



**My Back  
Pages #19**  
**Rich Lynch**



# My Back Pages #19

articles and essays by Rich Lynch

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The soon-to-be undearly departed 2017, by any reasonable assessment, has been one terrible, horrible, no good, very bad year. It's been surreal, to say the least, to work many layers down from a Commander in Chief who often seems to have a weak grasp on reality and is surrounded sycophants who are more interested in buffing their boss's overly large ego than in being truthful with all the ordinary Joes who are scrounging out a living every day. Alternate facts indeed, feh.

But there were also high moments. The continuing opportunity to work, effectively, with talented professionals around the world is something that imparts a strong sense of personal worth. It, by itself, has so far been enough to convince me every autumn to postpone retirement for another year. And, outside of work, I have been able to spend quality time with friends and family. And also visit places where I can find interesting and enjoyable things to do.

One of these is New York City. My wife Nicki and I go there for a mini-vacation every January, and there are always new and different things to experience. And there's also a lot of history in which to immerse ourselves. Some of it, as you will read, turned out to be only an 'A' Train ride away.

*Rich Lynch  
Gaithersburg, Maryland  
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# As Busy as a Bee, as Cheerful as a Cricket, as Steady as a Clock

## Take the 'A' Train

I had been afraid that the conditions would be too cold and blustery to be outdoors for very long, but the winter storm that was charging eastward across North America held off long enough that our last day in New York City turned out to be a relatively pleasant one. By January norms, at least.

Those of you who have read some of my previous essays know that Nicki and I take an early January vacation trip to New York every year. We always do them the very first week of the New Year, but not because we have any affinity for wintry weather. No, it's because that's the cost-effective time of the year to be in New York. Consider: the New York Marriott in Times Square had a room rate north of \$600 for New Year's Eve. For the four nights we stayed there just after the turn of the year, after the hundreds of thousands of people who filled Times Square had gone home, I was able to get a rate of \$168. It's all about the supply and demand.

True, there are some compromises you have to make when you come to New York in the dead of winter. No chance to take in a Yankees or Mets game, for instance. And a short cruise to the Statue of Liberty, out in the middle of breezy New York Harbor, is a total non-starter. But there are plenty of other sights to see and places to visit, and we've never run out of things to do.

For this particular day we chose to follow Duke Ellington's advice and "Take the 'A' Train". It's the express subway line that runs up the west side of Central Park toward Harlem. Two stops got us to 145<sup>th</sup> Street, and from there it was just a short walk to the place we'd come to see – the home of Alexander Hamilton.



Alexander Hamilton's house, "The Grange"

It's now part of the National Park Service and bears the title "Hamilton Grange National Memorial". It was completed in 1802, just two years before Hamilton was killed in that infamous duel with Aaron Burr across the Hudson River in Weehawken, New Jersey. The building has had a difficult existence, falling into disrepair by the late 1800s and being condemned for demolition to allow expansion of the New York City street grid. It was rescued by a local church and moved to a nearby location but in the process losing its original porches and other architectural features. These were restored in 2008, after a second relocation to its present site in St. Nicholas Park.

By early 19<sup>th</sup> century standards Hamilton Grange was a spacious mansion, but it's really not all that large. The ground floor, where the entrance to the building is, has been transformed into a museum about Hamilton's life and times, including a small viewing room where a short biographical film about him is shown. Up on the first floor, the rooms which had been Hamilton's library, dining room, and parlor have been kept as close to their original appearance as possible, though a lot of the furnishings and furniture are modern-day reproductions.



Alexander Hamilton's parlor room

It didn't take very long to see it all. The two Park Service staff there were informative docents who imparted a sense of history about the house and its famous resident. And also described all the ongoing maintenance and restoration issues with the house itself. Some of these were obvious to see – the porches were being propped up by temporary construction timbers to allow work to proceed on the building's foundation. Window openings on the south side of the structure were covered over, for whatever reason, by painted wood panels. And other windows and doors fit in their frames so poorly that it must be costing a fortune to keep the place warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

One other takeaway we had from talking to the Park Service people was that the house has gained a lot of visibility since the opening of the Broadway musical *Hamilton*. It was shown in the PBS documentary *Hamilton's America* and since then the number of visitors has soared. But unlike the homes of some of the other Founding Fathers, Hamilton Grange cannot easily accommodate hordes of people – just 15 at a time are permitted up to the first floor, and the second floor is not even open to the public. This was a far different situation than what we had experienced a week earlier, on a day trip to Mount Vernon.

### **Mansion on the Hill**

George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, on a hill overlooking the Potomac River, is as different from Hamilton Grange as can possibly be. It's located on the Virginia side of the river, south of D.C., and the driving distance from where we live is only a bit more than 40 miles.

Unlike Hamilton Grange, the main residence at Mount Vernon really *is* a mansion. Much, much larger. There are more than 20 rooms and even with dozens of people passing through the building in one long serpentine line, it really didn't seem very crowded. If I had just one word to describe the interior I would say 'opulent'. The ground floor features parlors, dining rooms, Washington's study, and a grand two-story high "New Room" where Washington received visitors and hosted meetings. Upstairs are six different bedchambers, including the spacious bedroom of George and Martha. As we later saw at Hamilton Grange, all of these rooms had splendid furnishings that harken back to the time when he was alive, some of them originals and



in line to visit George Washington's home

others period piece reproductions similar to items that the Washingtons might have owned. The most interesting and historic artifact on display was very small – a key to the demolished Bastille Prison, presented to Washington by the Marquis de Lafayette in 1790.

The Mount Vernon estate encompasses far more than just the mansion. Nearby there are many outbuildings – the kitchen, a barn and stables, slave quarters, an ice house, a blacksmith shop, and a

smokehouse. Farther away are a gristmill and a distillery. Washington had a personal hand in the managing of the estate, and he ran it like a business. And very successful he was. The main cash crop was wheat, and the gristmill made it into a high quality flour which was in great demand throughout the Potomac Valley. The most profitable enterprise, though, was fishing. During the spring the river was literally filled with shad and herring, and annual large catches of these were salted and packed in barrels for export down to the Caribbean.

There is a museum at the visitors' entrance to the estate that we found very informative, with displays, short videos about different aspects of Washington's life, military career, and term as America's first President. Both the estate and visitors center had live demonstrations – from blacksmithing to chocolate making – by people knowledgeable about early America. This added to the overall charm and ambience, almost as if we were being drawn back into that much different era. But what Nicki and I found most enjoyable was listening to Martha Washington describe what living at Mount Vernon was like back then.



"Martha Washington" describes life at Mount Vernon

We almost missed out on it. We were on our way back to the visitors center after having paid our respects at the Washingtons' tomb and saw people entering and leaving a small outbuilding near the mansion. Inside, there was a small stage where sat "Martha". The re-enactor, whoever she was, was really good – totally unscripted, just informally talking about the life and times of that era. She was so deep into the role that in effect she had become Martha Washington. I asked her a softball question about what season of the year was most difficult from a practical sense, just to see how much in character she would stay. Her answer was the

obvious one (winter, as I expected) but she went well beyond that, segueing in descriptions of everyday living and what it was like when General Washington was away from home for months at a time. Nicki then remarked how nice her brocade dress was and asked if she did any sewing. It was almost as if the question was expected because in the midst of an expansive answer she reached into a nearby sewing basket and brought out a needlepoint sampler which had depictions of two insects and a timepiece. Life at Mount Vernon, she told us, was at times undemanding and at other times requiring a lot of effort. But the secret to a happy life, anywhere, she said, was actually relatively simple and the needlepoint sampler was an apt reminder: “Keep yourself as busy as a bee, as cheerful as a cricket, and as steady as a clock.”

### Deep Beneath the City with a Thousand Other Strangers

A week later we were taking her advice to heart during our stay in New York. Being in that great city is always a happy time for us, no matter the weather, and as I described earlier our days were filled with sights to see and places to visit. But as for being as steady as a clock, we left that to the New York Subway System. It got us, very efficiently, everywhere we wanted to go.



part of the history exhibit at the New York Transit Museum

One of those was a place that is dedicated to the city’s public transportation infrastructure – the New York Transit Museum, sited in a formerly abandoned section of the Court Street subway station in Brooklyn. It’s actually two museums in one – the mezzanine level of the station is a walk through the history of the subway system from the start of its construction at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the dual disasters of Nine-Eleven and Superstorm Sandy. The lower level, at the subway platform, was a collection of well-

preserved vintage subway cars from many different eras of the transit system. Some of them were only a few decades old, but others rode the rails more than 100 years ago.



amongst the vintage subway cars at the Transit Museum

It was thought-provoking in a time-binding sense to walk through some of those old railcars. They all seemed to have the original passenger seats so I could almost see in my mind’s eye a family seated there, back in the early 1900s, on their way to Coney Island for a Sunday at the beach.

With only just a little bit of imagination it was like being in the company of ghosts. Thousands and thousands of people, over the years, rode in every one of those railcars. And each of those riders probably had a story of some kind that would have added to the richness of the history of the transit system.

There was some synchronicity with our visit to the Transit Museum. That very evening we attended a new Broadway musical, *In Transit*, that was set in amongst New York’s public transportation system. The stage, in fact, was designed as the interior of a subway station. It was being performed in one of the smaller theaters, Circle in the Square, and the discounted tickets we got at TKTS put us in the second row.



the stage of *In Transit*

One of the things that had brought this show to our attention was that it was a different kind of musical – sung totally *a capella*. We’ve always liked this style of music and were real fans of the late, lamented TV show *The Sing Off*, which had launched the careers of several fine voice-only groups including Pentatonix. There was a lot of talent, not only with the cast (which included an *American Idol* runner-up) but also the music and lyrics (written by a previous Academy Award winner) and the choreography (done by a previous Tony Award winner). The plot was not overly complicated, but it *was* convoluted – the lives of each of the eleven characters were all intertwined, sometimes with people they already know and sometimes with those they met in the subway. The very first song of the show set the overall background and tone: “I’m deep beneath the city with a thousand other strangers.” Nicki and I found it highly entertaining but I really don’t think it will be coming to a theater outside the Big Apple – the show is so overly New York centric that I’m not sure it could be successfully staged anywhere else.

### When Men Were Men and Newspapermen Were Animals

There are, of course, city-centric shows which can be successfully staged almost everywhere. Two of them, both about Chicago, were in production during our stay in Manhattan. One, which we’d previously seen, is the eponymously-named musical and is in the middle of a years-long run with no signs of closing anytime soon. The other, which we saw near the end of its four-month limited run, was a star-studded production that featured many famous actors from film, television, and stage: Nathan Lane, Robert Morse, John Goodman, Jefferson Mays, Holland Taylor, John Slattery, Dylan Baker, Lewis J. Stadlen, Sherie Renee Scott, and Dann Florek.



outside the Broadhurst Theatre on West 44<sup>th</sup> Street

It was *The Front Page*, a comedy about muckraking and scoop-chasing set in the press room of Chicago’s

Criminal Courts Building, populated by a motley collection of police-beat reporters who were trying to out-scoop each other on the pending execution of a supposed communist revolutionary who had been unjustly convicted of murdering a policeman. The *New York Times* reviewer, who liked the show, described it as “a hyped-up, four-letter hymn to the obsessiveness of the ink-stained muckraker” and set in a time (the 1920s) “when men were men and newspapermen were animals”. He also wrote that *The Front Page* is “just about everybody’s favorite play about journalism”. It certainly is mine.

This was the fifth time the play has made its way to Broadway (the first was back in 1928) and the producers, to their credit, kept it retro by not updating any of the original dialog. It was a really slick production, with crisp repartee, sight gags, lighting tricks, and even some set-crashing stunts. It was also my favorite of the five shows we saw. Good seats were scarce, as you might have guessed, so for this one show we made an exception to our rule of thumb about not coming to New York to sit in the mezzanine. Our front row seats up there had so little leg room that my knees were sore for a day afterwards. But it was worth it.

## Last Calls

One other show we had really looked forward to seeing was *Holiday Inn*, a new musical based on the 1942 Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire movie. It featured oodles of Irving Berlin songs, including the iconic “White Christmas” and “Easter Parade”, and also some really good dance sequences, especially an energetic extended tap number with skip-rope. It was pleasant and easily lived up to our expectations, though it was pretty obvious early on where the plot was going.

That show, also, was near the end of its run and we were happy that it hung on long enough where it made it through the turn of the year. Several other shows, we observed, had not, including popular musicals *Jersey Boys*, *Matilda*, *Something Rotten!*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*. There were crews with large moving vans in front of their theaters packing up all the sets while marquees were going up for new plays and musicals which will replace them.

Last calls were not limited to only Broadway performance art. The famous Brill Building looked to be closed for an interior renovation of some kind. There are reports that the new owner wants to establish a small songwriters’ hall of fame and museum in there – totally appropriate, as the place was a songwriting nexus from the 1940s through the 1960s. The closing we were saddest to see, however, was one of our favorite eateries – the Evergreen Diner on West 47<sup>th</sup> Street. It was a really good place for lunch, especially on

Wednesdays when they had lentil soup on the menu. We talked to the owner for a few minutes and he said it was a matter of economics – the rent to keep the place open had risen to the point where it made his business unsustainable. So now the whole building is coming down, along with other buildings on that block, to be replaced by a row of shiny new hotels. The



Nicki and the owner of the now-closed Evergreen Diner

owner told us that he was not throwing in the towel just yet, however – this had been his life for many years and besides, he had kids in college. He said that he was looking at several options for opening a new edition of the restaurant, but probably a bit farther from Times Square where the rent would be less egregious. We'll certainly be on the lookout for him and his diner the next time we're in town.

## Food for Thought

Even though we didn't get any meals at the Evergreen Diner we still did pretty well for the trip. There is a French restaurant, Pergola des Artistes, located on West 46<sup>th</sup> Street, right next door to where *Hamilton* is playing at the Richard Rogers Theatre. We always make a point to have our first New York meal there – the ambience is really nice, especially on a chilly evening, and the French Onion soup is superb. One other cuisine that we invariably do in New York is pub food, and there is no lack of that kind of eatery in the streets surrounding Times Square. But they're not all of the same gastronomic value, and the one we went to last year, over on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, was a disappointment. This year we did much better, finding a Scottish pub, the St. Andrews, about a block off the Great White Way.

The waiters were all dressed in kilts, of course, and the one we had was outgoing and chatty. He told us he born up in the Bronx but now lived in Jersey, over in Weehawken. And he was a bit surprised when I told him what had occurred there back in July 1804. He'd had no idea, he told me, that an event so important in America's history had occurred practically next door to him. It was food for thought.

Alexander Hamilton may have been killed over in Weehawken but he was killing it on Broadway. There had been no chance of getting tickets to the show, a sell-out for many months to come, and my entry into the *Hamilton* ticket lottery came up a loser. We'll have to try again next year. But even if *Hamilton* continues to be beyond our reach, there will be other good shows to see. There always are. And that also goes for the rest of the city – in the nine years we've been making these early January excursions to New York there have always, *always* been new and different things to experience there. One of the characters in *In Transit* described it best: "It's real and it's here and I'm part of it all." We feel the same way. ☀



plaque in Weehawken commemorating the Hamilton-Burr duel

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## Afterword:

I find it thought-provoking that America's Founding Fathers were contemporaries with some of the great classical music composers. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, for instance, were both in France as Ministers to the Court of Versailles in the 1780s and that was the period of time when Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed some of his greatest musical compositions. There's no indication that either Franklin or Jefferson ever met Mozart but they both must have been well aware of his genius. As am I. In my opinion, Mozart was the world's greatest composer. Or at least I thought so back in 2004 when I wrote the following short appreciation of him and his music on the 248<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birthday.

# Happy Birthday to the World's Greatest Composer



posthumous portrait of Mozart  
by Barbara Krafft (1819)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was born on this day 248 years ago. It's a challenge to write a brief appreciation of him, because there is nothing about him or his music that merits the description 'brief'. He was born into a middle-class family in Salzburg, Austria, where his father Leopold was a member of the local orchestra. It was soon clear that young Wolfgang had special musical talent – at age three he was able to pick musical chords on the harpsichord and clavier (a proto-piano keyboard instrument), and by age five he had shown the prodigious ability not only to read and perform musical compositions, he was able to improvise variations on them as he went along. It became immediately obvious to his father that young Wolfgang had great promise as a composer, but he also saw that the boy could be a meal ticket as a performer, and set aside his own promising career as a musician and composer to take control of his son's burgeoning musical career. Before his sixth birthday, Leopold had arranged a concert/recital for young Wolfgang and his older sister

Anna (who also had exceptional musical talent), which included a performance in Vienna in front of Empress Maria Teresa of the Hapsburg dynasty. When Wolfgang was seven years old, his father took a leave of absence from the Salzburg orchestra to accompany his children on a recital tour of the major cities of western Europe.

It was during that tour that young Mozart became serious about composing, coming up with melodies and themes in his head during the long journeys between cities and writing them down during the stopovers. By the time he was ten years old, he had completed his first symphony and keyboard sonatas and had completed his first opera before he became a teenager. Throughout this time, Mozart's father remained the dominant figure in his life, and Mozart willingly allowed his father to chart the course of his musical career, including a trip to Italy that lasted more than a year. It was only when he had reached his early twenties, that this relationship ended – the death of his mother in 1777 caused him to re-evaluation his life and in 1780 he moved to Vienna where he eventually became the chamber composer of Emperor Joseph II. Mozart's relationship with his father suffered a major and perhaps fatal breakdown when in 1782, against his father's wishes, he married Constanze Weber.



portrait of Constanze Weber  
by unknown artist

By then Mozart had become a major musical talent of worldwide fame. The decade of the 1780s was perhaps the greatest in the history of classical music, and this is largely because of the productivity of Mozart. Most of his greatest works were written then, including his two best operas (*The Marriage of Figaro* in 1786 and *Don Giovanni* in 1787), his greatest symphonies, and piano concertos, and, in 1787, a serenade for string instruments whose opening movement is the most familiar melody in all of classical music. He apparently wrote it as a trifle, for evening entertainment of the royal court, as its informal title implies: *Eine Kleine Nachtmusic* (“a little night music”).

One can only imagine what Mozart might have accomplished if he had lived past his mid thirties. In 1790, his benefactor Joseph II died, which forced Mozart to try to support his family as an independent musical composer/performer, a concept that was back then very much ahead of its time. He did not do very well (partly due to a somewhat extravagant lifestyle), and by the time of his death in 1791 (most likely of rheumatic fever) he was in such dire financial difficulty that he was buried in an unmarked grave, as was apparently the custom for those with that hardship back then.



memorial to Mozart at St. Marx Cemetery in Vienna, wherein (somewhere) is his final resting place

There's really no way to concisely describe the musical legacy of Mozart or the excellence of his compositions, so I'll only mention what some of my favorites are. Of his symphonies, most famous are the last few, especially his final one (no.41, the “Jupiter”), but I really like the very melodic 29<sup>th</sup>, composed when he still a teenager. Mozart wrote many wonderful concertos as well (though never any for cello or trumpet); my two favorites are the 20<sup>th</sup> piano concerto and his only clarinet concerto (which was his final orchestral piece, completed in the year of his death); the middle movements of these, especially, are indicative of one of the descriptions of Mozart: he could write music that made angels weep. One biographer wrote that Mozart's music “moves with an unparalleled grace and unveils its truths with a suppleness and subtlety only exceeded by Nature herself”, and it could be argued that this description does Mozart a disservice. He was the greatest musician of the past millennium; even while he was alive, his music had achieved an everlasting presence. This still persists, 212 years after his death, and it will continue to be true throughout this next millennium. ☀

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### Afterword:

In the nearly 14 years since I wrote that essay, I've had more than sufficient time to re-evaluate on who I think was the “World's Greatest Composer”. I still hold an elevated opinion of Mozart but there are others who certainly are in that conversation, notably the great Johannes Sebastian Bach, who died in 1750 never knowing there was going to be a Mozart. I'd most likely have reprinted an appreciation of Bach by now, but I never got around to writing one. But earlier this year I *did* write one, of sorts, about a much more recent musical idol.

# Thank You Very Much

I'm writing this short essay on Wednesday, August 16<sup>th</sup>. It doesn't seem that long ago, but today is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Elvis Presley.

I'm old enough that my memories of him tend toward the "Young Elvis", the one that was portrayed on the U.S. postage stamp back in 1993. And much of his music remains evergreen with me, especially the rockabilly stuff that he was doing at the start of his career. It's the "Young Elvis" that usually gets portrayed in the media – he was a character in the recent *Sun Records* TV series, and he was even on Broadway, back in 2010, as a character in the entertaining musical *Million Dollar Quartet*. But it's the "Old Elvis" and his later-life existence as a Vegas crooner which has added figures of speech to the English language.



One of them, of course, is "Elvis has left the building!" It was frequently spoken by public address announcers at the end of Elvis concerts, whether or not it was true, to encourage the audience to head for the exits. I remember that I learned about Elvis's death from the radio when the lead-in to a news story used that catchphrase. (It later came out that Elvis was sitting on the toilet when he died, which I only mention because I was doing the same thing when I heard about it from the radio. But enough on that.)

Anyway, one other Elvis catchphrase that fans of his often heard was "Thank you very much", or in Elvis-speak, "Thang-yew-verra-mutch!" It was used as an acknowledgement to applause during concerts and public appearances. And he spoke it so fast that it became, in effect, a single multisyllabic word to him. Back in the 1980s and 1990s I can remember that on-stage performers once in a while would try to add a bit of humor to whatever they were doing by parodying Elvis with that phrase. But nowadays it's just about fallen completely out of use because 21<sup>st</sup> century-speak now uses the inferior and shallower "Thank you so much!" instead. And the less said about that the better.

I'm going to stop here before this devolves into an Andy Rooney-esque rant. Forty years after his passing, I still remember and appreciate everything that the "Young Elvis" contributed to the pop music genre. So thank you, Mr. Presley. Very much. ☀



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## Afterword:

Back in 2014 the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology ranked the 25 most famous Americans based on Internet metadata. Elvis came in at #2, ahead of Mark Twain, Thomas Edison, and all of America's Founding Fathers. (In case you're wondering, Martin Luther King was #1.) But if fictional characters were included, it's quite possible that #1 would have been Batman. Turns out, as you will read next, that there was quite a lot I didn't know about him.

# Stuff I Never Knew About Batman

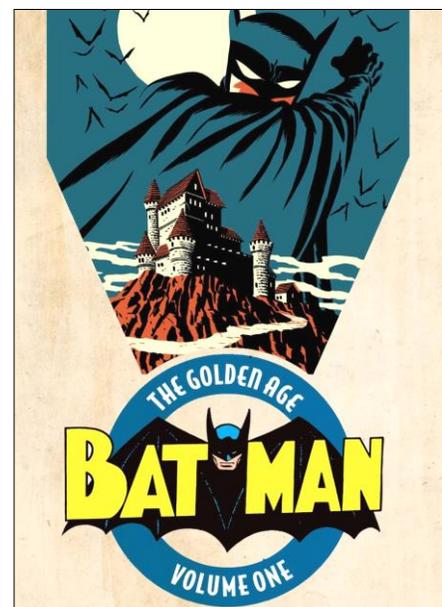
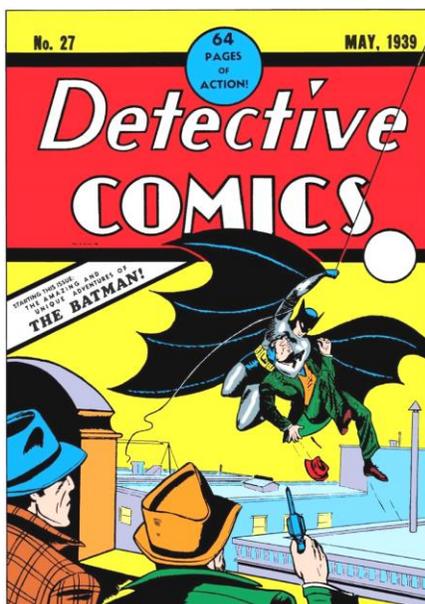
I think I've finally been dragged, kicking and screaming, into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It used to be that every bit of my reading material was in dead-tree format. And then I acquired an iPad.

A tablet computer is a wonderful thing, and I've used mine for many purposes. It has, at times, been an alarm clock, a white noise generator, a mobile bank for paying bills and transferring money, a source of news and audio/video entertainment, a place where I can archive photographs and things that I've written, make hotel and airline reservations, and even play mindless video games if I so desire (which happens all too often). And it's also a library.

There are still a lot of unread books in the house but I've now come around to appreciating the convenience and easy access of e-books. It was my wife Nicki who pointed me in this direction – she has her own iPad and is admittedly a faster and, yes, more avid reader than I am. It did not take her long to learn that the local public library gives access to its electronic media offerings through a free app called 'Overdrive'. Many libraries support it, and it brings several lifetimes of reading material to just a quick download away. Browsing is very easy and I've now used Overdrive to download dozens of e-books in the past few years, some from favorite authors and some from writers whom I'd not previously discovered.

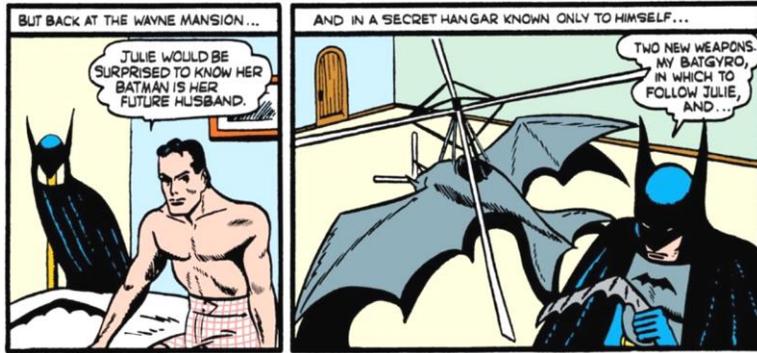
The one grumble I have with Overdrive, and this is an issue with the host library and not the app, is that the holdings in e-books are way, way less than what the library has in traditional dead-tree format. Many of my favorite authors are only sporadically represented and for some there are no e-books at all. But, it turns out, there are other online libraries than just the local one that are accessible from a tablet computer. One of them is called 'Hoopla' and I was once again pointed toward it by Nicki. It's a commercial digital media service, paid for by local library systems, that

has more than half a million content titles available for download – e-books, audio books, television shows, movies, music...and comic books.



Most of its comics holdings are from the 1980s and later, but among the titles are a very few from the DC 'Silver Age' era of the 1950s and 60s – *The Flash*, *World's Finest*, and the *Justice League of America*. So far, anyway. I was pleased to find out that Hoopla is adding new Silver Age titles at about one every month or so and, lo and behold, even a couple of titles from the 1930s and 40s 'Golden Age'. One of them was an anthology of the earliest Batman stories, including the Caped Crusader's very first appearance, in the May 1939 issue of *Detective Comics*.

When I first discovered Batman it was during that gosh-wow Silver Age era. He and his sidekick Robin were battling a different super-villain nearly every issue, with menaces from space aliens thrown in from time to time. It was, back then, very much a sci-fi series – storylines were totally ‘skiffy’ in the most preposterous sense of the word. So I had looked forward to reading about the origins of Batman and seeing how his character, in span of a decade-and-a-half, had evolved from its noir-ish beginnings.



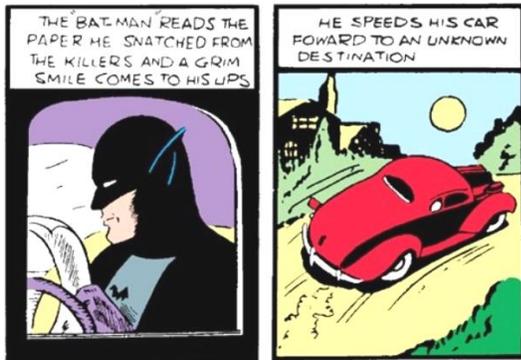
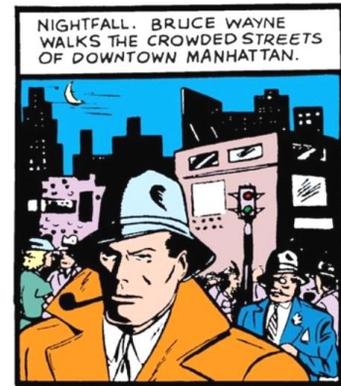
half, had evolved from its noir-ish beginnings.

I was amazed what I hadn't known about the early years of the character. There were some big differences! For instance, it was a complete surprise to me that Bruce Wayne/Batman had been engaged to be married!

That little tidbit was part of the fifth-ever Batman story, “Batman vs. the Vampire”, which appeared in the September 1939 issue of *Detective Comics*. And that same story yielded two other eye-opening revelations – the Bat Cave didn't exist back then, at least as part of the Batman mythos, and the Bat Plane was an ultralight one-man autogyro.

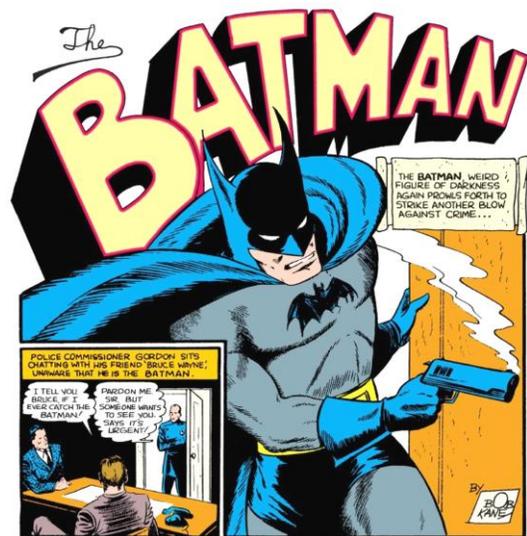
That little tidbit was part of the

And there was more: Gotham City did not yet exist as the home city of Batman! The story “The Batman Wars Against the Dirigible of Doom”, from the November 1939 *Detective Comics*, shows Bruce Wayne walking in “the crowded streets of downtown Manhattan” just before a city-wide emergency causes him to become his caped alter ego.



The Batmobile did not yet exist

either. The very first Batman story, “The Case of the Chemical Syndicate”, shows Batman riding around in a spiffy red coupe. That car appeared in the next few issues as well, but it, too evolved, changing into a much longer and larger sedan but still red in color. Most amazing to me was the depiction of Batman as a rather lethal individual – something that he most definitely was *not* during the Silver Age. He wasn't at all averse about throwing thugs to their deaths off the tops of buildings, and he was even shown as carrying a gun!





There were also some changes to the Bruce Wayne character. The Batman mythos as we all know it depicts Bruce Wayne as a wealthy socialite who had inherited his father's money-making Wayne Enterprises business. This was certainly the case in the Silver Age, but back in the earliest Batman stories Bruce is depicted as being a pipe-smoking journalist!

I discovered all of this in just the first eight Batman stories, which is all of what I've read so far

in this Golden Age omnibus. And I'm taking it slowly – more startling revelations are on the way, most likely, and my amazement quotient can take only so much at a time. Upcoming are the first appearances of Batman's arch nemesis The Joker and also Batman's young companion Robin the Boy Wonder. I'm especially looking forward to reading "Batman and Robin Visit the New York World's Fair", which was included in the second of two special comic books published by National Publications (which later became DC Comics) for the 1939-40 World's Fair in New York City. The cover of that issue depicts the very first appearance of Superman and Batman together, something that would not occur again until the 1950s in the Silver Age *World's Finest* series of comic books.

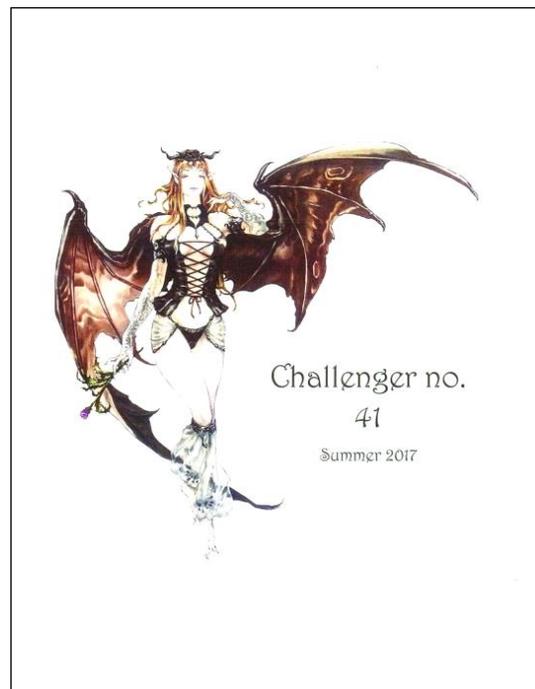
But that's a *different* anthology! ☀

### Afterword:

I found all the early Batman stories to be charmingly retro and quite a bit noir. A sharp contrast to the gosh-wow Batman of the early 1960s that had so very much enthralled me.

At any rate, noir seems much in vogue nowadays so next is an essay I wrote earlier this year for my friend Guy Lillian and his very fine general interest fanzine *Challenger*. He had written me that the 41<sup>st</sup> issue he was preparing had a theme of 'Demons' and asked me to do an essay about a famous episode of a 1960s science fiction television series that was about a demon of sorts. But what he got was an essay about the very noir-ish building where that television production was filmed.

It's absolutely my favorite building in Los Angeles and most likely I'd have eventually gotten around to writing an essay about it anyway. So thanks to Guy for making it happen sooner.



# The Building

There's an old edifice in downtown Los Angeles that's not only an architectural landmark, it's also earned its chops many times over for being the filming location of many cinematic and television productions over the past  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a century. It's the iconic Bradbury Building.

It's construction dates all the back to 1890s, originally intended to be the Trump Tower of its day for Los Angeles gold mining and real estate tycoon Lewis L. Bradbury – a monument to himself. But it wasn't completed until after Bradbury died and has instead led a much more prosaic existence, mostly as an office building. Today it's the home of the LAPD's Internal Affairs Division.

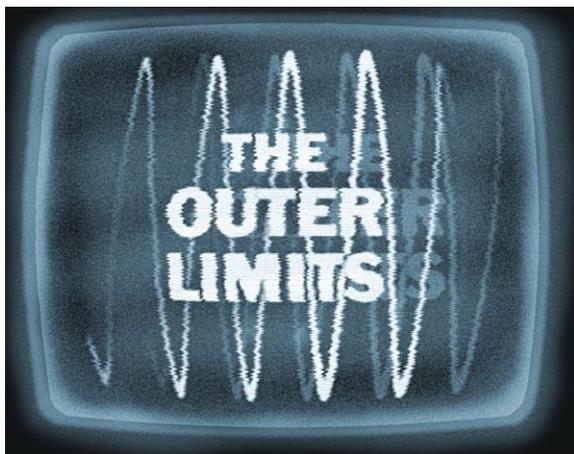
What's iconic about the building is its interior. There are marble and terra cotta tiles on floors and walls, wood paneling, decorative ironwork, and an open “bird cage” elevator. But the dominating feature is the five-story atrium where all these design details are gloriously on display. I was there, briefly, in 1992 as part of a walking tour of downtown Los Angeles and I remember that I was stunned by how wonderful the interior of the building was. But that was not the first time I had ever seen it.



interior of the Bradbury Building

In real life the Bradbury Building might be nothing more than an office building, but there's nothing prosaic about its alternate universe existence as a filming location. Perhaps its most famous moment

happened back in 1964, when it was the setting for an episode of *The Outer Limits* which has been touted by *TV Guide* magazine as one of the 100 greatest television episodes of all time: “Demon with a Glass Hand”.



I was fourteen years old when I viewed it on its original airing. Back then, *The Outer Limits* was struggling through its two seasons as a clone of *The Twilight Zone*. It featured more science fiction and less fantasy than *The Twilight Zone*, but the writing was much more uneven. So much so that only a very few episodes left enough of an impression on me where I can remember anything

about them. The best of these was “Demon with a Glass Hand” and there's a reason for that – the teleplay was written by Harlan Ellison.

I don't need to give much of a description about the plot because many if not most of those reading this essay have probably seen the episode (and for those who haven't, you can find it on

both YouTube and Hulu). A man named Trent, played by Robert Culp, wakes up on one of the upper floors of an office building having no memory of the previous several days, and finds that he has a glass hand which seems to be a computer of some kind. But it's incomplete, missing several fingers which are in the possession of alien invaders. The remainder of the teleplay becomes both a quest and a deadly game of hide-and-seek as Trent recovers the missing digits, and in doing so, gains knowledge from the ever-more-powerful computer as to why the aliens are after him.



Robert Culp in "Demon with a Glass Hand"

It all might seem a bit hackneyed by current-day standards, but back in 1964 this was cutting edge stuff for network television. So much so that it won a Writers Guild of America Award, in 1965, for "Outstanding Script for a Television Anthology". Ellison, who has a reputation for disliking productions of his teleplays, was described as being reasonably happy with the episode even though for budgetary reasons the producers cut out several of Ellison's characters from the final version of the script.

There was also one other change the producers made in the script to save money. Originally, the cat-and-mouse chase between Trent and the aliens was supposed to take place across the country, but that was changed to a single location – the interior of the Bradbury Building. There doesn't seem to be any surviving records as to why that particular interior was selected, but the choice was a good one. The futuristic story amid a retro setting worked very well.

As I mentioned, this was not the only time the Bradbury Building has appeared in television and film. The building's interior design was particularly good for some of the famous noir mystery movies of the 1950s, including *D.O.A.* and *I, The Jury*, as well as more modern noir-ish movies such as *Chinatown*. And for science fiction enthusiasts, the Bradbury Building was a cast member, of sorts, in one of the best genre movies of the 1980s, *Blade Runner*.



the Bradbury Building as it was seen in *Blade Runner*

I've viewed "Demon with a Glass Hand" several times in the decades since 1964. It's no longer the gosh-wow experience that it was back then but it still holds up pretty well. But I am fully expecting my next visit to the Bradbury Building, whenever that occurs, *will* have the same sense of wonder effect on me as when I was last there a quarter of a century ago. I'm very much looking forward to seeing it again – and may it happen soon! ☀

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### Afterword:

It's not hard to believe that the Bradbury Building was intended to be a monument to himself by a real estate tycoon – after all, an identical situation exists in the District of Columbia, where revenue from that structure is causing a Constitutional debate. It used to be one of my favorite buildings in Washington. And also, as you will read, one of the happier places in the city.

# The Edifice

Each year I look forward to the year-end Holiday Season for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is *making* it to the end of the year. At my age that's getting to be a real accomplishment just in itself. But the Holiday Season is supposed to be a time of joy and happiness, and here in the D.C. area one way it is manifested is in all the holiday receptions that various organizations and embassies put on. Nicki and I have been to probably more than our share of those – we've been to events sponsored by everybody from the National Coal Council to the Azerbaijan-America Alliance. But in the past decade these have dwindled in number for us, and this year there has been only one.

It was sponsored by an organization that is active in the energy sector (in which I work as a U.S. Government employee), and since I am friends with its Executive Director I have no worries that I'm ever going to drop off the invite list. And it's always held at a high-end hotel. Last year's was at the Willard, a place that is steeped in history and sometimes referred to as the 'residence of presidents' (every president since Franklin Pierce has either stayed there or attended an event there). But for this year, the venue was a different edifice – the Trump Hotel.



the Old Post Office Building  
before it became the Trump Hotel

It's located on Pennsylvania Avenue, right across the street from a Metrorail station and as everybody knows by now, just a few blocks from the White House. It was formerly known as the Old Post Office Building – it dates back to the late 1890s and over its history has served first as Washington's main post office and later on as office space for a progression of lawyers and government officials. It escaped demolition in the early 1970s due to heroic efforts by a group of local citizens and architects which later evolved into the D.C. Preservation League. After that, for many years, it was home to an assortment of interesting little eateries and souvenir shops.

And then Nine-Eleven happened.

The building is U.S. Government property, so in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks airport-style security was put in place. You couldn't get in the building without passing through a metal detector and having all your belongings searched and x-rayed. It was enough to make you want to look elsewhere for lunch and places to shop. So that's what most people did. Business establishments in the building started closing and it eventually got to the point where most of the available retail space became unoccupied.

I've read that the concept of redeveloping the building as a luxury hotel actually pre-dated the Nine-Eleven attacks, but by the mid-2000s it was an idea whose time had come. It is an indication on how slow the wheels of progress turn that The Trump Organization was not selected as the redeveloper and lease holder for the structure until the beginning of 2012, which eventually resulted in its transformation into a world-class hotel. The Donald and his minions didn't get everything, however. The clock tower, which provides superb panoramic views of the city, remains under the purview of the National Park Service and has a separate entrance from the hotel.

I had been looking forward to that holiday reception not only for all the good food and opportunities to network (and it turned out there were many), but to also see what had become of the building. Nicki and I immediately noticed that there was plenty of exterior branding, with the Trump logo visible in large letters over all entrances to the building. But it turned out that only one of those doorways was functional – security barriers blocked off what looked to be the main two ways in (including the one nearest the Metrorail station).

Before it became a hotel, the interior of the building was dominated by an atrium that went all the way to the roof and I was pleased



one of the several non-functional entrances to the hotel



atrium interior of the Trump Hotel

to see that's still the case. But it all seemed a bit, well, cold and standoffish when compared to the bustle of activity I remember of the building the times we were there in the 1990s (and, for that matter, to the interior of the Willard where last year there was a Christmas choir that entertained everybody with familiar carols). There were not even very many holiday decorations – just two Christmas trees that were dwarfed by the enormous space they were situated in. The exterior was even more Spartan in that regard – other hotels put up decorations galore that are visible from the street but for this now-foreboding edifice there was no indication whatsoever that we were deep into the Holiday Season.

in one of the 1990s Holiday Seasons – a human kaleidoscope of holiday shoppers with intriguing aromas from food vendor kiosks and a choir singing carols at a stage in the atrium. A much more interesting place to be. And yes, a happier one. ☀

If there's ever another holiday reception in there I'll go back, but there didn't seem to be anything else about the place that would make me want to. So instead I'll just remember it as it was

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### Afterword:

The 2017 Holiday Season is concluding as I write this and I'm looking forward to 2018 (as my professional career winds down) with hopes that it will be calmer and saner than this dog of a year. It's possible that retirement may happen for me in 2018 but before that I am looking forward to being an unpaid intern on a Saturday in mid-February. Next is a short essay about what occurred the previous time that happened.

# In Amongst the Morris Dancers

There was a loud commotion going on just down the hallway from where Nicki's crafts booth was set up, and it had suddenly become difficult for us to hear each other talk. There were bells jingling and wooden poles clacking together, all accompanied by accordion and fiddle music. It was the Morris Dancers.

The Folklore Society of Greater Washington, which has been in existence for more than half a century, is a volunteer organization which is preserving and promoting the traditional folk arts around the Washington, D.C. region. It sponsors more than 200 events every year, including concerts, dances, open sings, and storytelling. Their big event of the year is the annual Folk Festival in early June. But there is also an annual Mini-Fest, the second Saturday in February, which includes a broad cross-section of all of the Society's interests.



Morris Dancers at the FSGW Mini-Fest



Nicki's booth at the Mini-Fest

The Mini-Fest also includes craft vendors, and that's what brought Nicki and me to the event. About five years ago she formed her own one-person company, Nicki Lynch Quilts and Crafts, and has been spending a lot of her time doing quilting and crocheting. Some of it is volunteer work – she is a member of her local parish's 'Yarn Angels' group which makes crocheted hats, shawls, and baby blankets for the needy – and some of the quilted and crocheted items she creates are being sold at a nearby regional history museum. Her small business usually manages to finish in the black each

year but as anyone who has ever been a retailer of any kind can tell you, sales could always be better. In Nicki's case, it's largely a matter of finding more places than just the museum where her crafts can be sold, and the Mini-Fest, in the past few years, has always resulted in a small but valuable bump in her annual sales revenue.

I'm a part of that. Manning the booth is a two-person activity and for that one Saturday every year I am her unpaid intern. I do pretty well interacting with other people, so the Mini-Fest is something that I actually look forward to. And there is one huge side benefit – lots and lots of music to listen to throughout the day.

It came in all forms, at many different locations within the middle school where the event is held. The main stage was located in the so-called 'Cafetorium', where all the food vendors were located. Seven groups performed there throughout the day, with music genres ranging from collegiate-style folk-pop to bluegrass-inspired folk to Irish traditional to maritime sea shanty to jug band. Elsewhere there were rooms where storytelling was going on and where vocal and instrumental workshops were taking place. And there were also jams and sing-alongs. Many of them – Celtic, gospel, doo-wop, old-time Appalachian, and more. The best one was the blues jam, and the room was so crowded that I could only hover around the hall doorway.



Sweet Yonder quartet on the main stage



looking in at the blues jam

In all there were nine different concurrent tracks of music, dance, and storytelling featuring more than 65 performers and groups. And, like any multi-track convention, there was no way to see and experience everything. Or very much of anything, actually, since I was there to help Nicki. So in the end I just took in bits and pieces of as many of the performances as I could, even while missing out entirely on mini-concerts by intriguingly-named groups such as the Tango-Tango Mercurio Orchestra, the Sibling Rivalry Fiddle Band, and the All New Genetically

Altered Jug Band. My favorite performance of the day was an ad-hoc one that took place in a hallway near one of the crafts vending areas – a fiddle jam that grew in size as musicians happened by and joined in.

The Morris Dancers kept at it, off and on, through most of the day. So much so that Nicki started wondering if the proper terminology for a gathering of them is 'a plague of Morris Dancers'. She had a worse sales day than usual for this year's Mini-Fest but still ended up about breaking even. Better than that, actually, if you take into account all the entertainment value we had. We'll certainly try it again next year. ☀

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### Afterword:

As I mentioned, retirement is certainly an option for me this year. As was the case in 2016. But as you will read next, it turned out that a fascinating business trip to a far-away land that year caused me to rethink things.

# To the Land of the Rising Sun

## Prolog: Storm Warning!

Another autumn, another big conference of the international carbon sequestration forum. Its activities have in effect been controlling my life these past several years, and I have to admit that the work is interesting enough that I've once already postponed retirement so that I can stay involved. This year's annual meeting was in Japan, and it came only three months after a mid-year meeting in the United Kingdom. I was a planner and organizer of

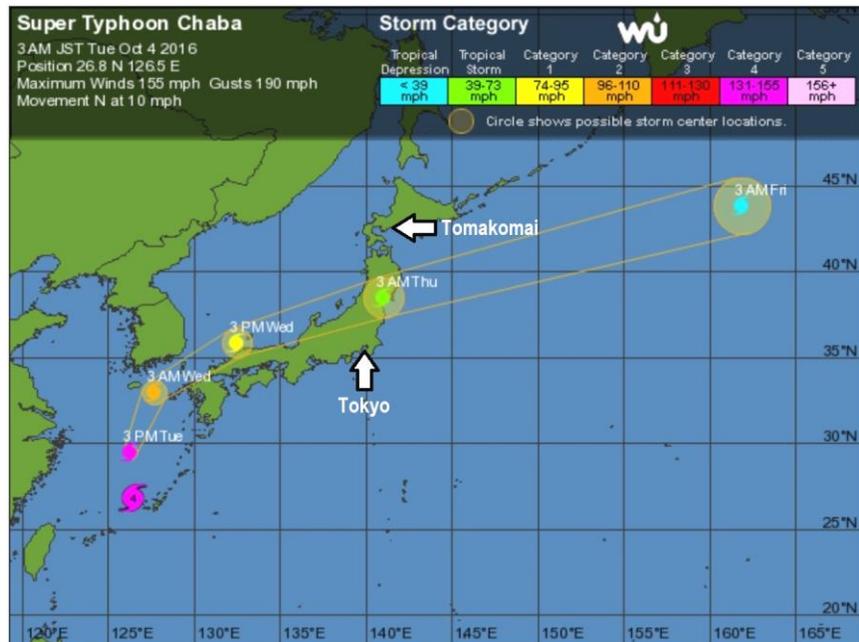
both of the meetings and it made for a very busy summer – there were so many things going on in the aftermath to the U.K. meeting and the roll-up to the Japan event that I was already worn down before I even boarded the airplane to Tokyo.

When I am away at conferences like this, my experience has been that I tend to lose contact with what is going on in the outside world. And so it wasn't until Day 4 of my stay in the Land of the Rising Sun that it finally “dawned” on me that there might be a problem with the overall schedule. The next day was the field trip to Tomakomai, where a new carbon capture and storage project has just come online. It was located several hundred miles north of Tokyo, on the island of Hokkaido, and the airplane ride to get there looked like might have to pass through some bad weather – Super Typhoon Chaba, which had been laying waste to southwest Japan and southern Korea, was predicted to pass between Tokyo and Tomakomai on the day of the field trip. But nobody really seemed all that concerned, or maybe it was just that they had seen it all before. When I showed the image of the storm path to one of the other meeting attendees, he just gave a resigned shrug and said, “It'll just make it all the more interesting.”

## Imperial Edo

This was my first and perhaps only visit to Tokyo, and as usual with this kind of trip, there wasn't much room for free time. But the day after I arrived was unscheduled to allow for adjusting to the 11-hour time zone difference between Tokyo and home, so I and three others who were also early-bird arrivals spent a low impact day taking in a bit of the history and culture.

The first place we went was the Imperial Palace, which was within easy walking distance from our hotels. Or, make that, tried to go, as we found out that the Palace itself was not open to



predicted path for Super Typhoon Chaba

the public. But the Palace's East Gardens were. It's a 21-hectare mostly-greenspace that dates back to the 1500s as part of what was then Edo Castle. Remnants of the castle still exist. There are massive stone walls where no two building stones are the same size or shape. The *daimyō*, hereditary feudal lords who controlled Japan back then, had been required by their *shōgun* to supply building materials for the construction of the castle. The size of each granite block was symbolic of the wealth of the feudal lord who provided it.



stone walls of Edo Castle

Japan's Imperial Family came into power in the 1860s, after the *shōgunate* was overthrown, and Edo Castle became part of the Imperial Palace. The East Gardens includes in its confines



in the Imperial Palace East Gardens, with friends from Australia's delegation to the meeting

some of the administrative buildings of the Palace and also the Museum of Imperial Collections, which exhibits art and calligraphy which date back centuries. But most of the Gardens is a bucolic place, with fish ponds, trees, and shrubbery, every so often broken by the view of one of the Palace's outbuildings. It was all too easy to spend time there slowly, just enjoying the day.

We eventually did get some views of the Palace itself. There is a wide moat that separates the

Palace grounds from Tokyo city, and a large plaza comes right up to the edge of the moat where a heavily guarded bridge crosses over onto the Palace grounds. We could just about make out where the Palace was, through the surrounding trees, but it was actually the outbuildings which were more photogenic. One of them, situated just above where the moat takes a 90-degree turn away from the street, was at a place where creative photography was absolutely called for and I was only too happy to spend a few minutes there admiring the view.



the view across the moat toward one of the Imperial Palace's outbuildings

## The Temple of Fortunes

There were relatively few people at the East Gardens, which made it easier to enjoy the morning there. That wasn't the case for the other place we visited that day, the Buddhist temple of Sensō-ji. It's the oldest shrine in Tokyo, dating back the mid seventh century. But that original building no longer exists. The temple was destroyed during the World War Two bombings of Tokyo and the present-day structure dates only to the 1950s.



the temple of Sensō-ji

Still, it's very iconic, so much so that I made it the signature image for our web page about the meeting. And it's also a popular place to visit, from the size of the crowds there. As well as a place to spend money. The street that leads into the temple grounds is lined on both sides with dozens of small shops. This is in itself a tradition, as such enterprises have been present since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, selling to pilgrims who walked great distances to visit the temple. But back then I don't think they were vending picture postcards, refrigerator magnets, Godzilla toys, and t-shirts.

Actually, many of the visitors to Sensō-ji probably *do* consider themselves pilgrims. We observed some of them trying to divine their fortunes at *o-mikuji* stalls located in the plaza in front of the temple. For a donation of 100 yen, a person seeking enlightenment selects at random, from a metal container, a wooden stick embossed with a number (from 1 to 100) designating a correspondingly numbered wooden drawer where the pilgrim retrieves a paper scroll bearing his or her fortune. It's not exactly big business, but there were a lot of people doing this and we saw that the scrolls were printed in several languages including English. And so Max, one of the Australian delegates who was with me, decided that he also wanted to know what might lie ahead for him. Boy was he surprised!

What none of us had realized was that not all fortune scrolls contained good tidings – the 100 possibilities span the gamut from “great blessing” to “great curse”. And the one Max got was, well, more than a bit foreboding:

*“Every year your servants will get fewer and fewer and you will be alone. Even if you stay in bed for a long while, you'll never get well. It is too dangerous for you to bring the boat to shore. Just like a dragon loses its treasure ball, you will lose your hope. Your wishes will not be realized. A sick person will never recover. The lost article will not be found. The person you are waiting for will not come. Building a new house and removal are not good. Making a trip, marriage, employment are bad.”*

When we saw that, we all decided to give Max a wide berth, at least until we ascertained that the sky wasn't going to fall down on him. But a short while later, after lunch and beer, all was right with the world again.



beer with friends

## Not in Kansas Anymore

All was right with the world for the carbon sequestration meeting as well. It went smoothly. All the hours leading up to the meeting, sweating out the details, in the end paid off. My main role at the meeting was as Secretariat to the Chair of the Technical Group (she's from Norway) and the presentations I gave seemed well-received. At the very beginning of the meeting, the delegate from Japan gave the standard 'what to do in case of an emergency' briefing and spent most of his time on earthquakes. I took that as evidence that we were not in Kansas anymore.



at the Technical Group meeting

As for the trip to Tomakomai, it also went smoothly. The Super Typhoon hit cold water and imploded on itself, going from hurricane-force winds down to nothing in less than a day. There were clear skies and not even a hint of bad weather. After all the drama leading up to the site visit it was almost a let-down, but on the other hand I'm certainly not disappointed by the outcome. The biggest problem turned out to be that my airline reservation for the flight was not in the computer system. This was a domestic flight (and a busy one, too – the Tokyo-to-Sapporo air corridor is the second-most-traveled in the world). But my reservation was an add-on to an international air ticket, and this had apparently made the system burp. If not for our very efficient meeting liaison, I might still be stuck in Haneda Airport.



during the site visit to the Tomakomai Project

The Tomakomai Project is located in an industrial part of the city, but right on the waterfront. There were some nice views of the Pacific Ocean from the rooftop of the assembly building but from up there I could also see that a tall barrier wall, between the shore and the project buildings, had been incorporated into the overall landscape design. And there was a reason for that.

During our safety briefing, we had been informed on what to do in case of an emergency. But what had been prepared for was water, not fire. The roof of the assembly building was where we were to go if there was a tsunami.

I took that as evidence that we were *really* not in Kansas anymore!

## There is an “I” in “Sushi”

There was far more to Tokyo than what I managed to see in my lone free day of the trip. The greater Tokyo area is the most populous metropolitan area in the world and at nearly 14 million in population, Tokyo itself ranks as the eighth largest city. A far cry from its humble beginnings in the 1400s when it was a small coastal village named Edo.

The meeting venue was in central Tokyo, so that part of the city is what I mostly got to see. And usually only after dark. Most parts of the city were calm and peaceful once all the commuters had left their jobs for the day to go back home, but the swank Ginza shopping district, which was an easy walk from my hotel, had as much of a 24/7 feel to it as Times Square in New York.



Ginza shopping district in Tokyo

There was no lack of places for food and drink, and it was entertaining in its own way to discover them. On my very first evening in the city, I and one of British delegates to the meeting had a very tasty meal of pork dumplings and noodle soup at a place that had seating for, at most, about ten people. On my last evening in town, there was a large group dinner at an upscale Japanese restaurant in Ginza where there were so many courses of food that I lost track. And many of them, of course, were sushi.



the first tray of food at the upscale Japanese restaurant



embarking on a sushi adventure

Now, I have never made a secret of my aversion to sushi. I prefer my fish cooked, thank you very much. And yet, here I was, sitting next to high-ranking people from one of Japan’s Ministries and from the company which was sponsoring the Tomakomai Project. No way was I going to do anything that could possibly disgrace myself so I figured, what the heck, let’s just give it a go.

But what I didn’t realize was that my antipathy toward sushi had become so

well-known among the other meeting attendees, many of whom I have known for years, that when I embarked on my sushi adventure it became almost a separate event. Lots of people stopped to observe and even take photographs to document this seemingly unlikely occasion. And, oh yeah, it was good. Very good, actually. I'm not yet ready to make sushi a part of my diet, but after this I may not be so much in a hurry to run away from it.

### Epilog: Storm Warning!

The food on the airplane, on the way home, was much less memorable. For trips like this I always make up a batch of my home-made trail mix as an emergency substitute for a meal, and this time it came in handy. The journey home itself was uneventful except for the last fifteen minutes or so.

Super Typhoon Chaba had come up a cropper, but back on the east coast of the United States there was a different storm that had been churning its way into becoming an aviation hazard for the mid-Atlantic region. It turned out that Hurricane Matthew stayed far enough offshore that it didn't greatly affect the Washington, D.C. area. But there was still wind and rain, and some of the gusts made the final approach into Dulles Airport a little bit uncomfortable.

The location of next year's meetings are not yet set, but it seems very likely that the first of them will be in Abu Dhabi. And yes, I am going to again postpone my retirement for at least one more year. I informed one of the delegates that I was going to stick around a bit longer, and he just smiled and patted me on the back. And then offered to buy me a beer. When the time finally comes for me to leave I won't miss all the work that goes into making meetings like this happen. But I *will* miss many of the people. And I'll even miss the misadventures that inevitably occur along the way. They just make it all the more interesting. ☀



projected storm track for Hurricane Matthew



