

# Madison foursquare



This issue of *Madison Foursquare* is brought to you by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, who live at 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704.

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This is **Madison Foursquare #90**. *Madison Foursquare* was created using a Mac Studio with InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop, all CC 2024, and printed on a Ricoh Aficio CL7200 color printer. All contents ©2024 by Scott Custis [SC] & Jeanne Gomoll [JG] April 2024 for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal #454*.

## Covers – Elizabeth Matson

[SC] “Here comes trouble” indeed. Very amusing stamp-art project. At the *Turbo* collation we were wondering if you had actually hand-produced each of the covers.

[JG] I suspect that your rubber stamp collection must be awesome.

## Jeanne Bowman

[SC] Thank you for your story about helping folks through the election process. When you’re finally able to settle in one place for an election, I’m sure you will be missed at the other centers. I love how you changed Reagan’s old put-down into a laugh line.

Sorry about the damage from the tree fall. You managed the difficult transition from focusing on how much of a disaster it was to how lucky you actually were and how much worse it could have been. I hope the recovery is relatively quick and painless.

[JG] And a lucky thing it was that the tree fell on your truck AFTER the primaries! What a month you’ve had!

Scott and I went on-line a couple months ago, before the Wisconsin primaries, and volunteered to work as poll workers (you inspired us!), but we haven’t been contacted. Richard Russell told us that Dane County didn’t need any extra workers for the primary, and gave us a link to sign up again. I’ll be doing that soon.

## Elizabeth Matson

[SC] Your photo/caption for Nick was perfect. Thanks for the updates on him as always. Best wishes to him, of course. I also wish for the best outcome on the selection of your new Library Director. Bosses make a big difference when it comes to quality of life, in my experience. Lovely job on the Joshua Tree Park hat.

We have, thus far, not had any push-back on our garage art. Not a lot of comments at all from our neighbors one way or the other so we really don’t have a good handle on what, if any, impression it’s left on people. Time may tell. A neighbor behind us has almost finished his new house facing away from us toward Milwaukee Street. Walking around the block to the front of the house reveals white brick accents, but the whole rest of the house has black siding. It’s a modern style and the roof is flat, not peaked. The house is



Our front yard



Spy vs Spy wall mural

not actually real big, but it takes up most of a small lot and, between its two smaller neighbors, it looks like a huge, black box to us. We have dubbed it The Black Monolith. We have been trying to figure out some positives about our new view and the best I can do so far is to look at it when I'm trying to determine whether a light rain or drizzle or snow flurry has completely stopped.

Beautiful Children's Room mural.

[JG] Re "visible mending" – I buy many of my clothes from *Marketplace: Handiwork of India*, and really enjoy the added hand-embroidered details on their clothing. If I was willing to learn how to embroider (probably not), I think I would add my own embroidered detail on other pieces of clothing.

Cool mural in the Children's Room! the photo on the top of this page shows new public work just off East Washington Avenue. Photo by Scott.

### Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I think I learned more from your discussion of Neanderthals than I'd known about them before. Fascinating.

[JG] I love the idea that *Star Trek's* Enterprise crew, or any starship's crew, would want to fill some of their off-time with creative projects and non-Holodeck play. Consider all those big, blank corridor walls. Just as a city offers community garden plots to its denizens, a starship might offer wall space to its crew members to decorate with murals.

I found your thoughts on the current anthropological view of Neanderthals fascinating. So often, anthropological theorizing reveals more about the culture of the investigator than it does of the group being investigated. I think your skepticism is well-founded and hope that you one day get the opportunity to handle some Neanderthal artifacts to see if they speak to you.

I missed seeing the live version the zoom panel on early female SF fans. But I was able to view the recording. It was, indeed, a really interesting session. The historical identification which considered female fans in the 40s and 50s to be almost entirely wives and girlfriends of the "real" male fans, is yet another example of a skewed anthropological view whose judgments are based on the culture of the reporters, rather than a clear-eyed view of those being studied.

### Greg Rihn

[SC] When you say that you are giving up on the job hunt, does that mean you are officially retiring? I try hard not to give people unsolicited advice, but here are just two thoughts. First, sometimes opportunities come along when one is not actively hunting. Second, being a Field Organizer might lead to contacts (networking) that could lead to something. Stay open to possibility. I think it makes sense to stop doing what isn't working. Best of luck to you as always, my friend.

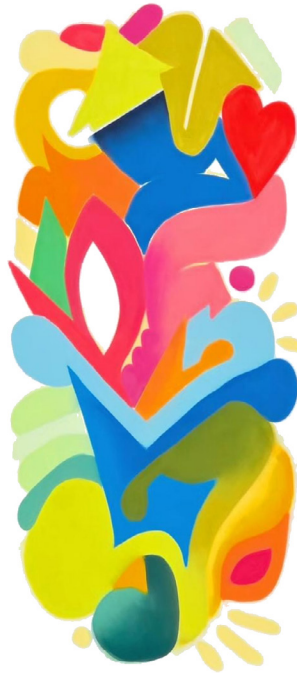
Great bunch of events y'all went to last month. I think I would have only passed on the old movies, though your descriptions were interesting to read. I think we will miss the Grohmann Museum this time due to an unexpectedly busy and expensive schedule lately. Keep us posted on other events there, however. We'd both like to go back. OMG, I did not know about the missing brake pedals in Teslas! What happens if the sensors fail? Is the emergency brake lever really handy? Oh hell no.

RE: **Steve Swartz** on Atlantic Magazine's list, I also saw that list. I think such lists exist to push back on old white guys like Harold Bloom proclaiming what does and doesn't forever belong in the canon of "Great American Novels." Nobody ever agrees with all the choices. The argument about it is the point. That said, I was amused, and sometimes intrigued, by a number of their choices including *Biography of X*, which I read and trashed last month.

[JG] I would have liked to have seen the Grohmann Museum exhibit (Pattern of Meaning), but it just wasn't in the cards for us this time. We really do want to go back sometime though, as Scott said above.

I am eager to see what costumes you and Georgie come up with for next year's Teslacon!

Happily, there is no HOA in our neighborhood and we are free to decorate our house however we please. So far, the few comments we've gotten about the artwork have begun with a question, "did someone tag your house?" Talk about caste hierarchies – there are also value hierarchies in styles of artwork (e.g. handicraft art gets less respect than so-called "fine art"), and one of the very lowest rungs is reserved for graffiti. I feel differently. Unless I'm in a hurry to get someplace, I actually don't mind getting stopped at a train crossing. I've always enjoyed looking at the artwork adorning freight trains. But I think some people define spray-painted graffiti as "not-art" – maybe based on their assessment of the identity of the artists? Anyway, it has been a lot of fun watching Liubov Szwako/Triangulador's artwork evolve from mattress graffiti to gorgeous wall murals, and most recently to this piece with a very different style:



Liubov Szwako/Triangulador

### Steven Vincent Johnson

[JG] Sadly, I note that you discovered no recyclable organs suitable for transplants during your office chair autopsy.

Re your comment to **Steve Swartz**: So far, I haven't tried using my iPhone to purchase anything and would rather not. I guess this is one of the stereotypical "Boomer" behaviors that fits me. I may be fairly comfortable using electronic devices and engaging in on-line activities, probably more than some others of my generation, but I don't want to use my iPhone as a credit card and I resist giving out my bank details in order to automatically pay bills. OK Boomer, OK. Happily, I do not end texts by typing "Sincerely yours, Jeanne Gomoll." It could be worse.

### Walter Freitag

[SC] What a harrowing trip-to-the-ER story. I hope Barbara is healing well and you are both recovering. It took me back to my own experience at the UW Hospital ER after my bike accident in 2018, where I broke my collar bone. Jeanne drove me in and, for a weekday afternoon, it was very busy. They did not have a room available, so I ended up sitting on a gurney in a big open area near the nurses' station. In my case, treatment was simple. I got an x-ray, they told me they couldn't really do anything, gave me some Tylenol and a sling for my arm and released me. I had to go in regularly for x-rays to monitor progress with the bone knitting. I wonder now what kind of a wait we would have had if I'd needed surgery.

I hope Barbara's memory loss turns out to be insignificant. Please keep us posted.

[JG] I'm so sorry that you and Barbara had to endure such a nightmarish day and night, and even more sorry that such a "liminal space" waits for all of us after a fall, an illness, or some other accident. Scary.

### Andy Hooper

[SC] Delightful story about Suzanne Waldron, I think it's one of my favorite Horror Host pieces. She seems to have been very clever and fun.

Bill Breiding's article was fun, too. My favorite part was his dream of you producing A.I. copies of fans. That was funny. The rest of your letter column was great! Kudos to an especially hilarious letter from Steve Bieler.

[JG] I enjoyed reading the story of Tarantula Goul. Thanks Andy. You expressed a wish for video. Myself, I'd like to read her autobiography. I bet her life was an interesting one.

I recognize the assumption that graffiti often signifies an abandoned building, but I've always resisted that connotation. I like looking at the sometimes-magnificent spray-painted art on train cars and buildings, even as I sympathize with the owners of those surfaces. That's partially why I became so enthusiastic about Liubov, because he found legally available surfaces (discarded mattresses) on which to create his art and improve his techniques. After removing vandalism as a factor, it's much easier to look at the art for what it is, and to admire the colors, composition, and line work. Most people seem to have grown comfortable with mural work, commissioned by building owners, even if their style resembles graffiti

art. I hope that by celebrating Liubov/Triangulador's work on our garage, we might nudge a few people to look at graffiti with more appreciative eyes.

We haven't watched the series, *Ray Donovan*, but I will add it to our list for possible future viewing!

I loved Bill Breiding's stream-of-consciousness, What's-New article. I also managed to avoid Niven and Pournelle's novel, *A Mote in God's Eye* when it was published around the time I discovered fandom, same as Bill. I haven't been tempted to remedy that omission and wonder why Bill felt the need to subject himself to it.

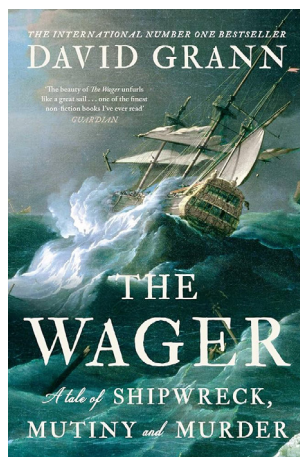
I laughed frequently while reading Steve Bieler's letter, but groaned when he shared the story of the fan who memorialized a piece of Wonder Bread that had been run over by a car. Are you not worried, Andy, that **someone** will be inspired to make a *Turbo* cover using a similar technique? Think, man!

### Carrie Root

[SC] I enjoyed reading about your travels, except for the part about the con crud, of course. As I have written before, I have only been in Vegas once, a brief drive through during the day on a family vacation to L.A. in 1963. I was seven. I have long suspected the place has changed a lot since then. Whenever I think of visiting Vegas, I sort of dread the sensory adjustment I'll have to make when I arrive.

You wrote about the "dreamy quality" of *Little, Big* which is spot on. It definitely has a dreaminess to it.

In other reading news, in March I finished *The Wager* by David Grann (*Killers of the Flower Moon*, *The Lost City of Z*). It's the story of the shipwreck of the British man-of-war *The Wager* in 1741 near Cape Horn at the southern tip of South America. It's about the struggle to survive by the castaways, the survivors' return to Britain and ultimately a court martial to determine the truth of charges of mutiny and murder that the survivors directed at each other upon their return. It's a helluva story if you don't mind a bit of starvation, scurvy, stormy seas, treachery, bravery, violence and death. Not cozy.



[JG] I was glad to read that you were able to adapt your carefully-made travel plans and fly out of Ontario rather than hold on to your original plans and drive back to Las Vegas. I can remember one or two vacations when I was unable or unwilling to alter reservations and carefully designed schedules in order to accommodate real life changes. Flexibility is good. Sounds like you had a great time in spite of contracting con crud.

I don't use my phone as a credit card. But I do deposit checks using our credit union's app. Why I distrust one thing and not another very similar thing ... is a mystery.

### Marilyn Holt

[SC] I'm glad the chemo is working out. Not often do people say they are "happy" with it, but I'm relieved that you are. I hope you gave the web-design company a shitty on-line review after you paid them. It's a shame that you felt you had to pay for a bad website.

[JG] I sympathize with your bad experiences getting a website designed. The Tiptree Award (now the Otherwise Award), worked with five designers – all commissioned jobs, paid decently – and had significant problems with all of them. The last designer gave us a great website, but was really difficult to work with and demanded that we have her do all updates (which were rarely promptly completed). Debbie Notkin was the only person able to maintain a cordial relationship with the designer and when Debbie retired from the motherboard, updates became torturous exercises. I don't know how well the website is being maintained now. From an outsider's point of view (me) it's difficult to differentiate between motherboard and web designer procrastination. Which is to say that I recognize your impatience with your designer. I'm sure that there are good ones out there.

### Steve Swartz

[SC] Every time our mail fails to show up (which is more and more frequent), I think about how Louis De Joy is still in office. I know Biden can't just fire him, but he should be able to do something. What good is it being "the most powerful person in the world" if you can't flush one poophead?

I appreciated your review of the novel *Dune*. I remember enjoying it 35 years ago and I think fondly of it today. After re-reading it a few years ago, Jeanne thought it didn't hold up well over time, so I'm not going to bother. I'm liking the new movie versions a lot. I don't much care what they do to the original story to make the movies work. I never read

beyond the first novel having been warned away from anything after *Dune Messiah* by other readers.

Down with snooty, elitist attitudes toward snapshots, zine writing, graffiti or any other creative activity that are often looked upon as not-serious-enough. Carry on please with your story-telling ambitions. I think it suits you very well.

I think I saw that same list of “22 funniest books” you mentioned. *American Psycho* (Bret Easton Ellis) was on it! I haven’t read it (yet), but I was not expecting that.

Why drive to Corvallis when the University of Oregon is just across Eugene? Won’t the Ducks take old Buckeyes?

[JG] As I’m sure I’ve told you several times, *Catch-22* is one of my favorite novels. It’s one of the few novels I’ve actually re-read several times. So, I look forward to hearing what you thought about it. As it happens, I’ve been thinking about it this week because Scott and I have been watching the Apple TV series, *Masters of the Air*, which follows the actions of the American 100th Bomb Group stationed in eastern England during World War II. Nearly all the original bomber (or “flying fortress”) crews were killed or forced to parachute down onto enemy territory within only a few months as they flew incredibly dangerous missions to destroy targets inside German-occupied Europe. (*Masters* serves as a companion to *Band of Brothers*, and *The Pacific*. Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg are both associated with all three series.) I was reminded of Yossarian’s terrible realization in *Catch-22*, that he was unlikely to survive the war if he continued to fly bombing missions, especially considering the fact that the maximum number of missions kept getting increased by the top brass.

I hope that Priority Mail delivers your apas on time. And I hope you enjoy playing with InDesign!

### Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] Thanks for the updates again and congratulations on the new great-great niece. Re: Boring, we may also be in a rut, but I think the change in weather may help us get out more and socialize. Paying off our garage project has been going slower than I hoped, so that has curtailed some travel plans during the winter when getting away is especially attractive. We have been able to go out a bit to a few shows and restaurants, but caution over COVID is still strong with us. Our intrepid little bowling group has been helpful for

me and I’m enjoying it a lot more than I thought I would. On travel, we’ve purchased memberships to the Seattle worldcon in 2025 and I’m hoping to drive. A trip up north, possibly Door County possibly elsewhere, is likely this summer/fall.

[JG] Weirdly, during my knee surgery recovery period, I had no trouble straightening my leg. I managed 0° just a week after surgery. I had much more trouble bending my knee past 90°. Well, I have never been very flexible, but my knee never did bend much past 110°.

Congratulations on the new grand-niece! Funny about Nancy’s malapropism, “Pollyanna”!

I had no idea that it was possible to keep a phone number as you have with Numberbarn and get around having to pay high fees to a carrier. Very interesting. I’d eventually like to see a day where once someone is assigned a phone number, they would own it for their lifetime, without having to extract it from whatever carriers they use. I’d also like to see extreme security measures apply to those “lifetime” numbers.

I sure hope we DO find out more about the 2023 Hugo scandal. I bet we would if *New York Times* or *Washington Post* investigative reporters were convinced this was a newsworthy story. Those journalists have been amazing over these past many years, uncovering emails and making connections that have pushed congress and the courts to investigate scandals that, not too long in the past, would have been covered up and forgotten.

Every once in a while, I notice someone walking past our house pausing at the end of the driveway and looking at our garage art. Their expressions are not disapproving. I’m looking forward to the summer block party which happens on our street, right in front of our house. I bet we will get a little more feedback on the artwork then.

### Kim & Kathi Nash

[SC] Kim, thanks for the medical update. We now know that you made it through the surgery and understand that you are clear of cancer. Good. Healing is the order of the day. I think Kathi will take good care of you.

[JG] I’m so glad they caught the cancer early. So are you, I’m sure. Thank you, science.

### Jeannie Bergmann

[SC] You have had an impressive series of medical issues lately. Wow. Best wishes for a full recovery.

## Luke McGuff

Re: your comment to me on morel hunting: When I was young and lived on the farm, I used to go hunting for them every year in the nearby woods. The advice I was given back then was to look under dead Elm trees, but since I would not recognize an Elm tree if it smacked me on the head, I just looked in general for likely spots. The fun part of finding morels was that you often did not just find them one or two at a time. If you spot one, look around very carefully because there will usually be more nearby, sometimes many, many more.

Congratulations on the poetry award nominations and being selected a SFPA Grand Master and Lifetime Service Award!

[JG] Members of this apa are having entirely too many health issues. So sorry to hear about the very expensive, concurrent health insurance annoyances. This should not be happening to anyone. Damn.

I actually prefer to drink my tea with ½+½ and sweetener, usually Splenda. I might like milk if we drank whole milk, but the stuff in the fridge is 2%, which turns tea gray and unappetizing. I order my tea on-line from a store in Austin, Texas to which my sister Julie introduced me when I was visiting many years ago. The company is named “Zhi Tea,” and my favorite of their offerings is coconut Assam. Yum. I like it hot and I like it cold, as sun tea. Every time I re-order, I add a note telling them that coconut Assam is my favorite tea, and beg them to please never never discontinue it. There is now a little medallion on Zhi Tea’s coconut Assam page declaring it “a customer favorite!”

Your comment about deaths associated with consumption of morels sent me googling for more information. The news about the Montana restaurant that served China-sourced morels during the Spring of 2023 was easy to find, but apparently there were no deaths, according to the CDC. 51 people suffered severe gastrointestinal illness after eating raw morels.

I was shocked. I love eating morels, luckily never raw. But still. And despite that warning, Scott and I are already on the lookout for this Spring’s offerings of morels which we hope to find at the farmers’ market. We are already anticipating a steak and (cooked) morel dinner.

Congratulations on the Grand Master Award and publishing successes!

“Afterimage” was terrifying and felt much too real.

[SC] Two zines for the price of one. What a deal! The Hilltop with you guys was fun, we can do another restaurant again anytime. I like a “murmuration” of birders. I remember the WisCon retreat at the Holy Wisdom Monastery. It was a very nice, quiet place to have an open, civil, positive discussion of what we hoped WisCon’s future might be. <sigh>

I can tell you guys are serious about helping Warner Park and the FBC if you choose to attend committee meetings about them. I enjoyed reading about all your nature-related activities once again.

RE: review of *The Midnight Library* and regrets, I’m pretty happy with how things have worked out for us overall, so I don’t have a lot of regrets about choices I made in the past. The only people I have ever really envied were people who found their “life’s work.” I have known several people who’ve said to me that they had no intention of retiring because they love what they do. I never had that feeling about work. I would like to have had that. My jobs were always a means to an end, just a way to make a living while my real life moved along. I never really figured out what work would have given me so much satisfaction that I looked forward to doing it every day. I’m retired now and happy with that, so I no longer have much curiosity about what could have been.

[JG] We enjoyed meeting you and Julie at The Hilltop. I had forgotten what thing delayed our trip out there and was puzzled at first by your reference, so I had to look at my calendar. Oh, right! Liubov was finishing the painting on our garage that afternoon. We didn’t want to hurry him. Somehow those two events – the painting and dinner with you guys – had gotten disconnected in my mind.

The first time we had dinner at the Hilltop was after we discovered that they offered broasted chicken (which is a rare thing in this area, less so in Iowa, which is where I first tasted it). Later we visited the Hilltop with a group a few times before attending APT plays. In addition, Scott is fascinated by Wisconsin supper clubs. So, we go there a few times a year.

It’s been years since I did my own taxes, which means it’s been years



since I suffered a finances-related anxiety attack and got grumpy and sarcastic toward any person who dared to talk to me while I was filling out tax forms. Those were the bad old days. I hated balancing my checkbook too, and would often go months without bringing my checkbook up to date, which of course lead to big mistakes that made everything much worse. But once I started to do serious freelance work (concurrent with my job at the DNR), I was able to justify paying someone to do my taxes for me. And eventually, when I started my own business (Union Street Design), things got so complicated, that no one in their right mind would want to do taxes without professional assistance. Even though I'm no longer in business and our taxes are less complicated now, I will never go back to doing them by myself and heartily endorse Julie's preference to get it done as soon as possible. Bonus, I no longer have issues with balancing my checkbook. Once I learned how to use QuickBooks and could leave the arithmetic to the computer, I actually started to like keeping track of my finances.

I'm so glad that you and Julie are feeling comfortable here in Madison. It actually surprised me at first when you reported that you were enjoying more social interactions here than you did in Seattle. I guess my impression of Seattle is of a very active fannish scene, in contrast to Madison's fan group which no longer even gathers once a week, as we did for so many years. Perhaps the critical difference is that fans are more spread out in the Seattle area than we are here in Madison and it takes more effort to get together? Also, you've put a lot of effort into joining multiple groups, not just fannish ones. I really admire how you are making a place for yourselves in this community!

I liked Haig's *The Midnight Library*. It echoes a familiar sort of daydream I frequently have – thinking about roads not taken and parallel universes where my life would be different. I don't often regret the road I actually took, but I still like thinking about the many options that might have led to different lives. I liked Haig's *idea* a lot, though if I recall, the story seemed a little thin.

### Jae Leslie Adams

[SC] During biking season I end up cruising around your end of town fairly often. I tend to avoid taking the bike path over the causeway across Lake Monona (too busy, too narrow) I prefer to ride through Brittingham Park and around Monona Bay on Shore Dr. and Lakeside St. to pick up the path again at Olin Park. I will also frequently

turn off Shore Dr. at Erin St. to cross Park St. to the Arboretum or the Cannonball Path off Fish Hatchery. I will often wander around neighborhood streets. I have been known to stop at Zu Zu Café on Drake for coffee, but Cargo is another possibility when I'm riding down Wingra Dr. I was sad when you lost the Park Street Barriques. Grace Coffee, across the street, never really charmed me. It's easy to see why you like walking in your neighborhood.

[JG] Perhaps I am not understanding what the issue was when the Microsoft Word file which you delivered to FedEx, printed differently than expected. But just in case this is helpful to you....

Microsoft documents rely on defaults set on YOUR PERSONAL COMPUTER. That is, when you transmit (or hand-carry) a file to a print shop, or even to a friend's personal computer, the document will almost always come out looking different than they did when you created them, because when the document is opened on a different computer, the file readjusts itself to the defaults set in that other computer. What you need to do is to make a PDF out of your MS Word document and have FedEx print the PDF, not your MS Word doc. You can make a PDF when you use the "Save As" command.

My apologies if you know all that and I have misunderstood the problem!

### Pat Hario

[SC] Your ever-changing zine titles rock. I find that house projects are deeply satisfying. I'm a little sad now that we have to limit ourselves to projects that make sense for us at our age. Investing in solar probably doesn't make sense for us, for instance, considering the likely amount of time we have left to live here. There are only one or two smallish things I'd still like to do, but we have to balance that against doing the traveling that we want to do while we are still able.

Awesome trip report! The ship you were on was gigantic, but you said it could be tough on sailing days when everyone was crowded onto the ship. Almost 7000 guests are a lot of people. Does that mean that all the things like the pools, shops, decks, restaurants, etc. were full? That possibility had not occurred to me. I also did not know the cruise lines owned their own islands. Not being a Dr. Who fan, I am unfamiliar with the celebrities so I appreciated your depictions of them. The zip line and park excursion sounded like great fun. I'd do that, too, although most of your excursions sounded good to

me. You have not convinced me to do a cruise on a ship that size, but maybe something much smaller.

We are watching stuff on our temporary Hulu membership (that we got in desperation that night you were here and we were trying to find a live broadcast of the Oscars.) We're keeping up with *Shogun*, completed the two seasons of *The Bear* and just finished the only season of *Under the Banner of Heaven* which is based on real murder case in an LDS community in Utah. All great stuff.

RE: your comment to me for #452, I was not on my bike when I took that photo. My bike has narrow tires so I don't ride if there is snow or ice around. I think I was on a stroll to Willy St. Coop.

[JG] I really liked your cruise report. I'm glad it turned out so well! Love the picture of you on the zip line and the one with a monkey perched on your shoulder. And the photo of the ship – Holy cow, what a monster!

Re those inaccessible question marks: Are you able to use your phone's microphone to write texts? All you have to do is say the phrase "question mark" and your phone will insert it. (Along with periods, commas, colons, semi-colons, etc.)

### Karl Hailman & Hope Kiefer

[SC] Great zine! First time I have heard of Vantablack. I went straight to Google to check it out, thank you. Best birthday wishes to both of you. Sounds like your celebrations were fun, except for assembling an IKEA sofa. These days I think I would find both kittens and assembling IKEA furniture aggravating. I also wish you luck searching for the solar eclipse. In 2017, we drove all the way to Carbondale to watch a cloud block our view of totality. The trip was fun anyway, but we are staying home this time to watch it on TV (it currently looks like it will be a cloudy day around here on the 8th, hopefully less so where you're going.) [JG] Please note that Scott wrote this paragraph before we made the last-moment decision to dash south and witness totality. More on this below.]

Darrah's death came as a shock to us. We had intended to attend his memorial service but somehow, we missed seeing the obituary in time with the details. Since the apa came out, we know that John Peacock has passed. I know he (and Paula?) were *Turbo* members at one point, but I know it was not during my 3-year tenure as OE in the early '90's. I'm sorry for his passing.

[JG] I am very sorry to have missed Darrah's memorial service. I would have wanted to be there. I knew that they were planning a service but I got the impression that it would be later. I should have checked back to look at Darrah's Facebook page again or searched for the official obituary. Damn.

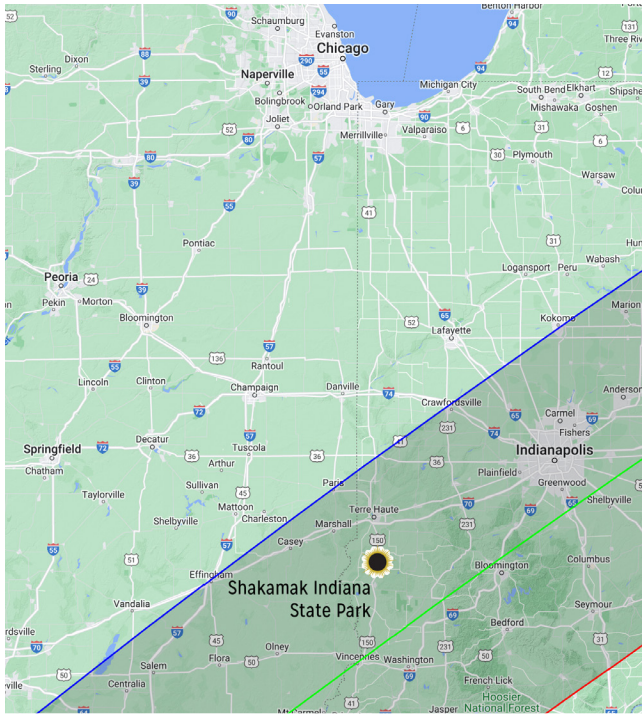
Did you manage to find clear skies to view the eclipse and totality? We did!

Second time was the charm for us. On August 21, 2017, Scott and I drove down to Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois, which calls itself the "Eclipse Crossroads of America" because it is located in the totality path for both 2017 and this year, 2024. It was blazing hot, but the exhibits and lectures were great. And we scored a bunch of eclipse viewing shades there. But we missed the totality because a very small, but very dense cloud floated in front of the moon a few moments before the moon blocked the sun. Hundreds of people sitting in the stadium groaned in unison as the cloud strategically photo bombed the moon and sun at exactly the wrong moment.

We thought maybe we'd drive down to Austin Texas for the 2024 eclipse. Surely, we thought, the skies would be more likely to be clear in Texas! But the complexity of driving down to Texas overcame our willingness to make arrangements. Happily, our procrastination worked to our benefit. Weather forecasts for Texas were not great. We might have made non-refundable hotel reservations and visiting plans only to miss totality again.

This time, just two days before the eclipse, as Scott and I ate breakfast, I said, "You know I will really hate missing it." We checked out the weather maps and spontaneously decided to drive down the next day to the nearest part of the eclipse path that were predicted to have clear skies. We settled on the area south of Indianapolis. Luckily, we already had our eclipse shades (from 2017). I made a hotel reservation in Springfield Illinois (a couple hours outside of the eclipse path because all the hotels inside the eclipse path were booked up or hideously expensive). We arrived in Springfield late Sunday afternoon and early Monday morning drove toward Terra Haute, Indiana. In the end we chose to view the eclipse at the very lovely Shakamak Indiana State Park, about 30 miles south of Terra Haute, close to the centerline of the eclipse path. The sky was clear. We settled into our lawn chairs and read until the show began, and then watched the sun disappear through our spiffy eclipse shades. Everyone cheered. Totality was awesome and the trip was well





worth it. Thank goodness we didn't try to plan it in advance!

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You must have missed the story I published in the October 2023 issue of *Turbo* (#448), "The Marriage Question," in which I revealed Scott's and my 2003 secret marriage. Once I decided to write about it in my memoir, Scott and I decided that family and friends should probably hear about it from us first. Considering how long it has already taken to get my books published (they're being edited now), I could have easily waited a while longer to tell the story. But the truth is out now.

### Andrea Connell

[SC] *Turbo* can always use a few more dedicated dog-owners IMHO. Schnauzers are great. So what if you have to bury the occasional Xenomorph or Amazon driver corpse in the backyard, not everything can be a plus. I like their names. I hope you are not the only full-blown SF fan in the household who can appreciate those names (hopefully no eye-rolling from the teenagers, especially.)

*Emily Wilde's Encyclopedia of Faeries* sounds like fun. It's not too soon to think about SF Without Borders book group recommendations for next year, just sayin'.

[JG] I'm glad you were able to find a non-cat cat-substitute to provide affirmations of love and worth.

I wonder if you are using the word "cozy" in a commonly understood way. Is chopping off heads normally included in the definition? However, I approve 100% of your unique interpretation.

### Ruth & Jim Nichols

[SC] Jim, I have only the vaguest memories of what I was reading when I was 10 in 1966. I know I've never heard of the Sladek novel. Sounds like something I might have liked.

Ruth, I liked the drawings and the bookmark. Were the train drawings from memory or were they drawn during the trip?

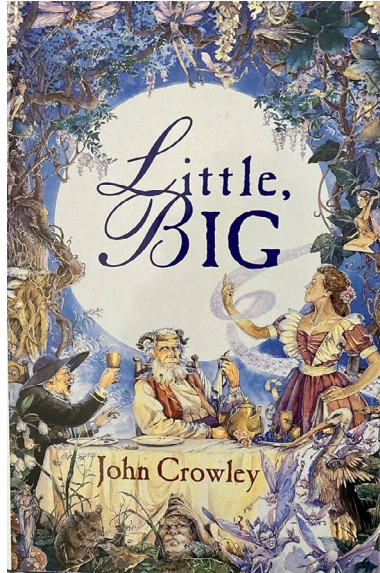
[JG] I like the gel pen art on red cardstock. Very nice! And a great project for arting days.

## What's New

### Little, Big Book 2, Chapters 3 & 4

[SC] I think of Chapter 3 as “The Seduction of Sophie” chapter, though she wasn’t really seduced. Or was she? Or was she taken advantage of (raped?) by George Mouse? As is so often the case in this book, it’s not really clear.

It happened as required by the Tale, it seems. George appears to be stumbling through this chapter, clearly sent on a mission (to impregnate Sophie). George desires her, but he does not understand that he is acting in the service of the Tale. At a card reading later with Cloud, she recognizes that he represents the Vista of corridors and doors spreading out before her that, I believe, show her all the possibilities, the elements and patterns of the Tale. But she doesn’t understand what it all means and is unable to explain what she sees to George. In the final scene of this chapter, George is staggering around Edgewood house in the middle of the night searching for Sophie’s bedroom when he gets confused and enters Alice’s young daughters’ bedroom only to observe some sort of mysterious fairie creature sprinkling (magic?) dust on the daughters’ sleeping faces. The fairie faces George, but disappears. George ends up returning to his own room and drinking himself to sleep. I found the sexual overtones of this chapter to be a bit creepy (especially the part about the album of Auberon’s photos of naked Alice and Sophie



as children that George sees during the seduction scene.)

Book 2 ends with Chapter 4, in which a lot happens. Christmas at Edgewood with an interesting tradition. Instead of writing letters to Santa, everyone writes what they want on pieces of paper to burn in the fireplace where the smoke will transport the

messages to Santa. Santa even makes an appearance. Sophie realizes she is pregnant and tries to lie to Alice about who impregnated her, telling Alice it was Alice’s husband Smoky who did it until she finally breaks down and confesses it was really George. Sophie begs Alice to not reveal who the real father is because she’s so embarrassed about it being George. Better if everyone believes it’s Smoky, including Smoky (since he has had sex in the past with Sophie “3 ½ times”). Alice agrees to keep the secret and place the blame on Smoky. Later Alice forgives Smoky for his indiscretions. Time passes until one day a stork nests on the roof of Edgewood. The stork is someone

imprisoned in the shape of a stork and sent to keep watch for the arrival of Sophie’s child. After the child arrives, Alice’s now magical daughters predict that Sophie’s new child, Lilac, “will not stay long.” But will one day return. That night, fairies steal into Sophie and Lilac’s room and replace the real Lilac with a false Lilac. Where is all this going? I have no idea, but it’s certainly not like any fantasy I have ever read. There was a lot of dialog in this chapter and I thought it was all beautifully written. I feel I have a lot in common with the perpetually confused Smoky, but, like him, I’m caught up in the story and must proceed.

### Little, Big reading schedule

<b>Book One:</b> <i>Edgewood</i>	<b>Book Two:</b> <i>Brother North: Wind's Secret</i>	<b>June:</b> Chaps 3, 4	<b>Book Five:</b> <i>The Art of Memory</i>	<b>Book Six:</b> <i>The Fairies' Parliament</i>
<b>January:</b> Chaps 1, 2, 3	<b>March:</b> Chaps 1, 2	<b>Book Four:</b> <i>The Wild Wood</i>	<b>September:</b> Chaps 1, 2	<b>November:</b> Chaps 1, 2, 3
<b>February:</b> Chaps 4, 5	<b>April:</b> Chaps 3, 4	<b>July:</b> Chaps 1, 2	<b>October:</b> Chaps 3, 4	<b>December:</b> Chaps 4, 5
	<b>Book Three:</b> <i>Old Law Firm</i>	<b>August:</b> Chaps 3, 4		
	<b>May:</b> Chaps 1, 2			



## Movies and Streaming

[JG] *Elsbeth* (CBS and Paramount+) If you were fans of *The Good Wife* and/or *The Good Fight*, you may remember the very entertaining character, Elsbeth Tascioni, a ditsy-but-brilliant attorney played by Carrie Preston. I was always glad to see her when she popped up in an episode. I am much less enamored of the same character presented as the protagonist of her own series. Sadly, it's really not well written. I expected more of the writer-producer pair, Robert and Michelle King, who were responsible for some great shows including *The Good Wife*, *The Good Fight*, *Evil*, and *BrainDead*. We watched just the first three episodes of *Elsbeth*, and it was so formulaic that we swiftly absorbed the plot template and decided that watching more episodes would be a futile, repetitive exercise. Not recommended. (On the other hand, I keep hearing it referred to as belonging to the "cozy mystery" genre, which doesn't interest me. If you like cozy mysteries, maybe you should ignore my comments.)

*Masters of the Air* (Apple+) This 9-episode series is a companion for two other war drama miniseries, *Band of Brothers* and *The Pacific*. All three series were produced by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg – each of them covering a major WWII theater. *Masters* recounts the story of the U.S. 100th Bomb Group, based in eastern England during World War II, and follows bomber crews on dangerous missions to destroy targets inside German-occupied Europe, as they battle relentless anti-aircraft fire (flak) and flocks of German fighters. It was hard to believe any of them were able to survive and indeed, most did not. Hundreds of them, the lucky ones, ended up parachuting from their destroyed planes and ended up in German Staligs. The survival rate was minuscule. It's a stunning and brutal story. Recommended

*This is Us* (Netflix) What an amazing series. *This is Us* got great reviews when it was released. I remember hearing great stuff, including that it won multiple awards, but I'd never watched it during the years it

was playing. But it's all available on Netflix now, so Scott and I started watching last month. It's an epic family drama, beginning with two characters who fall in love, get married, raise three children all exactly the same age (a white boy and girl, and a black boy), and eventually die. But by the end of the sixth season (each with 18 episodes, except for the pandemic year which only (!) aired 16 episodes), we meet the couple's parents and grandparents; we also see the three children grow into adults, celebrate annual birthdays, build lives, experience crises, find partners, have their own children, and in some cases, welcome grandchildren. Fans asked for a seventh season but the producers shouted them down: "You already know everything about their lives!" (In spite of that, I hear that a new podcast will air in May, called *This Was Us*.) The series does not follow the characters' lives chronologically. Each episode moves back into the past, weaving scenes into ones set in the "current" time, and sometimes, reaching far into the future, to compare and contrast similar life challenges, exploring how parents and siblings influence choices made by adult selves. Scott and I were stunned by the difficulty of filming. Episodes featuring kids who played young versions of the main characters were sometimes filmed several years in advance of an episode where those scenes would be used. This was an extremely well-planned series. I really admired it, and to be honest, was completely absorbed by the stories and characters. I dreamt about it a few times. I think it would probably be impossible for anyone to watch it and be able to resist identifying themselves and family members with the show characters and situations. Highly recommended.

*Wicked Little Letters* (theater) We didn't see many movies this month, just this one, I think. But we enjoyed it. It is set in 1920 in a small seaside town in England (Littlehampton), and is based on a true scandal and an investigation into the anonymous author of numerous crudely insulting letters sent to town residents. It stars Olivia Colman and Jessie

Buckley (those two actors would have drawn us to the theater no matter what the movie had been about), who portray the recipient of some of the first letters (Coleman), and chief suspect (Buckley). Anjana Vasani is great as a female police officer of Indian descent. The film is funny even as the plot excoriates the position of women and girls in society.

### TurboCon

[JG] I haven't responded to any comments here about TurboCon. Send me an email if you want to add or delete something from the TurboCon chart. I will send a new version out on May 1.

### "Am I the A\*\*hole?"

[JG] If you recall, last September I submitted a stage play ("Am I the A\*\*hole") to a competition run by Madison's Forward theater. Winners were announced last month. While I was not one of the four winners, they sent me a warm, very complementary note, along with three dense pages of notes containing some really excellent observations and suggestions. The note-writer(s) concluded with this very encouraging sentence: "This is a play worth working on" and urged me to submit a revised version of my play to them later this year. I have already begun work on a wholesale re-write and am excited by the new direction and ideas suggested. So: to be continued...