



The Tolopka Tattler

2019 Quid Pro Quotes Edition



Albert Einstein: “If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music.”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: “The music is not in the notes, but in the silence between.”

Janet Tolopka: “It’s a good thing I’m not a physicist. Steve says he can’t understand how I can understand so little about physics and still exist. As for my music, some might say I need more silence and fewer notes.”

Steve Tolopka: “We know it’s not Christmas. Let us not speak of it again.”

Pythagoras and his followers thought that the movement of celestial bodies made music—the “music of the spheres”—and that the workings of the universe could be known via this music. They were so close. We now know that the divine and poetic order of the universe is best discerned from the music of ... saxophones. Read on for highlights of this year’s cosmological explorations.

Albert Einstein: “When a person can take pleasure marching in step to a piece of music it is enough to make me despise him. He has been given his big brain only by mistake.”

The Beat Goes On Marching Band completed another crazy-busy season, performing on 48 days in 2019. In May, we made our first appearance at the Spokane Lilac Festival, joining four dozen bands all vying to meet the Lilac Gold Standard, a checklist covering musicianship,

rhythm, intonation, technique, alignment, and other qualities we rarely exhibit. To our astonishment, TBGO met the expectations of two expert band adjudicators and brought home the gold.¹

TBGO’s custom is to add a state or national flag to its parade line-up to commemorate each performance in a new region. Coeur d’Alene, Idaho is just a short drive from Spokane, making the opportunity too good to pass up, so off we went to play a lakeside show and then aboard the *Mish-an-Nock* on Lake Coeur d’Alene.²



The Lilac Gold Standard award

Old Aphorism: “Not all that glitters is gold.”

Alaska became TBGO’s second new state flag of 2019.³ Fairbanks celebrates Golden Days each summer with gold rush costumes, a street fair, a rubber duckie race in the Chena River, and Alaska’s biggest parade.⁴ Marching with sourdough miners and bar floozies must have inspired our ragtag crew: TBGO won the award for Best Marching Band.



Golden Days Parade: We’re Number One!

¹ We’re betting “audience appeal” was our saving grace.

² I’m not making this up and I managed to type all of that without typos!

³ If you’re scoring at home, we’re now up to 6 national flags (U.S., Canada, Bahamas, Republic of China, Netherlands,

Switzerland) and 9 state flags (Oregon, Washington, California, Texas, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Georgia, Idaho, Alaska). If we collect all 50 states we get free cork grease and valve oil!!!

⁴ Oddly, they’ve also got excellent Thai food.

Of course, the trip wasn't *all* musical glory – we got to do tourist stuff too, visiting the Alaska Pipeline, touring an Athabascan Indian village where we met dogs from Susan Butcher's⁵ kennels.⁶ And panning for gold at historic Gold Dredge 8 ...

This wasn't our first gold panning expedition. Back when the planet was still cooling and dinosaurs roamed the earth, we visited Gold Dredge 8 and preserved our hard-won gold flakes in a locket provided us for a modest fee. Janet decided to bring her locket with us so we could add whatever new gold smidgens we scored this time. Great idea! Talked about it for weeks before we left, wrapped it carefully in tissue, made sure it got packed.



And on the day we visited GD8 ... left it back in our hotel room.⁷ Ah well – we preserved the results of our panning⁸ and our local jeweler added the new stash after we got home.

Next stop was a full day in Denali National Park, where we saw bears, Dall sheep, caribou, Arctic ground squirrels, snowshoe hares, ptarmigan. We even spotted a rare wolf on a distant ridge, although longer observation proved it to be only spruce trees masquerading as fauna.⁹ We saw pretty much everything except Denali, which was socked in by clouds, same as on our prior visit.¹⁰



Denali makes a rare appearance

The next day the band bus headed south to Anchorage, and HEY LOOK!!! Gorgeous clear views of Denali all along the route, first time we ever saw North America's highest peak. Huzzah!

In Anchorage, Janet and one of her sax buddies serenaded Star, the reindeer who lives in Delaney Park.¹¹ We also played a standstill show in a persistent rain to a crowd that consisted only of people driving by in their cars.¹² Not our finest gig of the year

From Anchorage, half the band flew home while the other half boarded *Island Princess* for an Inland Passage cruise back to Vancouver, BC. Lots more fun cruising the glaciers,¹³ sipping spruce tip

⁵ Four-time winner of the Iditarod, a 938 mile sled dog race.

⁶ Janet was in dog heaven.

⁷ That sound you hear is Janet's teeth still gnashing.

⁸ Worth nearly \$20 as I recall.

⁹ We promptly dubbed them "timberwolves".

¹⁰ About 30% of visitors see the mountain.

¹¹ They played Total Eclipse of the Heart.

beer in Skagway, riding the Mount Roberts Tramway in Juneau, learning about natural and cultural history at the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center, and rooting on "our team" at the Great Lumberjack Show in Ketchikan. Aboard ship we bantered with our Italian dining captain, enjoyed the evening shows, learned more than we needed to know about the art of Thomas Kinkade, and met Libby Riddles, first woman to win the Iditarod. One afternoon TBGO even got to play a show in the ship's main showroom – score!!!



In Alaskan waters

Canadian Customs Officer, pointing to trumpet case: "Is that a musical instrument?"

Trumpeter Bobby Hackett: "Sometimes."

One of the great things about the marching band is that our gigs are so varied – and often one-off. This year we helped TriMet (Portland's public transportation system) celebrate its 50th anniversary, performed for the opening of the Nékter Juice Bar in Vancouver, WA, did another 11-day stint at the Oregon State Fair, enlivened the retirement of the president of the National University of Natural Medicine, landed a one-tune slot on the Christmas radio show of



Evening parade at the Oregon State Fair

a local station, and celebrated the kickoff of the holiday shopping season on Black Friday inside the Amazon Fulfillment Center in Troutdale, OR with shows at the start of two work-shifts—5:30 am (ugh!) and 5:30 pm.¹⁴

¹² On the plus side, our banner carriers reported that some cars drove around the block more than once and rolled their windows down to listen.

¹³ While they still exist.

¹⁴ Yeah, that's two 40-minute drives each way on the same day. But we did get to have Egg McMuffins for breakfast.

William Goldman, *The Princess Bride*: “Mawidge is a dweam wiffin a dweam. The dweam of wuv wapped wiffin the gweater dweam of everwasting west. Eternity is our fwieand, wemember that, and wuv wiw fowwow you fowver.”

Our most romantic event (yes, we did say romantic—marching bands love romance!) was a surprise marriage proposal. The couple’s ‘song’ is *Total Eclipse of the Heart*, so we learned the tune specially for the occasion. It was a very rainy day, but the rain stopped long enough for the band to perform its concert and the surprise piece for the proposal. Not a dry eye in the house.¹⁵ Whew! Glad the answer was yes!¹⁶

Mark Twain: “I have found out that there ain’t no surer way to find out whether you like people or hate them than to travel with them.”

In summer 2018, Steve attended a fundraiser for the Rice Museum of Rocks and Minerals, bought a raffle ticket – and won. The prize: a week at a villa in Cortona, Italy. We enlisted Steve’s brother Ken and family to join us and off we went to Tuscany in June.

We flew into Florence, picked up our rental (travel in our 9-passenger van was surprisingly pleasant and carefree),¹⁷ and headed for Villa Chiara near Cortona. Tuscany looks exactly like you picture it in your head, as if the whole re-

gion is subject to Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions that restrict the color scheme to creamy tans, buttery yellows, and rusty reds. Delightful!

We happened to arrive in Cortona during its annual celebration of *Giostra del’Archidado*, week-long festivities reenacting a



Part of Giostra del’Archidado in Cortona

¹⁵ Though that could have been the rain.

¹⁶ Otherwise, we would have had to follow up with Lady Gaga’s *Bad Romance*.

¹⁷ Primarily because Ken agreed to do all the driving.

¹⁸ His grown daughter plays the bride. 600+ years of scandal!

14th century wedding, and costumed celebrants filled the streets. We met the fellow slated to portray the groom later in the week when we dropped into his gift / art studio built atop a 2000 year old Etruscan well.¹⁸ We explored the Etruscan Academy Museum, housed in a 13th century palazzo with a wide range of artifacts discovered in and around Cortona. A winetasting at Molesini Wine Shop was a big hit as measured by the bottles of Brunello and Chianti the six of us shipped home.



Coprolites (look it up!) in the Etruscan Museum



Clara

One of our most fun times was spent right in the villa with a cooking class. Via ongoing instruction from Clara with translation by her son and sous-chef Francesco, we prepared¹⁹ a delicious meal of bruschetta, zucchini frittata, crostini with sausage, home-made²⁰ tagliatelle with meat ragu, roast chicken and potatoes, and tiramisu.²¹ Add a few bottles of wine and alfresco dining with good company and gorgeous views and you’ve got a perfect summer evening.



Victory over the tagliatelle

We spent a couple of days exploring nearby towns: Siena (famed for its semiannual Palio horse race around the enormous Piazza del Campo), Pienza (where Franco Zeffirelli filmed *Romeo and Juliet*), and Montepulciano. Another day we took the train to Florence for a whirlwind tour of the Uffizi Gallery (famous works by



Nick, Janet, Steve, Sharon, Kris – Lunch in Pienza

¹⁹ By which I mean “we followed Clara’s instructions for each dish until our incompetence outstretched her patience and she finished it herself”.

²⁰ Villa-made?

²¹ (Urپ!) (“Scuse us.”)



David

Giotto, Piero della Francesca, and Sandro Botticelli including *The Birth of Venus*), the Duomo di Firenze (cathedral) featuring Brunelleschi's marvelous dome, Michelangelo's iconic *David* in the Galleria dell'Accademia, and tons of statuary scattered about the city.²² We were

amazed that you get to see *David* "up close and personal", especially given that it's been vandalized at least twice in the past.

In sum: a great trip, and even better because we got to share it with family.²³



Ken & Sharon on Ponte Vecchio

Drummer Shelley Manne, giving his definition of jazz musicians: "We never play anything the same way once."

Second Wind Jazz ramped up its game with almost monthly performances this year. In addition to senior centers, a Mardi Gras dance, and a noontime concert series in downtown Portland, we started gigging on a semi-regular basis at the Jack London Revue, a



Front and center at the Jack London Revue

speakeasy beneath a pool hall in downtown Portland that runs a Monday night series featuring local jazz bands. And a subset of the band that performs in smaller venues has been getting regular callbacks at a local dance club. We're becoming a 20-year overnight success.



See – even Montepulciano gets it!

²² Art is to Florence like coffee shops and brewpubs are to Portland.

²³ And yes, we still like them!

Bob Newhart: "I don't like country music, but I don't mean to denigrate those who do. And for the people who like country music, denigrate means 'put down'."

We don't play country, but we try to cover a broad music spectrum.²⁴ Our Rock 'n' Roll group (Treble in River City) hit a trio of local festivals including the Clark County Fair across the river in Washington. Portland Community Wind Band performed its usual slate of shows including one whose theme was Myths and Legends and included a recitation of Casey at the Bat with musical accompaniment.

Advice from Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*:
"Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end; then stop."

Once again, neither of us won the Football Pool, though Janet came *this close*. Bowling, music arranging, tap dancing, yada yada yada – all the usual stuff is still happening. And with that, it's time to admit we have nothing left to say.²⁵

Songwriter Linda Allen:
**"Put your faith in the future
 But your hand on the plow
 'Cause there's hard work to do..."**

Wishing you the best for 2020!

The Beat Goes On,

Steve & Janet



Ciao!

²⁴ We don't do much rap or hip-hop either because we doggedly cling to the idea that music should include a melody.

²⁵ Editor's note: Does this sentence belong on page one?