

Madison Foursquare

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This issue of *Madison Foursquare* is brought to you by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll (layout/design and occasional contributor), who live at 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704. Scott@unionstreetdesign.com
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After our return from Eugene, OR earlier in December, the rest of month through the Holidays moved along quickly. At work, I'm the team leader for a group of five processors plus myself. Just before leaving for Eugene, one of my processors retired, with very little fanfare by her request. All she would let us do is a small treat day for a limited number of people she worked with. Initially, she did not even want that. She had been with the state for 40+ years. This sort of exit is getting more common these days. Once upon a time, a retiree with that much time would get a potluck involving the whole section, maybe even both sections on our floor. Or an Open House with cake and punch including the retiree's family and other retirees invited back to celebrate, a decorated room and upper managers presenting plaques of appreciation. These days lots of folks with decades of state seniority just leave, often with very little fanfare and sometimes they slip out without telling any of their co-workers and with management sworn to secrecy. Why? Certainly some people don't like being the center of a lot of attention and a big party never appealed to them but more and more folks don't feel like celebrating at all. Their departures are a statement of anger and frustration rather than happiness or accomplishment. There is a lot to be angry about, the state of state government under Scott Walker is a lot of it, but also a dramatically changing work environment has a lot of folks upset. What was once a fairly pleasant workplace is evolving into more of a sweatshop atmosphere. And with no union to stand up to management, folks feel powerless. So, as soon as the numbers add up, they bolt, and take their decades of knowledge and experience (which is almost impossible to transfer to new people) with them.

Meanwhile another of my processors announced her retirement the first week of January. She was not feeling particularly angry and so she wanted a more traditional farewell Open House befitting her 35 years of service. I could not agree more that she deserved it if she wanted it, so as her team leader, I plunged into getting a retirement committee together (of folks who had done this before because I was inexperienced at organizing something like this at work). We scrambled to reserve a conference room, organize decorations, order a cake, send out cards to sign (along with a sign-up for treats, and gift donation), organize punch, and try to track down retired folks she wanted to invite to attend. Oh, and we also had a pizza lunch the same day just for our section. Our supervisor ordered plaques for presentation and arranged for the Bureau Director and the Division Administrator to show up. It was a lot of work and we discovered we can no longer count on a lot of bodies for help. The office has a lot fewer people than it used to have. It all turned out well. Everyone had a good time. It was nice to be able to do something like this, especially for someone who had been so loyal for so long. Now my group is just three processors and myself. No replacements are in sight (also a common phenomenon in State service these days). And what does the future hold? Well when my group was still five processors plus me, my 28 years of seniority still put me at the bottom of the seniority list in my group. Although I took notes on how to do one of these blowout retirement parties, I doubt I will need them again. None of my folks that are left have any desire to have such a bash when they go. Frankly, I don't either. I wonder by then if we would have the people to do it even if they wanted it.

Jeanne and I hosted one small party this year. For the last few years, we have hosted a modest Christmas party and gift exchange for our book discussion group (a few years ago we named ourselves “Science Fiction Without Borders” because we started out many years ago as the Borders SF book discussion group. Now we meet monthly at local used book store, Frugal Muse, at least until they, too, close their doors.) We meet on a Tuesday night, so we hold the party in lieu of a monthly meeting. The party was on a Tuesday night at our traditional time of 6:30. Folks don’t usually stay very late as it is a work night. We have treats, talk, play a game and do a white elephant gift exchange. This year someone introduced us to a new card game, *Exploding Kittens* which we played as a large group. I thought it was a lot of fun, but that may have partly been due to the fact that I won.

As is my normal routine, I worked every day we were open over the Holidays. That meant I worked three days each on Christmas and New Years weeks. Jeanne and I were not hosting any parties or family gatherings over the Holidays this year. We did not have any travel plans beyond driving out to Milwaukee on a Saturday to do dinner and a movie with Jeanne’s younger brother Dan and his family. So, what did we do with ourselves over two 4-day weekends? We went to a lot of good movies. In two weeks we saw more films than we normally see in a very busy month. We saw *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, *Spotlight*, *The Danish Girl*, *Joy*, and the 70mm roadshow version of *The Hateful Eight* on New Years day. On New Years Eve, we took in a show (Brooks Wheelan) at the local Comedy Club followed by celebrating midnight at Hope and Ruth’s lovely New Years Eve party. Amazingly, the time went fast.

Comments

One of the great regrets from my busy Fall last year, was that I mostly missed out on reading and responding to three whole issues of the APA, #350, 351 and 352, which had some terrific zines. I have since caught up reading them all. I

have no hope of doing justice to all your work in those three months, but I thought I would give a shout out to some things that really stood out to me.

For #350, awesome covers, **Patrick**, front and back. Another thoughtful zine from **Lisa**. I love your essays. On your comments on WisCon, I think your concerns about participating more fully in programming are well founded, at least for now. Things are still changing and evolving which leaves me optimistic over the longer term. **Jim and Diane**, thanks for the trip details and photos. **Ruth**, so sorry about the job loss and best of luck in your search. No easy challenge in Wisconsin’s struggling economy. **Greg**, hard for me to pick a favorite APT show this year. Both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Merry Wives of Windsor* were outstanding. But the best one might still be Jim De Vita’s take on *The Illiad*. Wow. **Andy**, I loved your piece on Art Widner. I knew him only slightly, but now I have a much deeper appreciation for a legendary fannish character (how many times did I catch myself thinking, “Really? Art Widner did that?”). Welcome **Walter Freitag**, impressive first zine. Great photos and report on your trip to Cuba, **Susan Hastings**. And thanks **Jim Frenkel** on the entertaining piece on Jessi’s wedding, also with photos.

For #351, the rainbow cover turned out beautifully, **Hope and Karl**. Welcome back, **Jason**. I was pleased to see how much you enjoyed WisCon this year in contrast to how gloomy some of the rest of us have been about it. Speaking for myself, I have been involved with the convention long enough to be able to see the wheels spinning behind the curtains, and that distracts me from noticing that WisCon is still WisCon and it still can be an awesome experience for most attendees. **Lisa**, brilliant and touching piece on the passing of your friend, Mary Ann. **Andy Hooper**, I once again absorbed your next installment on the Wisconsin National Guard as they became enmeshed in WWI. As usual, lots of great stuff here I did not know plus a strangely hypnotic listing of the events of 1918. I intended to scan them, but I ended

up reading the whole year's list in fascination. Thanks for publishing it. **Cathy Gilligan**, I have gotten so spoiled driving with Jeanne and her iPhone/Siri in the car (and before that, Jeanne armed with a good map) that I almost dread driving anywhere new by myself. In Colorado Springs for my cousin's wedding I was a bit of a hero for driving my family all over town in a van, but that only worked out so well because Jeanne and her iPhone were there directing my every right and left turn. YCT our new kitchen, our renovation only involved the kitchen space on the 1st floor. No other floors were involved and no staircases were moved. The smart waiter does not extend beyond the ceiling, nor does it sink below the floor. It's just 3-4 shelves that move up and down within a cabinet in the corner of the room. **Marilyn Holt**, what interesting characters you wind up meeting out on the farm. That's not a feature of farming that I remember from my youth.

For #352, **Greg** what a great hodgepodge of art and entertainments! You guys get to a lot of cool stuff, plus book reviews! **Kathi Nash**, I'm very impressed with your workout plan with the Farrell program and kickboxing. At my age, I'm feeling less and less bullet-proof and feel that even running poses too great a risk of personal injury. I'm turning more and more to vigorous, but less punishing pursuits. I use an elliptical machine almost daily. I'm looking forward to more walking and biking in better weather and figuring out some kind of low-impact weight-training option. I think I'm done with aggressive martial arts, boxing and wrestling. **Walter**, excellent essays on the Fermi Paradox and Refugees and Space Invaders. Welcome back **Steve Johnson**, I thought your "intro" zine was comprehensive and honest. I tried to write an intro zine myself for my first issue back, it was disappointing so I never ran it and I have yet to revise it. Maybe I need to put myself out there a bit more, like you. Great zine, Steve.

Catie Pfeifer, interesting piece on how something that started out as a statement of personal empowerment can curdle into something selfish and unhealthy. **Jae Leslie Adams**, Jeanne and I have been to Duluth on a few occasions, during (admittedly) beautiful times of year, and I really like it. It's a lovely city and the gateway to the North Shore of Lake Superior. **Clay Colwell**, Jeanne's sister Julie (who lives in Austin) took us to an Alamo Drafthouse for the first time. It's a terrific place to see movies for many reasons but the thing I like the most about it is they managed to convince me that they are in the business because they really love movies. We don't have Alamo Drafthouses here in Madison, so I'm sending you some envy vibes. **Andy**, congratulations on a suitably absorbing final Wisconsin National Guard installment. What a great project. I particularly liked your family connections in the last two installments. I miss long car trips, **Hope and Karl**, thanks for sharing part one of your trip. We are tentatively planning to drive to K.C. for WorldCon this year, but that is not my idea of a truly long drive, like yours. I hope we can do some longer driving trips after I retire.

Out of time and I am still reading the December issue. Comments next month. –Scott



CSA season is over...



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