



The Tolopka Tattler

2024-25 Two-for-the-Price-of-One Edition



A First for Us

For the first time since we started doing annual holiday newsletters in 1981, we managed to miss putting one out last year...oops! So we have highlights to hit for two years. Without further ado¹ here's the 2024-25 Two-for-the-Price-of-One edition of the Tattler.

The Beat Goes On Marching Band

The Beat Goes On Marching Band (TBGO) continued to add its special brand of merriment to events throughout 2024 and 2025, including kicking off a software quality conference and marching down an urban volcano during intermission of an adult soapbox derby.²



Oregon State Fair. Janet at bottom left.

We survived our fifth and sixth years at the Oregon State Fair. "Survived" is the appropriate term since each residency covered 11 days with 3 to 4 performances per day.³

With the last show each day finishing after 9:30 pm, we've learned it's a great idea NOT to drive home from Salem every night, so we rented a VRBO near the Fairgrounds this year.

The band took a few out-of-town trips during 2024 & 2025. In 2024, we went to New Westminster, BC for the Hyack Festival and were awarded the Mayor's Trophy for "exceptional performance".⁴ We also traveled to San Francisco for the Italian Heritage Festival, where the Blue Angels performing overhead *during* the parade were so loud we couldn't hear ourselves play.⁵

In 2025, we headed to Galveston, TX for two Mardi Gras parades, each of which took us around the parade route twice. We capped off our travels with the fabulous floats of the Palm Springs Festival of Lights parade in December, where we were named "Most Spirited Overall Marching Band".⁶ While in the area we enjoyed a day tour of the unique geological formations and tree-like succulents of Joshua Tree National Park.

The band played its annual holiday concert in Pioneer Courthouse Square both years. This year featured Janet's debut on the agogo bells⁷ for one tune. It was a stunning success.⁸ On sax, she now has 21 marching band tunes memorized and plays through a few of them each



An exceptional trophy for an exceptional band



Our agogo bells specialist

¹ Further adieu comes later on.

² Two separate gigs. But wouldn't it be fun if they were combined?

³ We were startled to realize that we have now spent two months of our lives at the Oregon State Fair. Yikes!

⁴ We think "exceptional" means "I don't know what we were expecting, but this wasn't it".

⁵ People in the crowd were mouthing "it's a blessing".

⁶ It's impressive how hard people will work at inventing awards for what we do.

⁷ No, she's not dancing in a discotheque cage. It's a percussion instrument.

⁸ She's thinking of going pro.

time she practices to keep them in her head and fingers.⁹ Steve enjoys the daily concerts.



Galveston Mardi Gras Parade

It's been quite a ride. In its 14 seasons the band has performed in 10 states, 7 foreign countries, aboard 2 cruise ships and across four continents. We've done 253 parades and 331 standstills on 444 performance days. That's one gig every 11.5 days for 14 years including downtime during the pandemic.

Portland Community Wind Band

We're still playing "serious" music with PCWB with regular concerts and a short holiday show at a senior community. This year is PCWB's 20th season. For our Fall concert, we played a selection of pieces from our very first concert including *Amparito Roca* and Holst's *First Suite in E-flat*.

... And All That Jazz

Second Wind Jazz had some fun gigs. We gigged at a couple of senior communities; a festival in Rainier, OR¹⁰; a private party; and a winery. Margarita Madness, our annual show at the foot of our driveway for friends and neighbors, was back for the first time since the pandemic hiatus.

Our smaller SWJ combo had some gigs this past year at the local dance club where we played in the past and we performed at a senior community. It's great to have repeat customers.



Margarita Madness in full swing

Music Project
A couple of years ago, Janet decided she wanted to find the music for

Killian Concert March, a piece composed for her high school by Clifton Williams, a well-respected composer. If you've played much classical wind

⁹ This includes Christmas tunes played all year long. Sometimes the neighbors must wonder about us

band music you may have played his pieces (e.g., *Symphonic Dance #3* and *The Sinfonians*).

Now you might ask yourself why a well-respected composer would write a piece for a high school band. Clifton Williams was a professor at the University of Miami.

His daughters played in the Miami Killian Senior High School band – as did Janet. Williams was active in the music band parents association.

In addition to writing the words and music to our alma mater, he composed the Killian Concert March. He came to Janet's band class and worked with them on the piece.



This might be called Ore Ida Rock (Joshua Tree National Park)

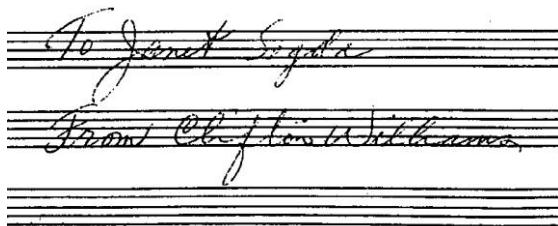
Finding the music for this was challenging. Janet tried checking in with her high school and the University of Miami -- no luck. She persisted and finally found the piece from a classmate who is a band director and had most of the parts. She took a long shot and found the rest of the parts from a school in Texas that had performed the piece around 2010. Unfortunately, the parts we got weren't in the best shape so Steve put the parts in Finale (a music program). We spent a *lot* of time proofreading to get the parts right.

We shared the Finale file with a few people, including the director of PCWB, and performed it at our spring concert. Janet shared the link to the concert recording with Killian band classmates on the PCWB Facebook page. They loved hearing it performed and the classmate who sent her the parts conducted it at a concert.

But wait – that's not the end of the story. Janet discovered that many of the original messy parts included hand-written dedications from Clifton Williams to the student who played that part. So the Alto Sax 2 part had the dedication from him

¹⁰ We dragged Steve's brother Ken and sister-in-law Sharon to this one. That'll teach 'em not to visit!

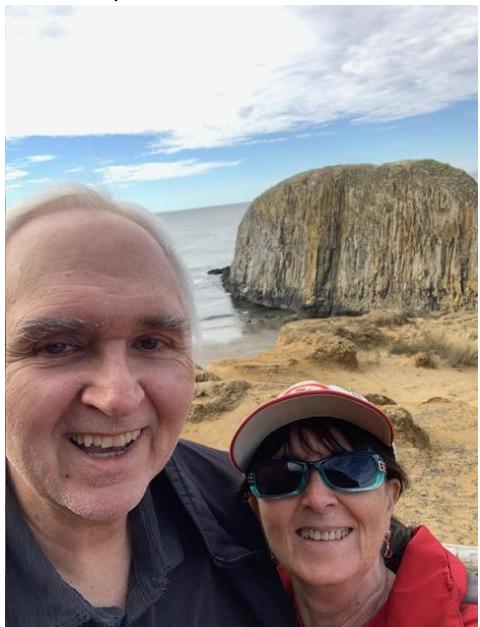
to her. She had no recollection about the dedications -- a super cool surprise!



The Eyes Have it!

Here's a crazy story. In around November/December 2024, Janet's contact lens 'disappeared' while she was sitting at her desk. She was sure it was in her eye but looked around the area just in case it wasn't. Then she spent an hour looking for it in her eye with no luck. She went to the optometrist to see if he could find it—no luck. So a new lens was ordered. She kept 'feeling' it in her eye but could never find it. She chalked it up to

being a hypochondriac and decided to ignore the sensation. While in Florida in January 2025, she felt it more than usual. She pulled up her eyelid and that sucker dropped down and centered itself! It had been up there for about 6 weeks! When she went her eye exam, her optometrist was surprised and a little dis-



Chillin' at the Oregon Coast

pointed that he had been unable to locate it. Oh, well.

While at her annual eye exam, she noted that her left eye seemed noticeably worse than the right. Her optometrist told her he could not help her with her vision and that it was time for cataract surgery. If you understand diopters, think around 9-12 and you might get how nearsighted she is. You see that big E on the wall at the optometrist's office? Janet doesn't.¹¹

¹¹ She just sees the light at the end of the tunnel.

She was referred to NVision which was a great clinic. She opted for what's called light adjustable lens implants for the surgeries. After the lenses are implanted, the vision is tweaked with UV light in 3-5 treatments. After those treatments, two more light treatments are done to lock in the vision.

Until the vision was locked in, Janet had to wear UV light blocking glasses to avoid inadvertently changing the vision in the lenses. The results were great and she doesn't need glasses for anything.

Do you do anything without a band present?

We kicked off 2024 with a visit to Florida. We

got to spend a few days with Janet's aunt and cousin. Then we headed for the Orlando area to spend a few days with Steve's brother and family. This was the first time we made it to Florida since before the pandemic. It was great to see everyone!



Yaquina Head Lighthouse

We were fortunate to miss the big 2024 Portland storm while we were in Florida. But we weren't so fortunate when we arrived home to lots of snow and ice making it difficult to get to our house. We discovered we had no electricity and that all the smoke alarms inside the house were blaring – literally screaming the words FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!¹² Since we couldn't figure out how to turn them off, we knew we couldn't stay in the house. So we found a hotel and stayed there for several days. We returned home a couple of times during our hotel stay. We did figure out how to turn off the alarms. Had to remove ALL THE BATTERIES EVERYWHERE! Duh! Electricity was out for the better part of 10 days with a brief respite for a few hours before it went out again. We had to toss freezer full of food—ugh!

We repeated our visits to family at the end of 2024/beginning of 2025. Glad there were no incidents at home this time around.

¹² Steve's brother Ken claimed (in a menacing voice) that the house was saying "Get ... OUT!!!!"

In 2024 for the first time since before the pandemic, we spent a few days on the Oregon coast. We visited Yaquina Head lighthouse and the Cape Perpetua Scenic Area. We enjoyed driving down the coast and stopping at interesting scenic spots. We stayed at a nice inn with a scenic view of the beach and were able to walk out from our room to get up close and personal. We found some nice places to eat both on the way to the coast and at the coast.¹³ Since we have some gift cards from In-and-Out Burger, we drove through Salem on the way home and stopped there for a free lunch. And we still have gift cards! With a new In-and-Out Burger opening in the Portland area soon, we'll have to take advantage of more free lunches!

Hittin' the Books

Since 2002 we've each kept a spreadsheet listing the books we read that year. Steve is proud to announce that for the first time his page total for the year exceeded 30,000 pages (86 books). Here are some favorites we enjoyed this year and recommend for your literary pleasure:¹⁴

- *Godforsaken Sea: Racing the World's Most Dangerous Waters*, Derek Lundy (single-handedly sailing the Southern Ocean)
- *The Six: The Untold Story of America's First Women Astronauts*, Loren Grush
- *Just One Damned Thing After Another*, Jodi Taylor (time-traveling British historians)
- *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, Richard Rhodes (detailed history)
- *The Wager*, David Gran (shipwreck of 18th century British warship)
- *Proving Ground: The Untold Story of the Six Women Who Programmed the World's First Modern Computer*, Kathy Kleiman
- *Dungeon Crawler Carl*, Matt Dinniman (sci-fi meets fantasy meets sentient cat with tiara)¹⁵
- *Race Me in a Lobster Suit*, Kelly Mahon (real email responses to absurd propositions)
- *Dark of the Moon*, John Sandford (first in a long series of Virgil Flowers thrillers)
- *'Everything and More: A Compact History of Infinity*, David Foster Wallace

Odds and Ends

We continue to enjoy puzzling and reading. It's fun to check in with each other on the NY Times Spelling Bee to see if we are Queen Bees (finding all the words) and to compare how many tries to

¹³ This is an accomplishment for us; our track record hasn't always been good.

¹⁴ For bonus points, guess who put each one on this list.

find the word in Wordle. And we also enjoy playing Squaredle (another word finding puzzle).

Our latest TV obsession is *S.W.A.T.* on Apple TV. Yeah, we watch plenty of other stuff but no evening is complete without one episode of Hondo and the gang.

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. The reality is that most people want to be paid for the kinds of accounting she does for the organization—especially since accounting for a non-profit with lots of grants is pretty specialized.

Wishing you the best for (the rest of) 2026¹⁶

We are looking forward to more shenanigans in 2026. We hope you have a safe and healthy year!

The Beat Goes On,

Steve & Janet



¹⁵ And six more volumes. Hands down the craziest books of the year.

¹⁶ Here's the "further adieu".