

Madison foursquare

61



Sunset Hill Park, looking at Olympic Mountains across Puget Sound

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

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November 2021 for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* #425.

[JG] Scott and I nominate **Steve Swartz** for membership in *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* Apa. Steve used to be a member years ago and certainly wrote entertaining zines. Life intervened and he would like to re-join. **Andy Hooper** has already seconded him. Unless, **Jim Hudson** has already received another second, Steve needs another to join.

Comments

Lisa Freitag

[SC] Once again, I enjoyed your thoughtful essay on the troubles World of Warcraft has landed in. Not being a gamer, I had no clue any of this was happening. You made an interesting point that only a very young person could have had an expectation that a company that could make something like WoW would not also be “a hotbed of socially clueless testosterone run amok.” Probably so. But when the company has been found to actually break the law by relentlessly sexually harassing its employees and practicing gender-based discrimination, those are significantly more awful things and will likely prompt departures by people who would otherwise tolerate a successful but sexist corporate product.

[JG] I had to smile when I read the final two words of your zine, Lisa: “Fall awaits!” while outside my window snowflakes are falling. That’s Apa time dilation for you. Good write-up on WoW. I’m in the same boat as Scott.

I had no idea. But I’ve never been interested in on-line games; Adobe graphics software beckons and I start doodling.

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I loved your gorgeous poem to autumn, my favorite season. No title? I chuckled as I sang (more like croaked) your Halloween lyrics aloud to the famous tune, but alone, of course, in our house. Perfect.

[JG] Thanks for your kind words about my book. Your question about the taste of hosts was echoed by a few others here in the apa, and reminded me of my own fears, pre-First Communion—about whether or not I would like the taste. So I had to add another little story to the chapter, “Growing Up Catholic.”

I don't recall getting called to the principal's office for my embarrassing behavior during the First Holy Communion ceremony. I suspect that Sister Joseph sadly shook her head and gave thanks to the Lord that my family was going to move out to the suburbs, thus relieving her of responsibility for a troublesome child. Or perhaps she thought the embarrassment I suffered that Sunday morning was punishment enough.

Despite the fact that the second-grade class rehearsed every morning in the week before our first communion, I managed to goof up on the big day, at the end of mass, as we filed out of the church. Instead of following the girls (to my left), I followed the bcys (to my right) and utterly

ruined the pageant's symmetry. Busty Berkeley would have fired me. I didn't recall my part in the choreographed procession because I was focusing on the taste of the host I'd just consumed. I had been deeply concerned that I might not like the taste of the bread wafer after it had been transformed into human flesh. Yuck! What if I couldn't swallow it? What if I threw up? As it turned out, the host tasted like a sort of dry, unsalted, flattened piece of Wonder Bread, very similar to the "hosts" that my brother Rick and I made when we played "Mass" at home, when we poured Welch's grape juice "wine" into one of Dad's martini glasses and chanted, "Dominos Nabisco," when Rick-as-priest lifted the grape juice filled martini glass over his head. The actual Latin phrase was Dominus vobiscum, or "the Lord be with you." I played the part of altar "bcy," rattling the jingle-bell ribbon (because we had no altar bells) at the appropriate moments. I felt relieved that Sunday of my First Holy Communion, and only slightly disoriented to find myself exiting church through the wrong door.

Great Halloween poem! I'd like to hear it sung by a chorus!

Walter Freitag

[SC] Good luck with the job search. I think the challenge for you will more likely be finding an employer who is actually worthy of the experience, skill, common sense, reliability and honesty you will be bringing to the job. Good employers are just as hard to find as good workers in my opinion.

[JG] Funny resumé. Sadly, I think you have correctly identified the qualities desired by employers looking to fill minimum wage positions. There should be another, ideal employer resumé.

Elizabeth Matson

[SC] Great job writing up the story of the yurt raising! It drives me a little crazy thinking about how much time was wasted, and frustration experienced, due to the manufacturer's inadequate instructions. The process would have gone so much more smoothly if we did not have to spend so much time figuring everything out. And I was only on site one of the two days! You managed to hold it together very well as our intrepid leader and Tomas deserves a lot of credit for stepping up to the challenge. I did not know until I read your piece that he hadn't actually raised a yurt before.

I'm looking forward to your follow up piece on your first yurt camp out.

[JG] All I can say is Oh. My. God. What an ordeal. You might consider trying to recoup some of your expenses by writing up a more comprehensive list of yurt-raising instructions and lessons and offer them for sale to folks who plan to import and raise their own yurts. Thanks for the photos. They were very helpful in visualizing what you went through that weekend!

Greg Rihn

[SC] I hope that Georgie makes it through this last chemo hurdle without suffering as much as you fear. We send you both our very best wishes.

I think I enjoyed your review of *Shang-Chi* more than I would have enjoyed the movie. After recently watching a trailer for the new *Eternals* movie prior to seeing *Dune, Part One* in a theater, Jeanne and I turned and looked at each other and both shook our heads. Neither of us really wants to start down another Marvel Universe rabbit hole. We have all the super-heroes we can handle for now. Maybe we won't feel quite so overwhelmed someday and revisit this. *Dune*, one the other hand, was totally awesome.

Loved the cartoon. Periodically Jeanne and I have a similar conversation from time to time. After listening to me whine "I want the jet pack they promised us 50 years ago!" I always get the predictable response.

[JG] I'm so glad to hear that Georgie's CT scans are indicating that the chemo is working. I hope she is beginning to feel better now that the chemo treatments are done.

I might be interested in seeing the Lost Arts Festival next year, sounds interesting. I will put it on my calendar.

Your questions about my scapular contract made me curious and I googled "scapular" to see if the tradition existed anywhere beside my classroom at St. Anne's grade school, and found quite a bit of evidence that the tradition of the "Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel" or "The Brown Scapular" is fairly widespread. According to one article, "The Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel has promised to save those who wear the scapular from the fires of hell; She will also shorten their stay in purgatory if they should pass from this world still owing some debt of punishment. This promise is found in a Bull of Pope John XXII. The Blessed Virgin appeared to him and, speaking of those who wear the Brown

Scapular, said, 'I, the Mother of Grace, shall descend on the Saturday after their death and whomsoever I shall find in purgatory I shall free so that I may lead them to the holy mountain of life everlasting.'" So, there you go, scapular-wearers get sprung on Saturday morning. Pope XXII's papacy began in 1316, well before the Reformation, but yeah, this might have been one of those objectionable indulgence-selling-things that Luther disapproved of.

Info found here: <https://www.sistersofcarmel.com/brown-scapular-information.php>

Pat Hario

[SC] I missed seeing Norm Macdonald on SNL. I am a very sporadic viewer of SNL, often not seeing it for years at a time. I did see him do his famous Moth joke, I think they re-ran it on Stephen Colbert after his death was announced. I have to agree with you on the issue of giving your employer your fingerprints to punch a time clock, unless you're talking about some sort of high-security facility.

I was amused by your cookbook acquisition story. I think you should own your addiction and just accept they were all somehow your "fault." I was trying to twist my head around the idea of buying something because I felt grumpy that I did not immediately drink or eat. Hard to think that paging grumpily through a (cook) book that alluded to the possibility of doing some kind of work (baking cookies) in the future would somehow make me feel better is odd, but probably a better idea than some of my usual solutions to feeling grumpy.

[JG] I am thinking of getting rid of some cookbooks. Do you want some more?

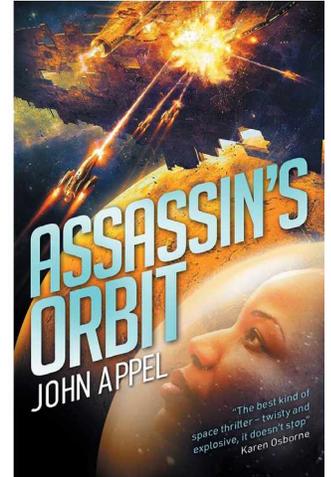
Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] In the area of health issues, the arthritis in my right knee that played a big role in our decision to take the train to Seattle instead of drive, has eased. PT and Voltaren seem to have helped. I do exercises twice a day and Voltaren usually twice, now, too though I was using it three to four times a day for several weeks. I drove all over central Seattle with no serious pain problems and would not hesitate to drive to Seattle from Madison today except for the issue of snow in the Rockies.

I had my very first MRI after returning from our trip. As a claustrophobic guy, I was more worried about the MRI than the prostate biopsy, but they

gave me a sedative which helped. As we were doing it I realized I should be freaking out, but the sedative and music on headphones helped me to not care. All looks "good" for my surgery next month.

The book for our book group this month is *Assassin's Orbit* by John Appel and we both greatly enjoyed it. It's a page-turning space opera with a diverse cast of characters dominated by several kick-ass older women (60+ years old!) Currently a stand-alone novel, but the author may return to this world someday. [JG here: One of my favorite lines is after Okafor defeats the assassin who wears a massive tactical armor by hacking into his diagnostic system, and then says "Let me grab my cane and we can go."]



We have been to the theater for a couple movies, the new James Bond movie was fun and *Dune, Part One* was excellent. Both were impressive on the big screen. We also saw *Spencer*, which disappointed me. On TV we wrapped up *American Rust*. It was an engrossing series, but the end was a little unsatisfactory. I thought it was a single series treatment of a novel with a definite resolution but it turns out that another season is a possibility which leaves the final episode feeling unfinished. Still worth it.

[JG] Thanks for the recommendation of Charlie Jane Anders' new novel, *Victories Greater than Death*. I bought an electronic version, among other books, to read on the train to Seattle, but I didn't get to Anders' book yet. I will. Instead, I plunged into Mira Grant's *Parasitology* trilogy (*Parasite*, *Symbiont*, and *Chimera*), but I don't actually recommend them, even though I finished the series. I've enjoyed Grant's writing before, but the main character in this one reminded me too much of the *Twilight* heroine: motivated over and over again to save the lives of loved ones in such a way that endangers everyone's lives because they end up having to save her over and over again. Nevertheless, there's an interesting plague idea embedded in the novels.

Thanks also for your recommendation of *Come From Away*. We loved it!

See my comments to **Georgie** about the taste of hosts and to **Greg** about scapulars. I certainly didn't wear

my scapular for very long. I don't think it survived my family's move from Milwaukee to New Berlin.

Marilyn Holt

[SC] Did you make it okay through the "bomb cyclone" of October 24/25? We had arrived in Seattle on our trip to visit Jane Hawkins just in time for the big storm. We were well sheltered in our basement VRBO, but the rain hung around tenaciously until Halloween weekend. I hope you got some much-needed rain without any damage.

Thanks for your comments on Charles Stross' work. I'm interested in checking out more of his writing and your comments have been helpful.

[JG] I'm sorry you have to worry about a forest fire taking your house. Scary.

Looks like a comfy chair!

Andy Hooper

[SC] Thanks to you and **Carrie** for the tour of your beautiful kitchen and dinner wrangling a group of rowdy fans to the superb Bamboo Village. And then there was pie! Oh my!

I found it hard to not be impressed with Bestink Dooley, host, actor, showman and cinephile. Certainly one of the more multi-talented characters you have profiled in this series. Thanks for this article.

I will email you my nomination for "Read and Enjoyed But no Content".

I failed to mention to you that last summer I read Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and *Farewell, My Lovely*, borrowed from the library. I enjoyed them both, but I have to say the casual racism in *Farewell, My Lovely* pulled me out of the story several times and probably makes it effectively unreadable by modern audiences.

We've already read *Jade Legacy*, and *Jade War* was just released. We'll read it soon. I'm looking forward to effusing to you about the series (I hope).

[JG] Thanks for your comments on my "Growing Up Catholic" piece. I continue to make progress on the book. Usually, it takes me two or three days to finish revising or rewriting a story. I write for several hours every day and progress is slow but steady. I haven't thought much about the format for the final book, though I did like the Ted White books that John Berry designed. I haven't even thought about cover art, which I've usually completed in early stages of most of my

publishing projects. Eileen Gunn wants to look at the book or whatever part of the book I'm ready to share. I'm not sure that will be anytime soon.

My C/Rapa zines may not appeal to a lot of people. If I recall correctly, I mostly wrote about the nature of art and how we perceive it, or don't. It was all very esoteric.

Carrie Root

[SC] You did a wonderful job of reviewing the William Smith biography for us. It was all very interesting and both maps are beautiful. Geology is one of those subjects I don't know much about, and rarely go out of my way to study on my own, but often find myself wishing I knew more especially when I'm out walking around along bluffs and other rocky areas.

[JG] You asked if I'd read any books about Shackleton's expedition. Yes, I have. After reading Kim Stanley Robinson's *Antarctica*, and seeing a PBS special on the expedition, I bought and read *The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition*, by Caroline Alexander. It contains many photos taken by the *Endurance's* photographer, Frank Hurley. Recommended.

As you know, our train trip was not derailed by the Montana Amtrak accident. In fact the trip was pretty uneventful both ways. Scott will tell the story later in this zine.

Nice maps!

Re your search for plants that do well into the fall, I've discovered Compact Tropical Roses, which we planted early in the summer in two pots on our front porch. I'm way far out of the league of gardening experts like you and **Diane Martin**, but I'm delighted with the discovery. Our Compact Tropical Roses bloomed continuously all summer and into the fall



Compact Tropical Roses

until the first freeze. When we returned home from our Seattle trip, they had expired quite dramatically, but until then, they were continuously magnificent. I hope to find some again next year for the porch pots.

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] I had my doubts at the start, but you were right! Your graphic wizardry succeeded in giving me a (very rudimentary) grasp of time dilation. I think I have an idea how much effort you put into those graphics and I appreciate it. But I feel a bit like the dog that chases cars, what does he do if he catches one? I've got time dilation a little bit, what are you going to make me do with it?

Darlene, it's good to hear from you! I hope conventions come back and you are able to get back to creating beautiful work. Are you going to Worldcon in D.C.?

[JG] Thanks Steve. Interesting and very clear explanation!

Kim & Kathi Nash

[JG] Stories about big pharma like yours, Kim, make me so angry at Congress and the Senate, whose members obviously don't care that huge majorities support the idea of negotiating with pharmaceutical companies over drug prices. Our legislators aren't working for us, they are working for big corporations.

J.J. Brutsman & Tom Havighurst

[SC] J.J., my God you're busy! So glad you and Tom were able to make time to have dinner with us at Takumi. Every time I see you guys I think it has been too long since the last time. I was hoping to get to more music festivals around town like Orton Park, but it just didn't work out this year. I visited the Willy St. Fair for a few hours, a few bands and a couple beers. I missed the parade (and Tom) but biking there was a good decision on a hot, sunny afternoon.

I liked the photos, too. You guys are truly party animals.

Tom, so good to hear (read) from you! Pay no attention to writer's block. When you can't think of anything to write just stream-of-conscious it. That's what I do. Sorry for the loss of Ali.

[JG] Thanks for the tips on coconut application to a cake. Sadly, I was hoping for some thrillingly simple trick, something like magnetizing the cake and the coconut so they automatically meld onto the desired surfaces. Apparently I will just have to accept that it's a messy business....

Jim & Ruth Nichols

[SC] Jim, regarding BRT, I have my fair share of questions about it, too, though we live a lot closer to the proposed line than you do. The thing is, no mass transit options are going to happen painlessly in Madison. We can probably come up with nearly fatal objections to almost anything that gets proposed (light rail, trolleys, subway, monorail, even more busses). But we still need more and better transit options in this city and if BRT gets the nod than I'll probably end up supporting it. I have to look ahead to a day that is surely coming when I'm not going to be able to rely on driving around the city anymore.

Ruth, I really admire that photo of you and Jim on your rooftop terrace with the sunset in the background. Congrats to Nes on the condo purchase and the drivers license. Your zine was the first time I had heard of induction stove burners and after reading your comments I read a bit more online. Interesting.

I'm sorry to read about your family's struggle with Covid. That must have been hard and frustrating. I think several of us have family members who are somehow resistant to plain reality and it's vexatious but that's our world now. Covid appears to be in decline again, hopefully for good. The problem of people clinging to nonsense information will be with us long after.

[JG] Congratulations to Nes for buying a house in this time of scarce housing!

Karl Hailman & Hope Kiefer

[SC] On the road again! Whee! I loved the story of the OYO motel, a classic travel story. Hope rocks, which we all knew but it's good to be reminded. I was curious about the food at the Dogtooth Grill in Wildwood which sounded suspiciously unappetizing, but it did not sound like you had a lotta options.

Nice photos, particularly the wedding shots, the elephant in scaffolding, the fall color shot and the clever ghost crab shot (I think I found the crab!) The "Here be dragons" on Hope McMahon's stone was amazing. Sounds like you had a pretty grand time on the road and thanks for the travel report. You've prompted me to think that some sort of car trip is going to be in our future next year.

[JG] Excellent trip report. Thanks!

What's New

Boosted!

[JG] We almost missed our chance to get the booster! GHC Health Coop called us while we were on the train, somewhere in Montana. I made the appointment and we both put the time, 10:30AM in our iPhone calendars, which helpfully changed our appointment times to 11:30AM when we entered the central standard timezone.

A Train Trip to Seattle

Jeanne and Jane, August 1983



[JG] When I first met her, Jane Hawkins told me that it was her dream to eventually build or buy a large house with many rooms, and to invite her closest friends to live with her, to care for one another, and grow old together. She wasn't able to build a physical structure (though she got close on a couple occasions), but she cared for many friends over the years, and in fact gave her father, her sister, and the daughter of her close friend Kate Schaefer places to live. For years, she invited the local Seattle SF group, Vanguard, into her home for its monthly meetings. She hosted extraordinary hospitality rooms, usually chocolate-themed, at many conventions. She frequently accepted the role of care-taker. Jane spent weeks caring for Ole's father in Idaho after he'd been incapacitated in an accident. She nursed her then husband, Luke McGuff's Aunt Mary in the months before she died. She cared for Vonda N. MacIntyre, her housemate and dear friend, in the months after her diagnosis of cancer until she died. Even in the midst of her own health crisis, she rushed down to Houston to help her life-long friend, Denise, recover from cancer. It is horrifically ironic that as such an extraordinary and loving and kind caretaker, that she herself has been plagued by a

We arrived at the clinic an hour late. But the nurses were great. They laughed at our story and gave us our boosters. The booster jab gave me much less of a sense of relief than the first jab did, but I'm glad to have had it. Scott received a shot of Moderna to top off his single J&J vaccine; I received my third shot of Moderna. Scott's arm was sore the next day but I felt no side-effects, except I may have slept a little later than usual the next morning.

series of cancers over the last couple decades. Of the most recent cancers, mantle-cell carcinoma is currently in remission, though it is still the most likely to kill her within the coming year. On the other hand, she's also dealing with two genetically different lung cancers, one in each lung, and they might win the race. She'd been planning to go to New Zealand for the 2020 Worldcon, but of course that was cancelled because of Covid. And a month ago, she had to cut short her dream vacation one day into it. She had wanted to see the stars and aurora borealis in Iceland but it was not to be; she was feeling too much pain; Kate Schaefer and Glenn Hackney helped her return home. She's not planning any more trips.

Ever since her latest cancers were diagnosed, I've been anxious to visit her. Jane has been one of my closest friends for a very long time. We met at the 1979 Westercon in Vancouver. And then we saw each other again at WisCon 2. It was 3AM on Thursday, February 16, and I was asleep when I heard someone pounding on my apartment door. I stumbled to the door and found a gang of smiling, laughing, but extremely tired fans and their luggage. They had driven straight through from Seattle to Madison in the middle of winter, just to attend WisCon. "Can we sleep here tonight? Our hotel rooms won't be ready until tomorrow," someone said. I don't remember exactly who all fell into my apartment, exhausted from their journey, but for sure, I know that Jane Hawkins, Ole Kvern, and Loren MacGregor were three of the Seattle refugees. Was Denys Howard the fourth? Were there more than four of them? It seems like there were more, but most likely four would have been the most that could have fit into a car along with luggage. I can't remember anymore.

We wrote long letters to one another for several years afterward, solved the world's problems on dozens of phone calls, and got together whenever possible. I took at least two cross-country bus trips to Seattle to see her during the 1980s. Jane visited Madison on a cross-country trip to New York and back. And we met

Jane modeling jacket by Kate Schaefer, October 2021. Scott lurking



at conventions whenever possible, including several west-coast Potlatches, always delighted to come together again. Jane and I have stayed close all these years since. For WisCon 20-23, Jane worked tirelessly to develop the on-line computer programs that became essential to WisCon's cloud-sourced program schedule. Four of us—Debbie Notkin, Donya White, Jane, and I—were all born in 1951, and so in 2001 we threw a 50th birthday party for ourselves, called Cronecon, and invited our 75 closest friends to the party in a San Francisco loft. The four of us cooked and baked and served meals throughout the weekend-long party. Jane was in charge of chocolate, since her chocolate hospitality suites had become famous over the years. I made 23 pies. Jane continues to be one of my oldest and best friends in the world. I hate thinking that in much too little time, we will have our last conversation.



Jane and Jeanne at Golden Gardens Park, October 2021.

And so, Scott and I took the train to Seattle. I told friends there that we hoped we'd get a chance to see them while we were in town, but that Jane was my priority. Jane would call me in the morning and tell me when she felt ready for us to drive over. We would walk into her house, hug, and sit down for long, intense conversations. We never ran out of things to talk about, things to remember. But then, a few hours later, she usually ran out of energy and needed to rest, and we'd hug again and go back to our rented apartment. Sometimes she got a second wind, and we'd return later in the day. When the weather cleared on the weekend, she felt good enough on Saturday to visit the beach at Golden Garden Park, where we gazed at the mountains and the sunlight sparkling on the waves. It was a gorgeous day. And then the next day, Sunday we watched the sun set, appropriately at Sunset Hill Park while kids wearing exotic costumes played and had their picture taken on the grass around us. Lovely. We managed to visit with other folks on Friday and Saturday night. Scott will tell you more about that. But the trip was all about Jane. Now we're talking once a week on the phone and trying to fit in as many conversations into the time left.

[SC] It's been a long time since we traveled by train. I think the last time was July, 2011 when we went to Austin, TX by train and then drove a rental car to Houston, where Jeanne was invited as Guest of Honor at ApolloCon. We decided to go by train to Seattle on this trip primarily because our bathroom remodeling project took such a long time, that we lost the whole summer to construction delays. But there was another reason, too: I developed some painful arthritis in my right knee and I could never have driven us 1800 miles to Seattle. My knee improved by October but rather than risk a blizzard driving experience, we took the train. Neither of us seriously considered flying.

We chose a sleeper car roomette, which we remembered liking back in 2001, when we took the train to San Francisco for CroneCon. Two seats face each other in a small private room and share a large window. At night a steward folds the seats down into a single bed and folds down another single upper bunk bed from above. (See photo) The room has its own sliding door with windows and privacy curtains. Each seat and the upper bunk has their own reading lights; the room has a thermostat—but just one, single electrical outlet, which made recharging our devices challenging at times. The railroad cars are old; they predate wifi by a generation. AT&T access for our



phones was often down to one bar, or no service, out in the bleak wilds of North Dakota and Montana, but sometimes service improved briefly as we passed through towns. My iPad decided not to sync with my phone as a hotspot for most of the trip so I took advantage of internet access mostly when we passed through cities. We managed. A roomette is private, which is its best feature, but two people might feel crowded unless they are very good friends. The upper bunk was just long enough for a 6-foot me to lie comfortably, but is enclosed on three sides which could have triggered my claustrophobia. Fortunately, I sleep well on the train and I always drifted off before getting too anxious. Bourbon also may have helped. Three shared bathrooms, a shower room and shelves for luggage were just down the hallway from our roomette. Those of us in sleeping cars could dispense with masks in our closed rooms, and while eating in the dining car. The folks in coach had to wear masks all the time except in the bathroom and when actually eating.

We didn't realize that meal service had changed drastically because of Covid. It turned out that all meals—breakfast, lunch and dinner—were rolled into the price of a roomette. But coach passengers were not allowed to take their meals in the dining car; they had to rely on food they'd carried in or snacks sold in the lounge car. We recalled lively conversations with other passengers during our previous train trips, but under Covid restrictions, dining staff no longer seats people with strangers in order to fill a four-person booth. Jeanne and I always got a table to ourselves and ordered off menus with no prices. The dinner meal included a beverage of coffee or pop, plus we could each get one wine, beer or cocktail. I ordered a bourbon and Jeanne ordered a diet coke and a glass of bourbon, which she slid

across to me. This was how my evening bourbon anxiety treatment got started.

The ride out to Seattle was relaxing and mostly comfortable. Jeanne was deep into a trilogy she'd started before we left while I started John Le Carré's comparatively slim last novel *Silverview*, a gift from Jeanne. It was dark the first night by the time we reached St. Paul. In the morning we had progressed about halfway across North Dakota, and judging by the announcements, could tell that the train crew were working hard to stay on schedule. Our sleeping car steward on the way out was named Gul (pronounced "ghoul") and he was excellent. He would have fetched pop or snacks for us, or even whole meals if we did not want to go to the dining car, but I tended to go to the lounge/snack bar myself just for a chance to stretch my legs. I like walking around on the train. It takes me back to when I was little travelling with my mother to California on the train to visit her family.

The disappointing thing about the west-bound trip was that the sun set just as we reached Glacier National Park, so we missed seeing most of the mountains. It was raining the next morning and, by the time we got up, we were traveling through the Mt. Baker-Snoquaimie National Forest and closing in on Seattle. But here we discovered an unexpected gift on the trip. Before leaving Wisconsin, we complained that fall color this year had been disappointing. The late season warm weather had delayed the leaves changing and even as we drove out to Milwaukee, we saw very little color. I expected to see a lot of deep green in Seattle. Jeanne and I have never traveled to the Northwest in the fall, so we didn't realize that Seattle has lots of deciduous trees and as we rode through the forest, even in the rain, we could see the fall color would be vivid for our whole stay.

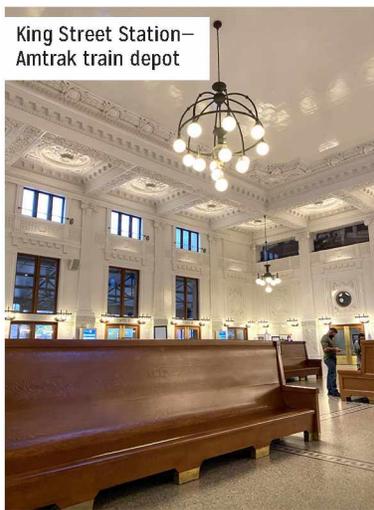


Fall color in Ballard neighborhood

We pulled into Seattle's beautiful King Street Station on time at 10:30AM Sunday, October 24 and looked for a taxi to take us to the Enterprise Car Rental office, not too far from the downtown station, but not within walking distance, especially in the rain.

Before debarking from the train, we had been warned about a sadly common scam—fake taxi services that gouged tourists. I stepped out of the station and didn't see the limos or SUVs that had been described to us. A single cab, painted taxi yellow, with the usual information stenciled upon it, sat in the taxi stand. We got in. Inside, as we started off, I saw the driver's photo and taxi license but it took a couple blocks before I noticed there was no machine tracking the distance travelled or the charge. The driver was friendly enough, he took a direct route, but at the end he charged us \$30.00. When we took the same trip back at the end of our stay, Uber only charged us \$16.00. We concluded that we'd fallen for the scam. Welcome to the big city.

Our next mission was to find our way to our VRBO (Vacation Rentals by Owner) apartment. We've never before used AirBnB or VRBO. Jeanne plugged her iPhone into our Toyota's ApplePlay, wrangled up the GPS and we gently waded out into Sunday afternoon traffic. It wasn't too bad. We found our apartment in the Ballard neighborhood, just down the street from Ballard High School, which—Monday thru Friday—made us very glad we'd insisted on an apartment with off-street parking. The apartment itself exceeded our expectations. It was the finished basement of a very nice single-family house. We had our own entrance.



There was a bedroom with king-size bed and large closet, a living room with a large flat screen TV and electric fireplace, a full kitchen that included a few staples, like coffee. A bathroom with shower, plus an unexpected extra—a laundry room which had not been mentioned in the listing. It was all very clean. It was the perfect place to stay for the week.

We drove over to visit Jane as soon as we'd gotten settled in our apartment. The first time we drove there, the route seemed long and convoluted, but after a few visits it became almost second nature as I got used to Seattle's often narrow, twisty, steeply hilly and heavily parked-up streets. We visited Jane when she was feeling up for company and left when she became tired, so we drove over once or twice a day except once, following one of her infusion treatments which knocked her out for a whole day. She was in good spirits most of the time; she struck me as a little fragile and tentative in the beginning but she rallied and got bolder about wanting to do stuff as the week progressed.

When we were not visiting Jane, we managed to amuse ourselves. We discovered a restaurant we liked a couple blocks from our apartment called the Wild Mountain Café where we enjoyed two delicious meals—lunch and a breakfast. The small house had been converted to a restaurant with a strong hippie vibe. It was homey, comfortable, and had good food and friendly staff. It felt to me like a big warm hug on the cool, rainy days. We treated ourselves to a fancy seafood dinner (this being Seattle) at a swanky place called Rock Creek Seafood on Fremont St. It was delicious. But we were so comfortable in our VRBO apartment, we often just hung out there. Jeanne did her magic connect-her-phone-to-the-TV thing and we watched news and a couple movies, or read. We grocery shopped at the nearby, upscale Ballard Market for pop, beer, snacks, breakfast pastry and a light meal or two.

We didn't do anything touristy, but we were glad that we were able to have dinner with friends on several nights. Jane walked down the block with us to Kate Schaefer and Glenn Hackney's house Sunday night and the five of us ate dinner together and made plans for the week. Friday night we ate

take-out Thai food at John D. Berry and Eileen Gunn's house, where we were joined by Steve Swartz and his wife. John and Eileen showed us their garage renovation project, which will convert half the garage to a library. Steve described settling back into life on the west coast from Paris, in an apartment in Seattle during the week while his wife works on their new home in Eugene, Oregon. John proudly displayed the latest of his designed books. And Eileen and Jeanne talked about Jeanne's book. Saturday night, we drove over to Andy and Carrie's house, and admired their gorgeous new kitchen. We caught up a bit with them before piling into their van to join Jerry Kaufman, Suzle Tomkins, and Luke and Julie McGuff for dinner at the excellent Bamboo Village. Yum! Andy had his hands full keeping the eager crowd from over-ordering dishes to share, while the staff seemed amused by us on their last night before closing the restaurant for a long break. Then it was back to Andy and Carrie's for slices of a scrumptious apple pie baked by Carrie.

I took several neighborhood walks, usually for a couple miles, in the Ballard area and once in Jane's Fremont neighborhood. Sunday night, when we were having dinner with Jane, Kate and Glenn, they told us about the cost of single-family houses in their neighborhood. Apparently, homes are so expensive that when they go up for sale, they are often snapped up by developers who tear down the houses and replace them with narrow three-unit condos, which they sell at a nice profit. Near the end of our visit with Jane, she sadly told us that there was little reason to put money into her house beyond necessary upkeep because if it went up for sale it would be unlikely that a single family could afford it. A developer would most likely just tear it down, no matter how nice it looked. As I walked through these neighborhoods, I saw some of these three-units, sometimes several in a row. I wondered if such a future lay in store for us in Madison if house prices keep going up and the city continues to support increased housing density.

I should mention the weather. We arrived in Seattle just as something called a "bomb cyclone" was bearing down on the area. It was raining the day we arrived but I think the brunt of

the storm hit late Sunday night. Huddled in our cozy basement apartment, we didn't notice much, but the news the next day was full of stories of damage and downed power lines. The weather system was so big that it basically hung over us with scattered rain, wind and gloom until Halloween weekend. But then, a few days before we left town, the weather cleared spectacularly and the days turned gorgeous. The sky was cloudless blue, bright sun shown down, and the temperatures turned warm, and Jeanne, Jane and I were able to get out to a couple city parks that overlooked Puget Sound and the Olympic mountain range. Glorious!

On our last day in town, Monday, November 1, we packed up, checked out and went to breakfast at a place Jane introduced us to, The Blue Star Café, on Stone Way (order the biscuits!). We stopped at Jane's to say a last goodbye and then drove downtown to drop off our car and wait for our train. We pulled out on time at 4:40PM. Our sleeping car steward this time was named Andy. He was okay but we missed Gul. Jeanne's bed had some mechanical problems that made the first night uncomfortable for her, but Andy switched us to a different roomette the next night and she slept much better. The highlight of the ride home for me occurred the next morning, Tuesday. We woke up, the sun was rising and our train was winding through the mountains. The weather was very clear and we were treated to superb mountain views as we passed through Glacier National Park.



Glacial National Park, seen through a train window

From the Book

Music Challenge! by Jeanne Gomoll

Written in 2021, never published

I suspect Miss Thordarson devised the Music Challenge as a way to carve out a few moments of quiet and respite from her boisterous third-grade class. She didn't repeat the game on any sort of schedule and we were never graded on our performance; but, out of the blue, with no warning, Miss Thordarson would suddenly say, "Quiet, class! It's time for Music Challenge!"

Miss Thordarson taught third grade in Calhoun Elementary School, a public school which I attended for just one year after my family moved to the suburbs. In addition to being delighted that I didn't have to attend mass every morning or go to religion classes, I noticed a few other differences between Calhoun school and St. Anne's in Milwaukee, where I had attended first and second grade. For one, I hated Calhoun's librarian because she refused to let me borrow books unless they were shelved in the little kids' area. I felt I had no choice but to steal books in the face of such a stupid rule, though I always returned the books after reading them. Another difference was the kids; I thought my classmates were much rowdier than we had been at St. Anne's. So, I sympathized with Miss Thordarson when my classmates' antics caused her face to grow puffy and red. She liked my drawings and I liked her. And I loved Miss Thordarson's Music Challenge.

Miss Thordarson slapped her hand hard on her desk and then said "Quiet, class! It's time for Music Challenge!" She walked to the shelves below the windows and opened the record player's cover. I sat next to the window and watched her select a record and place it carefully onto the spindle and lower it to the platen. She moved the tonearm over the record and lowered the needle into the first groove. Music suddenly filled the room. Miss Thordarson always selected instrumental music; there were never singers or lyrics. The rules of Music Challenge were that we kids had to close our eyes tightly and listen carefully to the music. We conferred, blindly, with our desk-mate to describe what we imagined was happening. We made up stories to go with the music.

"We're in a huge forest. There are eagles flying and bears and a river," I whispered, choosing the setting for our story.

"The pioneers are paddling down the river," Billy whispered, naming our characters.

The music grew insistent. "There's something dangerous around the bend! The pioneers are nervous." I said. "Oh no, it's a waterfall!" I said, introducing the conflict.

"There's a cowboy on a horse, racing along the shore. He's trying to save the pioneers!" Billy whispered fiercely. "He's holding his hand out to the people in the closest canoe...." We had our protagonist.

"...and the mother holds out her baby to the cowboy. He just barely manages to snatch it from her before the current sucks the canoe over the waterfall's edge."

When the music stopped, Miss Thordarson would ask us what we imagined had been happening in the music. Most of my classmates offered a single phrase or sentence—"It's a thunderstorm," or "people dancing," or "an ice skater," or "I don't know." But when Billy and I got our turn, we held the floor for a while as we recounted the exciting tale we'd glimpsed through the music.

I wished that Miss Thordarson would allow us to play Music Challenge every day of the week. In a way, I continued playing Music Challenge for the rest of my life. Maybe because of that experience in her class, when I listen to music, I always see images and construct stories to accompany the melody. If I hear a piece of music that was used in a movie I saw, I need only shut my eyes tightly to summon an image from the film. The music swells and I see animals racing across an African veldt. "Oh, that's the music from *Out of Africa*!" I love listening to movie and Broadway soundtracks for the way they weave plot and idea and song together. Stephen Sondheim's "Finishing the Hat" from *Sunday in the Park with George*, is one of my favorites because it's a song about making art.

When I went to college, I studied in the library's music room at UW-Waukesha, where I plugged into a record player's earphone jack, and let the music blot out the world around me while I read or looked out the window. I discovered Ralph Vaughn Williams, and Aaron Copland and Antonin Dvorák there, and can still recall the images and stories that I mentally embedded into their music. In fact, when I hear Vaughn Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, my favorite piece by him, I revisit the wintry scene outside the library windows, the young birch trees bent by the furious wind, the sense of time inexorably passing,

a story about women waiting for their sea-going husbands to return home. Copeland's *Fanfare to the Common Man* will always be accompanied in my mind by the setting in which I first heard the piece: a park beside a slew of the Mississippi River, looking out at a barge moving toward us, an orchestra set up on its deck, the horns and drums belting out the fanfare.

But I can't blame Miss Thordarson that I developed a taste for the slow movements of symphonies and music that hints of tragedy and sadness. Leah Beckerdite, my college roommate at UW-Madison, used to play the piano and viola. I went with her to the practice rooms in Vilas Hall. I'd lie beneath the baby grand while she played, using my backpack as a pillow, close my eyes, and make up stories to go with the music. It was wonderful. The piano took up all the space in the room; there was nowhere else to sit and listen except beneath the piano. But what great acoustics! The first time we did this, Leah played the second movement of Beethoven's 7th symphony, and I fell in love with it. The beautiful sadness of it captured me; it felt both uplifting and exhilarating in spite of the sadness; it affirmed the value of life in the face of tragedy. Years later, I set up a tragic/heroic/romantic music station on my Pandora app, by choosing the soundtrack of the PBS miniseries, *Band of Brothers* as its anchor, which allowed me to listen randomly to Ennio Morricone, Albion's Adagio in G, epic movie soundtracks, and similar music.

Surprisingly, it took me a long time to appreciate opera. I was in my mid-twenties the first time I felt an emotional connection to opera. I was recovering from flu at home, too tired to read; I just lay beneath

blankets on my bed and listened to the radio. The NPR station began to broadcast its weekly Saturday opera. Normally, I would have switched off the radio because it frustrated me not to understand the language. But I was feeling too weak to get up and switch the station, so I ended up listening to the announcer summarize the plot of *Madame Butterfly* and then I let the music flow over me. I didn't spend any time worrying about the fact that I couldn't understand the words, and somehow the music got into my head edgewise and I was surprised to find myself caught up in the emotion of the story and the characters despite the language barrier. I realized that I had found the trick to listening to the voices as if they were musical instruments and let go of my frustration at not being able to understand the words. I began to collect boxed sets of Puccini's operas.

I almost entirely missed the explosion of Rock and Roll during the 60s and 70s that captured most kids in my generation. During high school and college, I most often tuned the radio to the classical station. The only marginally popular music I listened to regularly was folk music—Simon and Garfunkle, Bob Dyan, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, Joan Armatrading, Joan Baez, Holly Near and Chris Williamson. Sometime after the Beatles broke up, I happened to listen to one of their songs and realized that it was really good, and regretted that I was so late in learning to enjoy their music. I never did "catch up" with popular music. Occasionally I hear a song and say, "this is nice! Is it new?" Almost invariably, it turns out that the tune had been wildly popular 10 or 20 years earlier.



For Steve Johnson

