

Madison four square

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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Covers

[SC] I love the bold Pride flag colors for the cover this month, **J.J.** Your choice to do issue #420 with the little pot leaf is hilarious. Just before picking up the apa I read an opinion piece in the Washington Post by Brian Broome where he talked about how much he always liked the expression “Love Is Love” whenever it showed up on signs or shirts at Pride events. He wrote: “The essence of the message seemed to me completely true. Love is, in fact, just love, regardless of who is giving or receiving it.

But as I’ve gotten older, and hopefully wiser, I’ve come to think that this message, in and of itself, occludes the real issue of what people are protesting when they object to the lives and freedoms of gay people. Love isn’t the problem. I don’t believe that homophobes object to whether same-sex couples love each other.

No, it’s not the love. It’s the sex.”

His piece goes on to talk about how, in his experience, homophobes always focus on physical touching and sex and never talk about love. Interesting piece.

[JG] Nice!

Andy Hooper

[SC] Another fine issue of *Captain Flashback* with a nice mix of subjects this month. I found the history of the FAAN awards to be very interesting, but your research into what became of George Willick after he dropped out of fandom really drew me in. His life story was not exceptional, but ordinary in a way that I found as interesting in its own way as the much more famous and successful horror host, Zacherley in your subsequent article. Willick was involved enough in fandom to produce a zine, promote more recognition of fan editors, writers and artists with more awards, actually write and sell SF stories and then he gafiated and apparently never looked back. I wonder if he even continued to read SF or see SF movies or TV shows. I wonder if he abandoned friends and correspondents from his fannish days as well.

That Zacherley poster was great. One of my favorite details from your Zacherley article was how he managed, as prominent as he was and as old as he got, to keep his private life private to the very end.

[JG] Great write-up of the proto-FAAN Awards and George Willick. I love how you managed to piece together what likely happened in his life after abandoning his idea of Fan Achievement Awards. I hope that if you ever run down *Parsection* #4’s editorial, that you will let us know if its contents confirmed your theories. Fascinating that Willick had such grandiose but weird plans for a naked-lady-with-knives Fan Achievement trophy. There *were* sculpted trophies given out during the first round of FAAN Awards, or at least there were in the two years, 1979 and 1980, when Jan Bogstad and I won FAANs for editing *Janus*. The trophies were designed, I think, by Randy Bathurst.

They stood about 8 inches tall including a wooden base with an etched metal plate displaying the name of the winner, category and date. On top of the wooden base was a mimeograph machine sculpted out of modeling clay, on which a Bathurst-style cartoon guy stood. He wore a propeller beanie and looked properly crogged. Sadly, my two trophies kept falling apart over the years. The metal plates fell off, and the clay sculpture suffered from some clay-based case of leprosy. Arms, legs, mimeo crank, and various other parts fell off. The clay sculptures were dust magnets but nonetheless impossible to clean without causing damage. I've inserted a photo of Dave Langford's trophy. Dave did a much better job keeping his trophy safe than me; I finally threw mine away when they became impossible to repair. But even Dave's trophy is missing its mimeo crank. I think I see part of it lying on top of the wooden base in the photo.



(Re your comment to **Carrie**) I would like to read the story or novel titled, *The Woman Who Alphabetized the Forest*.

Lisa Freitag

[SC] Thanks for your excellent essay on your experiences visiting George Floyd Square. Had I lived or worked near there, I'm sure I would have also been tempted to visit the square, in my case out of curiosity as well as a desire to show some support and sympathy. Like you, I think I would have experienced an acute sense of being out of place in a location that carried such a strong emotional charge for people of color. That feeling probably would have dissuaded me from returning.

Here in Madison, Jeanne and I did not participate in the BLM and George Floyd demonstrations and marches downtown, mostly out of concern for COVID exposure. Had COVID not been an issue, I probably would have attended at least some of the early marches here. As people got angrier though, I would have stayed away just because I would have felt out of place and my participation might not have helped matters.

[JG] Thanks Lisa. Your evocative description of how George Floyd Square has changed over the last 14 months, made for a lovely essay. One of the things I like about your writing is how you describe what you see and feel without trying to rearrange your impressions

in order to build evidence for a theory or political point. It's sort of the opposite of "mansplaining."

Elizabeth Matson

[SC] Your article on the pelicans in Janesville was brilliant. You painted us a crystal clear picture of the situation, thank you. But what you are also saying is that it looks like we, here in Madison, need a free flowing river with a lot of fish and some sand bars to attract these interesting birds.

We have the Yahara River, which is blocked

and regulated at one end by the Tenney Locks, so probably not ideal for ensuring large schools of fish are available. It's also not very wide or deep, maybe not practical for the big birds' coordinated fishing maneuvers. Down the street from us is Starkweather Creek which is also not very big. So, the prospects for attracting pelicans here do not look good. I don't suppose promoting the wide variety of coffee shops and craft beer outlets in the vicinity of our river would help much. Oh well, you will just have to share pictures and stories of their antics in Janesville with us. They sound like great fun to watch.

Good news about more options for dogs in Janesville. The massive demand for house pets during the pandemic may have resulted in more pressure on the city to loosen up their restrictions. The Janesville Market may be tiny, and the "square" may not actually be square, but the location in two new park areas connected across the river sounds nice and, with farmers' markets, if people turn out the vendors will soon flock there, too. I can easily believe that Nick the Greyhound would be popular with the farmers' market crowd.



[JG] Perhaps Janesville's pelicans are time-traveling stewards of the Rock River. They travel back and forth between pre-dam days and post-dam days, tending to

the river's flora and fauna. They scooped up fish whose lives were threatened when the dam was built, and rescued them by transporting them to the healthier, future waters of the Rock River, after the dam was taken down. Dam ogre changelings who lived within the rotting embankment tried to hold off the dam's destruction by presenting themselves as reactionary Janesville residents at city council meetings. But a brave young pelican named Blink and her good friend

Nick, the greyhound, chased the ogres out of town and back into the pilings, which freed Janesville to make the right decision for the environment, and liberated the Rock River from the dam's choking embrace. In thanks to Nick and his pelican friend for their bravery, local parks and trails welcomed dogs on leashes from that day forward!

(Re your comment to **Greg Rihn**) I also dislike the re-naming of places and buildings with company names and logos, and I agree with you that when a building is named after a person, a benefactor, it doesn't seem as egregious. For me, that's because the building named after a patron seems to just say: "Remember this person. She did some good things." On the other hand, the building named after a company turns that building into a forever-commercial. It's been years since Madison's Coliseum was renamed the Aliant Energy Center, but I still prefer to call it the Coliseum.

Jae Leslie Adams

[SC] I hope your solo drive to Duluth, and the time spent there helping with the toddlers, all went smoothly. Thanks also for the fun wedding details. I also developed an affection for the Mississippi River during two periods when I lived near it, for two years when I lived in the Prairie du Chien area and for a year when I lived in Davenport. It took me a while to get oriented in Davenport because I lived in an apartment located between the main thoroughfares of Harrison and Brady Streets. Those streets ran perpendicular to the Mississippi River, but at Davenport the river turns so it actually runs East/West through the city instead of North/South. Brady and Harrison ran North and South. It took me awhile to get used to orienting myself to navigating around the city by thinking of the Mississippi as an East–West river.

[JG] "Taking an interest in my own adventures," sounds like a good fanzine article title. A wedding and two road trips, all in the season of hidden trash. Great zine, Jae.

Greg Rihn

[SC] We also loved the movie *Soul*, but in your review you did not mention the jazzy Oscar-winning score by Jon Baptiste. The music was my favorite part.

Thanks for mentioning your visit to the Milwaukee Zoo. I don't think I have been there since I first moved to the Madison area in 1987. I remember being impressed with it back then, maybe it's time for a return visit.

I also liked the Tom Gault cartoons. Genre fiction vs. proper literary fiction, the struggle never ends.

[JG] Loved *Soul*, and as Scott mentioned, the music was wonderful; we've both become big fans of John Baptiste. This animated film is one of those sadly unusual animations in which excellent writing and a great story are of primary importance. The Pixar studio and Pixar alumni are justifiably proud of the fact that story, for them, comes before special effects. The element that I find myself referring to frequently is the part in *Soul* that takes part "in the zone;" I love it when I work "in the zone."

It's been wonderful to return to restaurants, movies and theater, but I've been disappointed so far by the shows we've seen at American Players Theater. This will not be one of my favorite seasons. I liked *The Mountaintop* the best of the shows we've seen so far, though Scott was put off by the fantasy element. I think I liked James DeVita's *An Improbable Fiction* better as a streamed production we saw last year, than the revised, stage version. Stoppard's *Rough Crossing* was just too silly to me, though that is exactly what it was supposed to be. I was disappointed because I have loved every other Stoppard play I've seen so much. We did not get tickets to *An Iliad* because we had already seen an APT version of it. We're going to see *Cymbeline* and Christopher Fry's *A Phoenix Too Frequent* in the next couple months. I see that *Oedipus* and *The Taming of the Shrew* are scheduled as autumn performances. I'd like to see the former, but definitely not the latter. I've sworn off *The Taming of the Shrew* forever.

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I loved your description of the evolution of Chalce over time. I like how it "grew" as opposed to being constructed. Do you have a map of this place that you have come to know so well, yet are constantly learning more about? What a cool world you have created. I think you answered all my questions, I particularly liked your response to my question about the continuation of the story and what Caltrigg might be up to while Bell is serving his time.

I was intrigued by your description of immersing yourself into the role of Mary Shelley for First Contact so far that you lost yourself. I thought right away that you had slipped easily into "method" acting, but your experience sounded deeper and more disturbing. I also found Heath Ledger's role as the Joker to be so impressive as to be a bit disturbing especially after he



Have you ever noticed a discarded bed mattress that had been coopted as a side-of-the-road canvas? We spot them frequently on Madison's east side. They are the work of experimental artist Liubov "Triangulador" Szwako, who (spray) paints on unconventional found objects like mattresses and TV screens. He also does large mural work.

died. There is acting, and then maybe there's a place some people can go beyond acting.

[JG] Thanks for explaining about Chalce and how you "discover" places and people in it. Your description reminds me of how Ursula Le Guin talks about exploring Earthsea and how, when she returned years after the trilogy was published, she saw it through the eyes of women.

Marilyn Holt

[SC] Since Jeanne works on our apazine after I do, she will probably write about our most recent bathroom developments right before our next issue gets printed off for deadline. The struggle we have had with this project is a new experience for us, our past projects moved along in a more timely fashion. As difficult as it has been, it still didn't stop me the other day from asking a question of one of the contractors related to a possible future job. I guess I haven't learned my lesson yet.

[JG] Yes, I will write about the bathroom project. It will be a sad story. We actually took two steps BACKWARD this month. *sigh* I've been telling everyone I know who is considering having work done on their house this year to wait till next year.

Carrie Root

[SC] By the end of all those GRANTA essays, did you agree that Travel Writing is Dead? I hope it isn't as I rather like it myself. I don't often go out of my way to find it, opting instead for some hot new SF or a compelling suspense novel. But when I'm sitting in a waiting room or riding in a plane and I turn to magazines for a convenient distraction travel pieces are what most often grab me. My interest in such writing may increase as I begin to realize that the list of places in the world I'd rather read about visiting than actually visiting is growing.

[JG] Hoa Nguyen sounds like an interesting writer. I love the idea of using one's travel-mode observation style to see one's home from a new perspective.

Given the recent set-backs in our bathroom remodel project, it's conceivable that it will still not be ready to show you when you visit in early August. Well, it's possible if work ramps up in the next couple weeks, but unlikely.

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] Regarding your comment to me, your suggestions for reform sound good to me but I have no idea how the political situation we are currently living through will turn out. Years ago, I thought Richard Nixon was as bad as it would ever get in my lifetime. Then we elected Ronald Reagan for eight years of meanness, incompetence, and reactionary right-wing policy. A few years later we elected for two terms probably the dumbest and most inarticulate straw man President in history, George W. Bush, and I again thought we will never see anything that bad again. And then we got Trump. So, I have no standards anymore. Anything is possible in modern America and, if I'm honest about the historical trend in my own life time, eventually we should expect to wind up with someone even worse than him.

Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] We enjoyed the movie *In the Heights* so much in the theater that we went to see it twice. The music and production numbers were great, of course, but I think the actors really pulled me in particularly Anthony Ramos as Usnavi, Corey Hawkins as Benny, Jimmy Smits as Kevin and Olga Merediz as Abuela. No shootouts, no fights or car chases and really no bad guy, it was a feel-good movie and it really worked for



me. So sad that it is not pulling in bigger audiences. It seems like the perfect movie for our post-pandemic times.

As I write this, Jeanne and I been to the Dane County Farmers Market three times since it returned to the Capital Square, mostly for the walk. By the time we get there, a lot of stuff has been sold already and we haven't ended up buying much, but the walk has been good if slower than we are used to with having to negotiate around so many people. It feels like such a long time since we last did the market on the square. It puts me in a good mood with the jostling people, the friendly vendors, the knuckleheads going the wrong direction or stopping in the middle of the sidewalk to have a conversation. They're all fine. I was even happy to see the crackpot anti-evolution guys are back on the State Street corner, still willing to take on all comers.

[JG] On the What-We're-Watching topic.... After noticing that Apple TV+'s *Ted Lasso* had received 20 Emmy nominations and had broken the record for the number of Emmys received by a freshman comedy series, we decided to watch an episode. I remember a couple years ago when the show was launched, that I laughed at some of the preview scenes in which a ridiculous American football coach took a job in England to coach a football (soccer) team; Ted is blithely unembarrassed that he knows next to nothing about the non-American variety of football or about England in general. But I

didn't seek out the show when it premiered because I assumed *Lasso* would fall into what I usually refer to as the "dumb and dumber" genre. Not my cup of tea. And it's about sports. Also, not usually my cup of tea. But 20 Emmy nominations, wow. So, we checked it out, and boom, we were immediately hooked. We've seen the first few episodes of the 10-episode season; season 2 premieres later this month. *Ted Lasso* now joins a very short personal list of TV shows centered on sports that I like very much. Another one is *Friday Night Lights*, about a high school coach who leads a football team in Dillon Texas. And even though *Lasso* is a half-hour comedy and *FNL* was a one-hour drama series, they have a lot in common. The coaches portrayed in both these shows—Coach Eric Taylor (Kyle Chandler) in *FNL* and Ted Lasso (Jason Sudeikis) in *Lasso*—both define their job's purpose as helping the young men in their charge grow into good and moral men. In fact, the underlying themes in both shows focuses on the idea of coaching and then goes deeper—to commentary on what it means to be a man in the modern world. Right from the first scene, it was clear that *Lasso* did not belong in the "dumb and dumber" category. Ted is an incredibly up-beat, gregarious, and unsophisticated man who is able to find a positive aspect in every situation and person he meets. But he is much smarter than he looks; he is enormously perceptive and canny in personal and social situations. He loves to coach and cares more about people than wins. And on top of that, *Lasso* has exceptionally witty writing, and fascinating, original characters.



Kim & Kathi Nash

[SC] Thanks for the lovely July 4 party. I think I mentioned how comfortable it was in your shady backyard in spite of the heat and humidity that day. Good food, cold beer and pleasant conversations, what more could anyone want? Maybe fewer fireworks bombs going off in the neighborhood.

[JG] Thanks from me too! It was lovely to see everyone. I'm still not quite used to seeing so many friends in one place, talking in person, etc.

Cathy Gilligan

[SC] Regarding your comment to us, Jeanne and I take turns being depressed about how long the bathroom project is taking. It helps me a little to talk to the contractors and find out that the world right now is full of sad stories of projects people started, or want to start, where the wait times and delays are months longer than we're dealing with. In spite of our complaining, our project has continued to move forward. We will get done this summer and I think we will love it when it's done.

Regarding your comment to **Catie**, when you go in to renew, will you have to upgrade to a Real ID license? If so, you will need some extra paperwork. Be sure you look into it before you go.

[JG] You mentioned that when you got surround sound speakers for your TV that you didn't like the fact that sound no longer came from the direction of the TV. Do you feel similarly when you see a movie at a theater? Having sound emanate from various directions helps me to really sink into a movie and ignore distractions. I sort of miss our surround sound set-up which we dismantled a couple years ago when a couple of the speakers continually malfunctioned. We decided to go back to listening to sound generated directly from the TV. But we will soon, or at least eventually, purchase a soundbar. Soundbars are installed near the TV (ours will go onto the shelf directly below the TV), but the resulting sound supposedly creates an immersive surround experience—they make you *think* sound is coming from all directions. I don't exactly know how that works but several friends who have sound bars rave about them. And soundbars can be fairly inexpensive and simple to install.

J.J. Brutsman & Tom Havighurst

[SC] Beautiful pictures, great food. So lovely to get a chance to talk to you both at the July 4 party. Thanks also for running the photo of us all gathered to visit with **Lisa Freitag** and Greg Ketter at Paisan's outdoor terrace overlooking Lake Monona and the Monona Terrace Convention Center. We all look a bit chillier than I think we really were. At least that's what I think speaking for myself. After my excellent little pizza and two good beers, I was feeling no pain. It was a good time.

[JG] I will have to copy one or two of the recipes you included in this month's zine, especially the apricot tart. That sounds amazing.

Jeannie Bergmann

[SC] Fantasy has never been a high priority for me for casual reading, but I have to admit that over the years there has been a surprising amount of it that I've liked quite a lot. We read Bennett's *City of Stairs* for our book discussion group several years ago and I remember liking it enough that I still intend to read both sequels. Most recently I picked up an excellent horror novel (something I choose only occasionally), *The Only Good Indians* by Stephen Graham Jones. It uses Native American-inspired supernatural elements, which is very different, but it's most compelling in its depiction of realistic Native American characters and lives. I really liked it.

[JG] Ah the gray/grey controversy. I have always used the words as if they represented two separate and distinct colors. Gray, to me is a cool color, with more blue in it. Grey is a warmer color, with more magenta in it.

I LOVED "After Hours," your fantasy of what happens in an art museum after closing time.

Karl Hailman & Hope Kiefer

[SC] Karl, regarding your comment to **Catie** with respect to spending too much time checking the rear view mirrors made me think of Raul Julia's famous line in *The Gumball Rally*, "And now my friend, the first rule of Italian driving." [Julia rips off his rear view mirror and throws it out of the car] "What's-a behind me is not important." I have always liked that line.

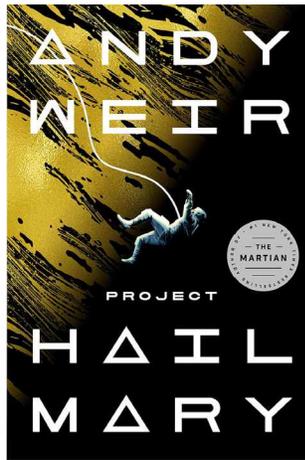
I appreciated your comments on your skating adventures. Before I head that far out of town, I will need to resolve our need for a new bike rack for the car in case Jeanne needs to drop me off or pick me up. But knowing the condition of some of these trails is helpful. Did you encounter a lot of bike traffic?

We just finished listening to the audio version of Andy Weir's *Project Hail Mary* and enjoyed it very much.

[JG] Karl, you mentioned a gaming session with Becky at the commons room in her complex. Is this Becky *Johnson*? We know her as a member of the SF-Without-Borders book discussion group.

I loved Andy Weir's *Project Hail Mary* for exactly the reason you mentioned: it was 90% about the why. It's a hard book to promote, though, without including

spoilers, since the book begins with the protagonist not knowing who or where he is. I've been using a phrase from *The Martian*: "A smart, funny guy 'sciences the hell' out of a dire situation." Without giving anything away to members who may not have read it yet (but really, really *should*), I'd like to make a pitch for the audio version which does interesting things with the part of the novel involving essential sounds. This book is ideal for audio, and the narrator is fantastic. I understand that the movie version is already in the works.



What's New

The Never-ending Bathroom Story

[JG] Sadly we have taken more steps BACKWARD than forward on our bathroom renovation. If you recall, last month I ended June's chapter on a hopeful note. The tile which had taken over a month to deliver, had finally arrived in Madison and had been laid on the bathroom floor and the shower floor. I predicted in the June issue of *Madison Foursquare* that the final week of June might be chock full of activity...shower surround installed, plumbing fixtures hooked up, window and trim replaced! We were so full of hope. I imagined that I would post photographs of the room in our July issue. We were so naïve. So very naïve....

It turned out that the tile laid in the shower had been laid badly, so badly in fact, that when the shower ran, some water would have drained OUT of the shower onto the bathroom floor. The tile in the shower had to be torn out and the floor surface mud reapplied. And then, of course, the tile had to be ordered *again*. Would the tile be in stock? Would we have to wait for weeks for the tile to arrive?

Two weeks passed.

Our contractor instructed the shower surround guys to install the surround with a 3/8" gap to allow space for the tile to be installed beneath the surround when it finally arrived. We are hopeful that this was a good idea. The shower surround looks nice.

A week passed.

The Granite Shop guys came over to install the granite counter top for the vanity. We had picked out a beautiful granite, way back in November to match a green part of the art mirror that will hang directly above the vanity. The granite's name is "Verdi Peacock Granite." When the guys announced that they'd finished the installation, we went in to the bathroom to take a look. The granite was beautiful, but it was not the granite that we had chosen. In fact, it was exactly the same granite (Ubatuba) that had been installed by a different company in our kitchen in 2015. Ubatuba granite has no green in it whatsoever. We don't know what options we have at this point. We don't know if the counter top can be removed from the wooden vanity without ruining the vanity. Can the vanity be repaired? Will it have to be re-built? Does the Granite Shop have any other pieces of Verdi Peacock Granite? We think that our contractor and the Granite Shop owner are in serious, possibly frantic conversation about the problem and we are waiting anxiously to find out what can be done.

A week passed.

The replacement tile *did* arrive just before collation day and the owner of the tile company himself supervised the tile installation. Our contractor is trying to line up appointments with plumbers, carpenters and painters to work in the next week. But, of course, we've heard that before, and all I can say is, we will see.

Cutting the Cord

[JG] One day last month after paying some bills, Scott and I got to talking about how much we were paying for cable service in spite of the fact that we watched fewer and fewer cable-provided shows. So, I grabbed a pad of paper, opened a Google search window on my phone, and started adding up how much it would cost to dump our cable and replace it with streaming subscriptions for the shows we watch regularly. Right away, it looked like we could easily cut costs in half or more, except for one thing. We needed to know that we would be able to download or otherwise watch full, current episodes of MSNBC shows, specifically Chris Hayes and Rachel Maddow. That's absolutely essential.

Without cable we won't be able to access MSNBC online. Maddow and Hayes are available on YouTube as excerpts or several days later for whole shows. Not good enough. We *could* access current and recent MSNBC news shows with a Hulu Live TV subscription, which would also include 500 hours of cloud DVR, and that is cool. But Hulu Live TV is very expensive. It's basically an Internet-based cable station which charges

for a huge number of channels, most of which we would never watch. It wouldn't be practical or save much money to switch from DirecTV to Hulu Live TV just for two news shows. We'd be practically back where we started with DirecTV.

Someone told me that MSNBC shows were available with Sling, which is a much cheaper, smaller Internet-based cable station. It also includes networks we watch occasionally like AMC, BBC America, FX, SciFi, Comedy Central, and IFC. But I discarded Sling at first because I thought the only way to use Sling was with their own proprietary devices (fire stick?), You know, like an Apple TV+ box, which we already have and do not want to give up because Apple TV+ has some awesome shows. I didn't want to have two separate boxes. But it turns out that it is possible to subscribe to Sling WITHIN Apple TV+. The sling icon is installed as just one of several subscription icons on the home screen, along with Prime, Netflix, Paramount, PBS, etc. And a Sling subscription includes cloud DVR hours. Cool. That changed everything in our calculations and solved our must-have-Rachel-and-Chris issue.

After adding the Sling subscription to our list, we figured that we could save about \$800 a year by cutting the cable cord. We think we might also add HBO Max (which reduces our savings to just \$600/yr), but we're tempted because so many first run movies are now premiering there.

We haven't cut the cord yet. There are a couple things we want to double check. But it will happen soon. Let me know if you want to see a copy of the Excel spreadsheet we made to check out the subscription prices.

Memoir

[JG] I finished reading my journals (1972-1979) a couple weeks ago. Turns out that I could have written a fantasy trilogy given the same word count. It was a weird, satisfying experience to read and experience those days again after all these years. And now I'm in the process of collating essays, fanzine articles, perzine stories, journal extracts, artwork, and other material into a sort of memoir collage, or maybe a memoir anthology. I am firmly NOT thinking about the final format or who might eventually read it. Right now, I am doing it just for myself.

It's quite possible that no one will ever read my memoir but me, and I am cool with that. I'm about to turn 70 years old as I write, and I need to recall where I've been. If this book entertains or is useful to anyone else, that would be lovely. But I'm not choosing stories on the basis of what anyone else might like to read.

One interesting thing I've noticed during this process is that even though I technically stopped keeping a journal in 1979, I kept working on the project in different formats—in the form of perzines, apazines, letters, stories and essays. The voice is the same. And as I assemble all this journal-like material into a single narrative, I realize that the process of putting it together is good for me in itself, and I am not especially focused on what the final product will turn out to be—a book? a blog? Who knows.

I think the act of telling our own stories (and retelling them) is actually the most effective way to remember. Sadly, it may be that the stuff I never wrote about has completely slipped away from me. On the other hand, I'm pleased that I committed so many memories to paper or pixels as I did and have been able to find them. There's a lot to remember.

Here's a story about my sister Julie that was fun to remember. At the time this story took place, Julie was 23 years old and had recently moved to Madison from Milwaukee. Julie died in July 2017.



Compact Tropical Roses in pots on front porch (minus Photoshop filters used on the page 1 image).

Why Does Morning Have to Come So Early?

By Jeanne Gomoll, *Whimsey* 3, 1985

Julie has always had a hard time waking up.

She's my sister and I suppose the problem must run in the family. They tell me that I'm no piece of cake to wake up either, though how you'd wake up a piece of cake I don't know. Well, maybe that's the point. Anyway, one story goes that when I was about fifteen years old, I fell from the top bunk one night, and woke everyone in the house but myself. After that episode I lost the coveted top bunk to Julie, whose sleep at the time tended less to violence and ambulation. There are lots of stories about me sleepwalking and doing or saying bizarre things in my sleep. They're the sort of stories horded by every family that get told in the most awkward possible times—usually to the new friends, employers and lovers of the family members whose fondest wish at such times is that these tales might be entirely forgotten. So don't expect me to repeat family gossip about me here...I've heard it all too often already. Ask my mom. Or Julie. After this little story gets published, she'll probably be more than eager to tell you stories about me.

I just want to establish the fact that the Gomoll sisters have a rather distinguished record in the area of imaginative avoidance of morning consciousness. For instance, the finest moment of my somnolent self was the time I dreamed that I'd been visited by a little green man from outer space who presented me with the gift of a time machine, with which I could stop everybody else's time and so steal time for myself to get projects finished or books read or sleep a few extra hours. Well, of course I pushed the button right away, figuring to start off with a few hours of extra sleep and catch up on work later. And, of course, I woke up an hour late to discover that the "on" button had been for the alarm on my bedside table, not a magic time machine. I'd turned it off. Nowadays I rely on a radio timer. A mere half hour of news and music will gradually wake me up early enough to preserve my job.

Well, Julie's waking problem makes mine look like a mild case of the yawns.

The most recent episode started one day when Julie had overslept and got to work late. This in itself—arriving late to work—was a catastrophic thing for her. Of all the virtues Julie possesses, she flaunts her obsessive punctuality most annoyingly. (How many times have I heard the words, "you're late, Jeanne"?, or



mocking laughter when I innocently promised to appear at a certain time... So, you must understand why I take a *little* pleasure in telling you that *Julie was late*.) She works as a typesetter and graphic artist with a small weekly advertising newspaper where work time is rarely bound by the traditional business hours of 9–5, but tends to drift regularly into the evening. Overtime seems more business-as-usual at Sunshine Press than an exception, and so arriving later in the morning was not so much a career catastrophe as it was, for Julie, a personal affront to her self-image.

Still, when she returned, she was bothered by the problem. Spike, Julie's housemate, asked her if she'd had a nightmare the night before. "It sounded like you were beating up on your clock." Spike said.

"That's funny," Julie replied. "My alarm clock didn't go off this morning. I think it's broken." She went out and bought a new clock radio, having remembered nothing of any bad dreams and thinking that the broken clock must have fallen off the bedside table during the night.

The next morning, the new clock radio lay wasted, damaged in such a purposeful manner that no appliance clerk would ever authorize its replacement on warranty. The cord had been ripped out not only from the wall but from the innards of the clock radio; its case was dented as if someone had pogo stuck into its case. Again, Julie was late for work, and again, she remembered nothing unusual from the night before. But it was now pretty obvious that the clock's sabotage was no accident.

Julie went back to a local department store and bought another clock, this time a less expensive timepiece, one without AM/FM reception. She set the alarm and placed the clock on her dresser, a good distance away from her bed.

But the next morning she again woke up more than an hour after she had planned on starting work. This would be the third late day of the week. She looked across the room at her dresser top. No clock. She glanced down at the floor beside the dresser. No wreckage. The clock was nowhere in the room; it had simply disappeared. Later, though, as she heated up some coffee for a hasty breakfast, she found it.

The new clock sat undamaged beside the toaster on the kitchen cabinet, its cord and plug dangling over the Formica edge like the leafless vine of a parched coleus plant.

Things were getting pretty serious. Julie told some of her friends about her problem getting up in the morning. We joked nervously about her sleeping self's determination to avoid waking and to what lengths it might go next to continue dreaming undisturbed. We nervously examined the remains of the smashed clock radio. We suggested that Spike wake her up, but Spike worried aloud—considering the things Julie's sleeping self had done to mere machines that threatened to wake her up—what Julie might do to *Spike* if threatened with consciousness from the next room.

It was the weekend and there was time to consider options. Julie wouldn't have to wake up on schedule for a couple days. And so, a plan was developed. We worked out a schedule of callers, employing people who would be awake and competent enough at the necessary hour to telephone Julie and Spike's apartment. Julie had a phone in her room, and so we figured the problem would be solved.

Of course, we were all woefully naive about the obstinacy of Julie's sleeping self. Monday morning, when Julie finally woke—long after she'd hoped to wake, and, again, late for work—she found the phone packed and wrapped with towels and clothing inside a duffel bag, the receiver separated from the phone, itself wrapped in a double layer of towels. The week's first caller had attempted to make the wake-up call several times and gotten a busy signal for their trouble.

That evening Spike proposed another plan. While Julie was gone, she (Spike) would hide a small travel alarm clock somewhere in Julie's room. Unable to focus any destructive energy on a potential waking force because she wouldn't know where it was, Julie would

be roused at the right time the next morning. The plan seemed foolproof and so when Spike got up the next morning—an hour after Julie should have left—she was amazed to discover the innovative way that Julie had found to evade the prearranged awakening. My sister was asleep on the living room couch, the door to her bedroom firmly closed, behind which the travel alarm clock's buzzer had long ago run down in whatever hidden recess Spike had hidden it.

For all the sleep Julie was supposedly getting, her eyes now began to take on a haggard, tired appearance. There were bags under her eyes and she frequently complained of headaches. Getting more sleep, turning in earlier, seemed to make no difference in her waking patterns or her weariness. The situation was clearly getting out of hand. Soon Julie would violate even the lax punctuality standards of Sunshine Press. Already there were questions, warnings. And besides that, she was growing frightened of the Hyde-like character who was manipulating her life during its nighttime shift. And more and more she began to fear going to bed at all, to dread what she'd discover she'd done the *next* morning.

And each night the sleeping Hyde grew stronger. Spike finally relented and agreed to take responsibility for waking Julie up the next morning. Spike returned from a movie one evening to find the apartment door lock jammed. She ended up having to spend the night with a friend. There seemed to be no lengths which sleeping Julie would stop to get those few extra hours of sleep each morning. The situation seemed hopeless.

One of the engineers in the group suggested a complex system of lenses arranged on the porch outside Julie's room, so, with the drapes and shade removed, the sun *itself* would wake her up. What could Julie do to stop the sun from rising? Ah...

Well, I can feel myself slipping into fantasy now. Family stories are *supposed* to be exaggerated, and I admit that there are one or two tiny embellishments in the story as I've told it so far, but I guess this is going too far. Julie eventually conquered her waking problem with several trips to the chiropractor who discovered that she had some rather severe backbone issues. After some therapy, Julie's sleeping patterns returned to normal; she began waking refreshed and, importantly, on *time*. Still, the whole episode *does* give me some reserve ammunition for the times she badgers me too much about my tardiness...