



The Tolopka Tattler

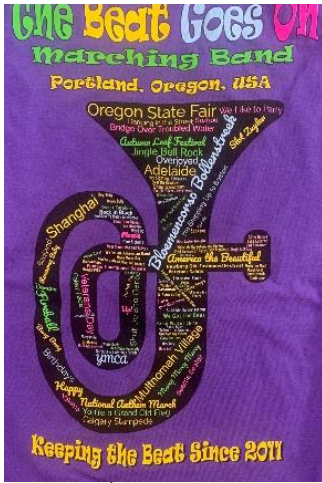
2023 Spring Forward Fall Back Edition



A Holiday Newsletter?

December passes ... No surprise, they never finish in December. Then January ... February ... March ... Just when you dared hope that Once

and For All the Madness Had Finally Ended – AAARRGGHHH, once again the Tolopka Tattler has graced your mailbox. And it is a holiday newsletter.¹



12th anniversary t-shirt

Back in the Saddle Again

The Beat Goes On Marching Band (TBGO) was pretty much back to its normal level of activity with 35 performance days in 2023. We celebrated our 12th band-iversary with a souvenir t-shirt festooned with events and music from a dozen years.

As usual, our schedule was an interesting mixture of repeat clients and new opportunities, including

the July 4th St. Paul Rodeo Parade, a birthday celebration for an 80's-music-loving four-year-old whose previous birthdays had all been low-key since they fell during the pandemic, and trade show performances at the Oregon Convention Center for the Oregon Dental Association and Oregon Association of Nurseries.²



Everett Amtrak station

In June, we loaded everyone into a couple of train cars and headed north to the Marysville (Washington) Strawberry Festival. This was the band's first-ever trip aboard Amtrak and it proved to be a fun way to travel together.³

The Oregon State Fair folks still like having us around and we again performed all 11 days at the Fair. Keeping with tradition, every one of those days in-

cluded a visit to the Oregon Dairywomen's booth for ice cream after the 6pm parade. In past years we drove back and forth to Salem every day, but this year we tried renting an apartment through VRBO. Cutting the daily drive time from 2 hours to 10 minutes proved to be a swell idea.



Healthy State Fair snacking



One of our State Fair mini-parades

¹ It's just that the holiday is St. Patrick's Day.

² No, not at the same time. Did you think this was *Little Shop of Horrors*?

³ And comfier than a motor coach or the ever-narrowing coach seats on a plane.

To the Antipodes!!!

Way back in 2020, TBGO began planning its most ambitious adventure, but thanks to a certain global pandemic we had to put it on hold. We fi-



In the staging area in Adelaide

nally made that trip in November as we traveled to Adelaide, Australia to be part of the National Pharmacies Christmas Pageant.

The Southern Hemisphere's largest public parade has been welcoming Father Christmas since 1933. TBGO was the first-ever international unit to perform in the parade, so we got an astonishing amount of news coverage—reporters met us at the Adelaide airport and filmed the band performing in baggage claim; Steve got interviewed a couple of times for TV and radio. Rock stars are we!



News coverage of arrival in Adelaide

When the band travels, we like to play something from the area we're visiting. For this trip we decided on "Back in Black" by the Australia band AC/DC to complement our holiday tunes.⁴ On parade day 300,000 people lined the



Sydney Harbour Bridge

streets and the parade was awesome! We were only a few entries in front of the float with Father Christmas. As we neared the end of the parade, confetti shot out in anticipation of Father Christmas's arrival. It was way cool to be marching and playing with a confetti blizzard swirling all around us.



Some of the elaborate Pageant costumes

The following day we played a concert at Rundle Mall, Adelaide's premier outdoor shopping area. The show went great and we drew a nice crowd. Janet had been emailing with two local band teachers interested in our concert and sent one of them home with tiny U.S. and Australian flags that now decorate the tympani in her band room. After the concert, another local brought home-baked treats for the band—they were a traditional Australian confection and darn tasty!



Leaving our mark in Oz

After the performances, the band became a sightseeing group touring Australia and New Zealand. We took the train to Glenelg Beach in Adelaide, were entertained by the "little penguins" at Phillip Island, cruised Sydney Harbour, admired the waterfalls and scenery in Milford Sound, and generally had a fine time. We even met a cheeky kea⁵ who dropped into our motor coach for an up-close-and-personal visit.



Our kea buddy

⁴ It made a nice contrast with "Jingle-Bell Rock".

⁵ Patron bird of crossword puzzles.

And All I Got Was This Lousy Virus

There was one downside to our trip “Down Under”. A few of our band buddies became ill during the trip and in the close quarters of our motor coach it didn’t pass us by. Janet tested



Fortunately, Steve convinced Gandalf he was one of the good guys

positive for Covid part way through our New Zealand itinerary – fortunately, a mild case. We ended up isolating in a Wellington hotel for five days while the rest of the group moved on, so we missed out on the Lord of the Rings part of the trip.⁶ Luckily, we had a fridge in the room, a nice grocery store across the street, and DoorDash works just fine in NZ so we stayed well-fed if a bit bored. We eventually caught up with the group for the flight home ... which was when Steve came down with similar symptoms (although he continued to test negative). But all’s well that ends well.

And All That Jazz

Second Wind Jazz had success rebuilding this past year after losing personnel during the previous few years. We added some fun players to the group and hope we can keep them. And we’re gigging again, with performances at a local winery and for a retirement community this summer. The band also performed for a celebration of



Sydney Town Hall at sunset – unretouched!

⁶ Aside from a misdirected assault by Gandalf and the Great Eagles in the Wellington airport. Clear case of mistaken identity.

life. We are looking forward to more great music in 2024.

Our smaller SWJ combo played at the local dance club where we’ve performed at in the past. It’s great to have a repeat customer. And we branched out⁷ in early 2024 performing for another dance club in the same location.

To Infinity and Beyond!

Just after the clock turned 2024 we made a trip down to Florida to see Janet’s aunt, Steve’s

brother, and their comes-withs. This was our first visit to family since the ‘rona hit and it felt good to see everyone in person. We even got treated to a Kennedy Space Center visit.



Kennedy Space Center Rocket Garden

Hittin’ the Books

With more of life returning to “normal”, we’ve slacked off a bit on our reading but still have favorites to recommend for your literary pleasure:⁸

- *The Six: The Untold Story of America’s First Women Astronauts*, Loren Grush
- *You’ll Never Believe What Happened to Lacey*, Amber Ruffin & Lacey Lamar
- *Legends & Lattes*, Travis Baldree
- *Calypso*, David Sedaris
- *The Hardest Job in the World - The American Presidency*, John Dickinson
- *The Black Hole War: My Battle with Stephen Hawking to Make the World Safe for Quantum Mechanics*, Leonard Susskind
- *The Perfect Predator*, Steffanie Strathdee & Thomas Patterson w/ Teresa Barker (true story/medical mystery)
- *The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution*, David O. Stewart
- *“But He Doesn’t Know the Territory”*: *The Story Behind Meredith Willson’s The Music Man*, Meredith Willson

⁷ Or maybe just twigged out

⁸ For bonus points, guess who put each one on this list.

Odds and Ends⁹

We finished building the Lego Taj Mahal that was a Christmas gift last year.

On the Star Trek front, we're watching *Star Trek: Discovery*.

We're not as fond of this one as the others. It gets a little strange or maybe a lot strange with weird plots and actors whispering a lot... We've also been watching *The West Wing*. It's amazing how many of the issues on that show are still issues today.



Our own little mausoleum

Janet continues to serve on the board and as treasurer for The Immigrant Story which features immigrants' stories in various formats (podcasts, videos, exhibitions, etc.) about obstacles overcome and successes of immigrants. She's still hoping she can find a replacement for herself or someone willing to take on grant management for the organization. The



Holiday fun in the Adelaide airport

plan now is to find someone to train by mid 2024 who can take over by the end of 2024.¹⁰

We remain firmly in the grasp of puzzle mania, having added Connections, Quordle, Octordle, Squardle, and Strands to our daily NYT crossword, Spelling Bee, Vertex, and Wordle addictions. We are sad little people.

Wishing you the best for (the rest of) 2024!

The Beat Goes On,

Steve & Janet



Ain't we adorable?



We gotta go now

⁹ George Carlin: "Twelve odds and ends on a shelf, eleven of them fall off, what's left - an odd or an end?"

¹⁰ Thank you for volunteering!