

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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Not much news to share this month. 2016 so far has been mostly work, frequently ugly politics and scattered relief via TV, movies and books.

Comments on issue 354

Greg Rihn

It's always fun to read about your annual Halloween antics. The *Men in Black* theme is a great idea.

We also liked *The Martian* movie overall, but in the end I preferred the book. I can't quibble with your criticisms of the book, but the problem I had with the movie was more general. The book did a very good job of putting forth the idea that Watney was truly on his own when it came to survival. His only hope was to use his knowledge and cleverness to solve problems as he encountered them. He always approached his situation as a matter of solving a series of problems and going forward with a carefully reasoned out plan. The movie dispenses with this strategy at the very end in favor of a much more clichéd Hollywood resolution. In the book, Watney follows his plan, sits in his seat in the capsule and is properly and professionally rescued by his crewmate. In the movie, he is forced to abandon the plan in order to jump out into space in a wild, desperate and chaotic attempt to save himself. The end seems to contradict the careful and deliberate lesson of the rest of the movie, that he could survive through reason and discipline. I preferred the book's ending.

Also enjoyed your con-report on TeslaCon, a convention that I am not tempted to attend, but find fascinating to read about. What an amazing total-immersion con.

We also saw *Suffragette* and I found it well acted, with historical elements that were new to me, but it failed to completely engage me. I almost felt like I would have been just as happy with a good documentary on the same subject.

Also, thanks for your comments on the movie *Macbeth*, which we have not seen and we will likely

skip. The local Sundance Theater is a subscriber to a National Theater of London series of plays performed there, filmed and the films are distributed in the U.S. A year or so ago we saw a Kenneth Branagh directed version of *Macbeth* in this series. I'm still not altogether sure what I think about it. The play was staged in an actual ruined church as part of the Manchester Play Festival, and they filmed it there. The old church had seating on either side of a long, wide aisle leading to the pulpit on one end. The audience was seated on one side of the aisle and the camera crew set up on the other side and all the action happened in the aisle. The floor of the aisle was covered in a deep layer of black dirt and the opening scene has *MacBeth* and his mates fighting a battle in the dirt with pipes overhead pouring "rain" down on them turning the aisle into a sea of mud which the actors had to perform in for the rest of the play. It was a filthy, sweaty, bloody, and utterly fascinating production. It was over-the-top to be sure, and I was occasionally distracted from the play by the mess the actors were wallowing in, but the experience has stayed with me.

Jim Hudson and Diane Martin

Jamie, I liked the smiling photo you ran of yourself in California. Delightful.

Steve Johnson

Very snazzy zine this month, Steve. I can't advise you re: Hillary vs. Sanders. Maybe you should look back to a somewhat similar choice in 2008, and see how well the choice you made then worked out.

Kim and Kathi Nash

Happy Birthday to you both, sorry to miss the party. Kathi is just 5 months older (and wiser) than I am. I had a rather frustrating time getting home on the bus that night in the snowstorm. When I realized the alternative bus I was taking was going to pass within a block or so of the Blue Moon Bar and your

party, I was tempted to say “screw it” and jump off to join you. Not sure when I would have gotten home if I’d done that. I count myself lucky I made it home as it was.

Cathy Gilligan

Re: your comment to us. As I look up at my growing shelf of unread books, I often envy your speed-reading ability. I have always been a slow, ponderous reader. Reading aloud is something Jeanne and I actually started doing (and still do) in the car on longer road trips. It is a way for both of us to get through a book at the same time (particularly helpful for book-discussion books or when we are rushing to finish a book before going to a convention or seeing a movie version) without having to buy two copies. It’s also helpful for me to make the time to work on it if Jeanne and I agree to sit down and work on it together. Left to myself, I often will assign reading time to a low priority on my list of things to do on any given day. A problem I’m struggling with a little bit now with the APA.

Andy Hooper

What an absorbing, but sad, story of John Hiram Lathrop and his family you shared with us along with the very interesting U.S./Mexico history that I knew nothing about. I have never heard of these damned “filibusters.” Have we in the U.S. always had crazy ideas about Mexico and what we should do to Mexicans?

Walter Freitag

I think the terrorist attack in Paris is a form of warfare. I think ISIS thinks so along with many governments. It is simply war conducted by other means. It is too narrow to categorize war based on casualty counts. What matters here is psychological impact. ISIS is trying to introduce fear to populations not accustomed to random terrorist acts, and undermine the government’s credibility when it comes to protecting its own people. You can see the results (and ISIS’ success at spreading fear) just by listening to the rhetoric of the candidates in our own Presidential primary.

I have not yet read Stan’s *Aurora*, but your comments were very interesting.

Comments on #355

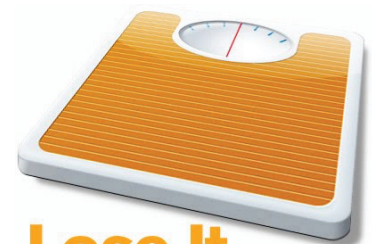
Walter Freitag

I enjoyed your insightful analysis of theme park ride as a Hero’s Passive Journey. Very nicely written.

I applaud your willingness to plunge into a discussion of losing weight. This is the sort of topic, like politics and religion, that people are either motivated to talk about or avoid at all costs. The nice thing about a conversation in the APA, as opposed to a conversation at a dinner party, is that if you don’t want to participate, you can just skip by it.

About 2 ½ years ago, I also embarked on a weight loss plan. Notice I did not use the term “diet” because from past experience I knew it was not going to be a temporary thing this time, which “diet” always sounds like to me. To lose weight and keep it off, in my opinion, requires a change in lifestyle. You have to obsess about it, as you said. You have to become a somewhat different person. That is not a trivial thing and it is not temporary. I started at about 260 pounds (give or take) and I reached my goal about a year later. Today I am still on the plan and my weight fluctuates weekly between about 180 and 184 pounds. I typically reach my minimum during the work week, I often gain back a few pounds over the weekend. When we go on vacation, I will sometimes gain a couple pounds, but I can take it off again within a week of getting home. I check my weight every morning. When I started this plan, I was on two blood pressure medications. I don’t take any today. I have no idea whether I have truly succeeded, time will tell, but it feels like I’m in control.

The general basics of what I do are not complicated, as you also said, eating less and exercising. I count calories, track them on an iPhone app, and exercise every day. I currently do about a half hour a day, six days a week, on an elliptical machine and walk as much as I have time for. I hope to do more biking in the Spring. Two days a week I “fast”—e.g., I limit myself to 500 calories those days. I record everything I eat into an iPhone app and try to keep below a pre-calculated daily calorie limit. It’s easier to cut back when I’m at work and I have more distractions. I like to relax



Lose It
iPhone App

on the weekends and I indulge myself a bit more. I don't avoid any particular foods, but we try to eat a lot of vegetables and fruit and limit sweets, carbs and meat. It's hard sometimes, but it's not magic. Am I still obsessing about my weight after this much time? You bet I am. Back to you, Walter.

Jason Burnett

Sounds to me like your bout of appendicitis was a bit of a close thing. I'm relieved that you got to the hospital in time. I would be anxious to put that behind me, too, and look ahead to 2016.

Lisa Freitag

Excellent essay on worrying, Lisa. I think worrying is underrated and too often dismissed as simply annoying. Although I'm not a parent and I have never had to worry about a child, I can identify with that level of emotion as a child who was worried about by a world-class-worrier mother. My mom worried about all of her kids and it was no secret. I think children find it annoying because they want to feel confident and independent and a parent's focused concern undermines that confidence. But from the parent's perspective, what else can you do? This very morning in the New York Times before we went out to breakfast, I was reading about a shooter in Kalamazoo, MI who just drove around town and randomly killed six people and seriously wounded a seventh with a semi-automatic pistol. Two of the victims were father and son. What are the surviving family members going to make of this? What kind of sense can this kind of random tragedy make? No wonder people worry about those they love. I sometimes worry about Jeanne working alone at home when I'm clear across town without a car. What choice do you have when you love someone but to worry about them?



Andy Hooper

I meant to tell you after we submitted our first zine to *Turbo* that color printing our zine is not a great inconvenience or expense. Jeanne has a Ricoh color printer. It's a large one for a home office, it stands on the floor. She got it as a deal from the guys who sell and service our Apple equipment. It uses individual color (red, blue, yellow, black) toner cartridges that do not run out very fast and are relatively inexpensive to replace considering their output. It's designed for a higher volume of color printing than most desktop models. Our aim is to keep our zine under 6 pages or so, and print it at home.

Old Farwell looks a bit stuffy and imposing in his photograph, but turns out he was an interesting guy and a fine governor. I will have to seek out his portrait on the wall of the Concourse's Governor's Club lounge, if I ever make it back up there. What a wild story about the rise and fall of his fortunes, his time in office, his peculiar mansion (I bet there is a plaque to mark the spot where it stood over on Spaight St.) his time in Washington, his proximity to the Lincoln assassination and his quiet later life. Thanks for sharing his story with us, Andy.

Steve Johnson

I have to repeat what I wrote last month about your first zine, Steve, only more so. Way to put yourself out there. You have always been someone who was willing to be open, honest and self-analytical and your “Confessions of a science fiction artist” was all that. I find it fascinating, and a little bit scary. At least when I think about how far down that path I’m willing to go myself. I’m looking forward to reading more.

YCT me, I have little doubt that I will enjoy retirement once I get there. The trick is getting there. Part of our retirement plan is based on investments that are not doing so well just now. The market is down, oil prices are down (I’m one of the few people not cheering that development), China is struggling and it’s a Presidential election year (not usually a good time for stocks). So I may be working longer than I planned until our investments recover.

Greg Rihn

I always enjoy your comments on the interesting things you guys are doing. Some are just interesting on their own, like the plot summary of the *The Pearl Fishers*, and others are ideas that we may eventually act on ourselves like a visit to the “Streets of Old Milwaukee” (Jeanne says we visited a long time ago, but I don’t remember) or a trip to the newly renovated Milwaukee Art Museum. A trip to the art museum as the weather improves is a real likelihood.

Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

I laughed at the list of color names “most disproportionately popular among men.” Great pictures in your annual newsletter. Congratulations on building a Little Free Library. There are a couple of them in our neighborhood including one just across the street and down a couple houses. Jeanne and I have contributed a few science fiction titles from time to time. However, a while back we had a copy of Richard K. Morgan’s *The Steel Remains*. I like Morgan’s science fiction novels, so we picked up a hardcover copy of the first in his fantasy saga. Jeanne read it first and warned me there was a lot of hard core gay sex in it, which I had not anticipated. We decided to pass on the series. We decided to give our copy away, why not to one of the free libraries? Somehow, with all the kids on our neighborhood, and all the kids’ books that we often find in the library across the street, we decided

not to leave it there. We dropped it off at the one outside Willy Street Coop instead, figuring it would find a more appreciative audience there. My theory is that free libraries will likely reflect the tastes of the neighborhoods they are in.

Ruth and Jim Nichols

Congratulations, Ruth, on taking the job. I hope after a month that it’s still working out. What an ordeal you went through before that. All I could think about is how tough it is to look for work at our age. All too easy for me to put myself in your place and wonder if I would have fared any better as a 59-year-old man with a 35+ year old college degree and limited marketable skills. Even with all my State service, in the Scott Walker era, it’s not that remote of a possibility I could find myself out there. I have to admire your optimism, looking into career possibilities with the personal chef idea. It’s a very interesting possibility.

Julie Zachman

The first thing that must be said is that your zine is beautiful. And by that I mean the photos, the layout and your writing.

There is much to be appalled at here, the behavior of the bad hunters, the state of regulation of Captive Wild Animal Laws and the long decline of the state DNR. The DNR was beginning its decline well before Jeanne left the agency in 2003, but has worsened under Scott Walker. Jeff Traska seems to be fighting a lonely battle.

Thank you for the informative and passionate report.



Scott & Jeanne at Hope and Ruth’s New Year’s party.