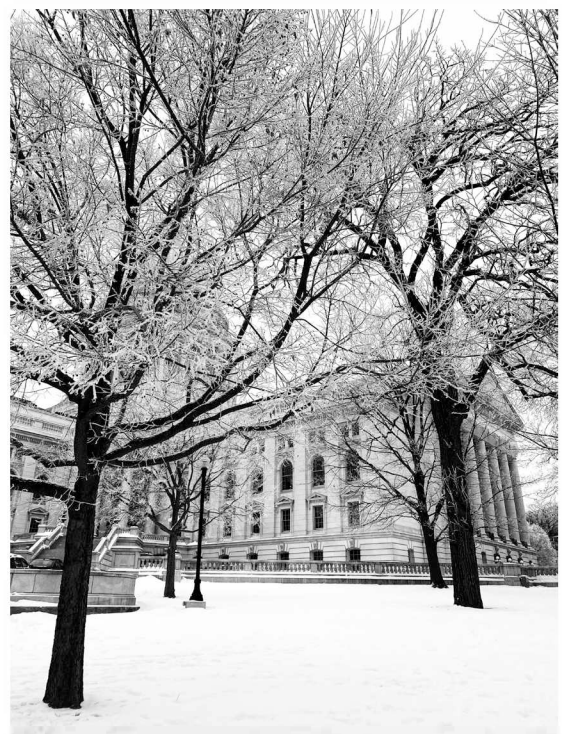
[JG] I expect that most of us are thinking and talking and writing here about the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol. I offer my back-cover Calvin and Hobbes remix as part of my contribution to the conversation.

I hope that Trump gets impeached, that he is stripped of the right to run for office ever again and that he loses all presidential "perks." In addition I hope he spends the rest of his life, ideally in prison, dealing with indictments, trials, and lawsuits. I hope he loses everything and everyone.

When I signed up to do the January *Turboapa* cover, I thought that by apa deadline I would have a fairly clear idea of what the Biden/Harris Inauguration was going to look like, which would be cool, since the January deadline falls just one day after the ceremony. I expected that I would be able to do some sort of visual riff on the ensmallled, pandemic-conscious Inauguration. I'd heard that Biden was planning to arrive by Amtrak, that Lady Gaga and Bruce Springsteen were scheduled to sing, that Tom Hanks would be M.C., and that every living ex-president except Carter and Trump would attend. The possibilities for an apazine cover image began to coalesce in my mind. But then Trump incited his gang of thugs to invade the Capitol and attempt to stop the electoral count and murder his enemies. So at this point (less than one week before the Inauguration), I realize that—really—none of us has any idea what is actually going to happen on January 20 or in the days leading up to it. In spite of the military build-up in D.C. (larger than our current forces in Afghanistan and Iraq

combined!), I am hoping for something anti-climactic, but would not place a bet on it.

So, instead of caricature or cartoon map (which was what I was contemplating, sort of), I applied filters to a photograph I had snapped of Madison's Capitol building and grounds on one of those gorgeous days a couple weeks ago, when morning fog coated tree and bush branches with lacy ice frills (Hoar frost). Applying a filter, I tried to produce something atmospheric, something foggy (as if to say, who knows what's going to happen next?).... Hope it worked. The photo below is the original version, minus the filter work.



Terror at the Post Office

[JG] Scott and I sent out holiday postcards this year. (You should have received one.) But it turned out we didn't have enough postcard stamps, so—a week before Christmas—we decided to stop at Madison's main Milwaukee Street Post Office to pick up some more 35¢ stamps. We found that chaos had engulfed the parking lot—too many cars, too few parking spots, drivers fighting with other drivers for vacated spots, and no one keeping to the right. That should have been clue enough that this was no time to walk into the Post Office, but I wasn't thinking clearly. "If it's too busy, I'll just buy them from the machine in the lobby," I told Scott, who had miraculously slid our car into a suddenly available spot and was going to wait for me in the car. I walked through the double automatic doors, stepped into the outer lobby, and stopped. I didn't stop to reconnoiter and consider which way to go. I stopped because I couldn't move an inch, forward or to either side. The lobby was absolutely packed with people clutching packages to their chests, all of them looking worried and anxious. There were two lines snaking back and forth, filling every bit of lobby space—one for entry into the inner lobby and one for the machine.

I panicked. Really. I'd fallen into a horribly familiar Covid nightmare. I THINK most, if not everyone, in the lobby was masked up (I certainly was), but everyone was standing mere inches away from one another, breathing into each others' faces. It was a Post Office Superspreader. My only thought was to get out of there NOW! So I backed through the still-open automatic door the wrong way, and crossed quickly through to the other side of the double automatic door, so I could go properly through the exit without getting slammed. I was still shaking by the time I got back to our car.

"None of those people's packages is going to get there on time at this point anyway. What are they all thinking?!" I said.

Scott and I decided to splurge and used first class postage stamps on the rest of our postcards.

See you all next month.

—Scott and Jeanne,
January 2021



Hoar frost melts from the bottom up. Who knew?

From the Vault

"Dear Shelly," by Jeanne Gomoll, 1959

Yet another never-before published story by me—this one the very first fannish story I ever wrote. Another Turbozine exclusive! Turns out that I was attracted to comic stories about minor disasters from the very beginning.

Dear Shelly,

How are you. I am fine. I was very happy with my presents. I will tell you what I got for Christmas. OH I forgot I told you over the phone. How is Kathy? Are you getting along with Kathy yet? billy is watching me. I did not make billy's name with a Cap. letter because he does not deserve it. I really am teasing. I had Billy worried for a moment. I am at Billy's house. My mother thought she had her key in her pocket and we have the kind of lock that you push the button and it is locked. Well mother thought she had her keys in her pocket so she locked the door. What she found out that she left the keys in the house so she did not have keys for the car. So she went to the neighbor's and asked if she could use their car so she could get the kids for going home. So when she picked me up and the kids so we had to go to the neighbor's house and stay till daddy came home with the keys of his own. So here I am TYPING. I wish THE TESTS were over. DON'T YOU? Well better say good-bye. My daddy just came home and God bless you all and good-bye.

Your friend, Jeannie Gomoll