

Shoreline Quarterly

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The Xmas Issue



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Christmas in Ohio, 2009



Christmas in Washington, 2017

Shoreline Quarterly Masthead

Shoreline, Washington, US

Issue 02: Winter 2026

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altaredwood.work/sq



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Remembering Bogey

2014-2025

Bogey was a beautiful white and blue budgie parakeet who was a fun and bright presence in my life for over a decade, with her trademark “DO-WEE” call of affection, her acrobatic flights around her cage, and her legendary feets of toy play.



She always had such a strong and distinctive personality. I loved watching her shred her wood toys, whether it was wood perches, carved toys, or her favorite—the yucca wood kabobs, which she would often shred within a day or two. I also loved how in the last few years my mornings would be marked by checking where she was at that point—still at her up high perch means it's really early, if she is on her cloth spiral perch then it is time to get up, if she is on the wood block perch in the corner then it is getting into the daytime now.

Whenever Bogey would be out in the

weather in her travel cage, between the condo and her car, she would pull her wings up defensively and wap them in short circles, shocked that the rain or sleet would be coming into her cage. Not often an outdoor bird, she didn't mind being on the deck on a sunny day but she didn't want to deal with inclement weather—in fact she wanted nothing to do with it.

She went through a lot over the years but consistently bounced back quickly. Cage-mates with Belle for her first few years, Bogey loved Belle and often deferred to her—but sometimes she didn't. After one unusually strident disagreement, Bogey received a beak attack on her right cere (nostril) from Belle that left that side permanently asymmetric from the other side. In her last year, one of her toes was off track and wonky, as



though her long nail had taken it off center and it had stayed there after a trim by the vet tech. At one point a year and a half ago, Bogey developed an eye condition where one was closed or blinking most of the time—but a course of eye drops from the vet cleared the situation up for her. Once she received a bite from

her bird brother Mango, a Quaker parrot, for which she was treated and left her foot bandaged for a few weeks.

When Bogey was diagnosed with a fatty growth on her preening gland earlier this year, we worked to improve her diet and get her consistent care from her vet. She got a good follow-up report from a visit in July but then a week or so later saw the growth burst, and she actually got much of it removed in the clean-up by the vet and came home and convalesced for a day and a half, seeming to do well until suddenly experiencing heart failure late at night.

We added Bogey to our flock at the start of April in 2014, getting her from a Petco in Fairview Heights, Ohio, not too long before our summer move to Seattle. We had lost our parakeet Sparta and wanted to find a new cagemate for the surviving bird, Belle. Not long after Bogey and Belle moved out west in our Chevrolet Malibu, following behind the U-Haul as we took everything we had out to the west coast.

Like many birds Bogey was a very social animal and she loved to greet visitors to our home, warming up quickly to all sorts of people and often creating a lasting impression. She was a very good friend and companion to Mango, who she would call for incessantly when her cage was rolled into another room and his hadn't been moved yet. They provided company to each other when my partner and I were both out and about, and Bogey as a longtime resident who had been with us since she was very very small could be a reassuring calm presence for Mango, who is a little more skittish as a rescue bird who hadn't been in our home for as long as she had.

Bogey loved to fly out of the cage to my partner for kisses and affection, a time when her song was the most joyous. She would also sing lovingly to me when I nuzzled up close to her and to Mango when I brought him by her cage. She even tolerated Mango's uncleared landings on her cage, occasionally climbing up in a pro forma show of bird territoriality but never racing up there to bite his feet. Even as I would wrap up Mango in a towel and tell him he didn't have landing clearance, she would usually just watch and chill, maybe adding a comment or two.

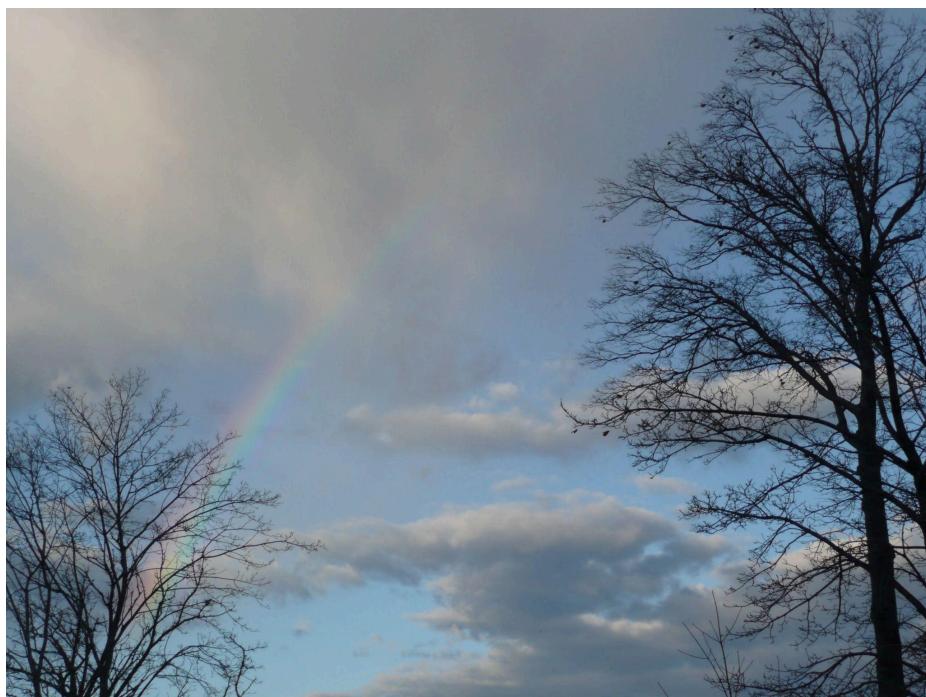
Bogey had a beautiful ability to sing, like many parakeets. I got so emotional a few days after she passed as I put on 'pink noise' sounds to sleep to and soothe my Quaker parrot and I felt the loss of Bogey as I recall the pretty songs that she would mix in with the noise sounds.

Bogey was a very bright bird.

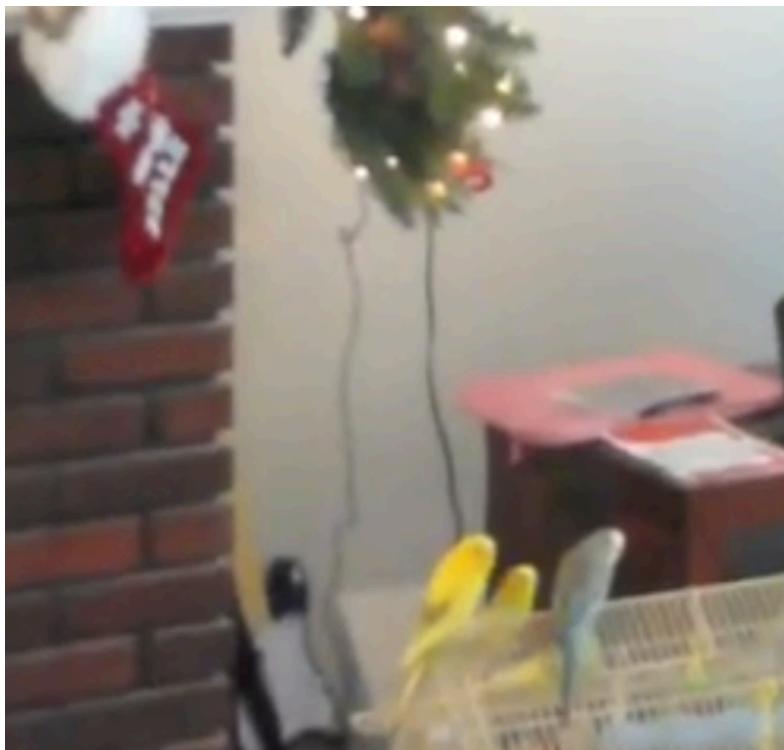
She figured out how to get herself out of a cage by raising up the door where her food dish would come in and out and by propping it up just enough to slip out—one time finding herself locked out of her cage at our place while we were away for the day. When we came back she flew over to us and we were stunned that she was out of the cage, but as soon as we got her back in there she ate half a day's worth of food. We kept her separate from Belle for the first week we got her and I remember thinking that we got Bogey while she was still so young as she stood on the floor of the cage just chilling for a long time, looking up at the spaciousness of her own cage and not moving much. It was a considerable contrast to the soon assertive, vocal, vigorous bird that we got to know who would leave piles of toy shavings all over the floor.



The Christmas Rainbow in Ohio, 2009



during our holiday celebrations and saw a big rainbow over Lake Erie, as seen in this [video](#). Also captured are our budgie parakeets Sparta, Ava,



After getting married in 2009, my partner and I spent our first Christmas at our own home as a couple. The weather in the Cleveland area that December 25th was on the milder side, and we decided to take a bike ride

Belle, and Striker, who kept us company as we enjoyed our tree, stockings, music, and holiday food as we started establishing our own Christmas traditions, which of course include bird-themed decorations as well as baking holiday treats and including practices and decorations from different places including Australia, Sweden, and Ireland.

Christmas Tipping Checklist

your mail carrier

Aside from the occasional [attempt to steal](#) an election, USPS does useful work.

your barista

Do you know someone at the coffee shop down the block, who makes an effort to greet you (and others from the neighborhood) in a friendly way every time you come by? That's someone who might enjoy a little gift or cash this time of year.

your spiritual advisor or secular guru

So many people seem to seek some sort of religious or spiritual experience during this season, whether they are celebrating Hanukkah, Saturnalia, Kwanzaa, Christmas, or one of many other celebrations. These leaders and advisors, both from organized religion and private practice, must be busy this time of year and could well enjoy a gift.

your fish monger

This will vary by region, but whether you are on the Atlantic, Pacific, or Great Lakes coasts there is much aquatic food available, and in much of the rest of America, rivers and streams also provide incredible nutrition-packed fish. So whether you buy halibut from a fishmonger store in Seattle or perch from a neighbor who drives up to the lake every summer weekend, maybe show some appreciation for their work this holiday.

your oil change specialist

If you got your oil changed a few times in the last year, and your car still runs, then they probably deserve some credit! Maybe if you have a newer car this isn't as critical but if you drive a 2012 Toyota Prius and it's amazing the car still runs why not show some gratitude?

your bud [light] seller

Whether you are in a free state like Washington or still under the thumb of pointless prohibition, you have to get weed from somewhere if you're going to enjoy it. So, think about giving some small gift to the bud tender at your local store or to your dealer sitting in his weird apartment playing Xbox. Or, if beer is your thing, give a gift to your favorite local brewtender.

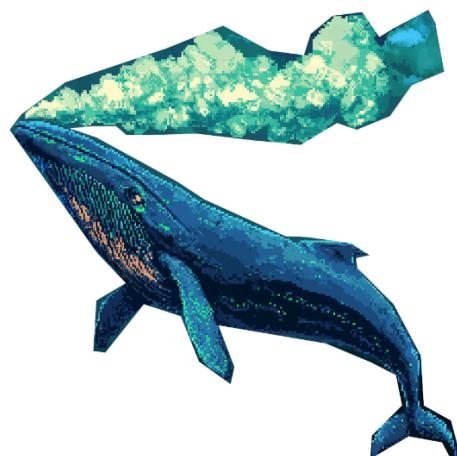
Cannabis Prohibition was a disaster—and crooked interests want to bring it back!!



Scoring a bag of weed used to involve making shady illegal deals



So it's good that most cool states have legalized the grass



'Castle 2' excerpt

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The old metal cart stacked with stuff, like one of those old hotel soap and shampoo carts that make their way along the hallways all too early, this cart rolled around all the floors of this place. It was going to be replaced any day now, with a robot cart, but they had some production delays with the KeckStarter so the old one remained in use. The Director had an idea of keeping the old cart going too when the new AI-powered robot cart made its way here, to keep Tim at his post pushing the thing. But the staff whispered that was just sanctimonious bulsshit, typical for the Director, and that Tim would be in the Basement Level before long--if the robot cart would just get here and they could do the unboxing video and then get on with it.

How about my Jay Leno impersonation? 'Myahh, wlook at thisss poor grammaerrr in thizzz locul paypper! Mynahh!!!" The Leno act was being taken personally by the crowd. They did not sound pleased. "Ok, but the thing I can't figure out about this bit is, do you hate Leno or do you hate Leno being skewered. Because I FUCKING HATE LENO!!!" The wheels were squeaking on the cart, and residents were asking questions. On the second floor, where some people are more aware than others, it was rolling along in the evening, many had been fed and there was a quiet pharmacological haze around the place and the nursing shift supervisor was greeting Tim's assistants as they wheeled the cart and they seemed evasive so she got a bit interested in what all was going on there and suddenly he is yelling

--'Castle 2' by Daniel J. McKeown

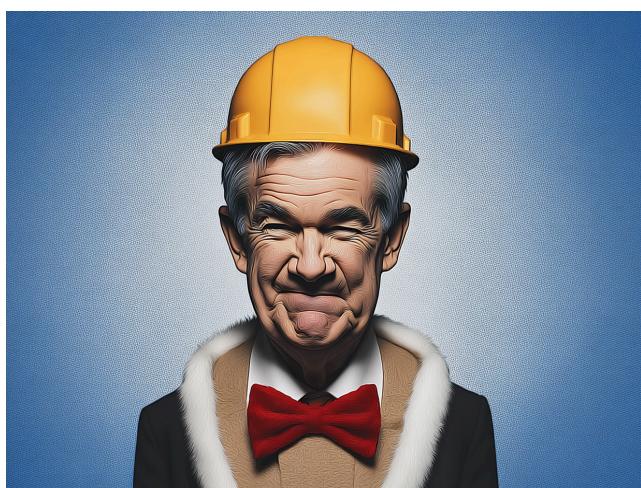
Jerome Powell earned that clown suit

An unafraid Fed Chair would hit back

[[cross-posted](#) from [The Long Trade newsletter](#)]

August 22, 2025

When Joe Biden had a chance to give Jerome Powell a well-deserved heave from his position as Federal Reserve chairman, he instead chose to renew the Trump pick for another term. At that point Powell already faced much criticism, and the politically sound move would have been to



put in a new chair
uncompromised by previous
arrangements.

But now Powell is Donald
Trump's problem, again, as the
administration wants to stoke the

economy with rate cuts to try to offset the destruction unleashed by misguided tariffs. Since inflation is still running at moderately elevated levels, Powell has flatly refused to lower the Fed's overnight rate.

The overall plan can be seen in the recent dismissal of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) chief due to downward revisions on a job

report—push out capable professionals and put in shills. Over time this will erode the credibility of government statistics, the same way attacking the Fed’s independence will undermine the credibility of the US dollar.

If only the Fed were represented by a more capable chair, who would proactively make the case for an independent central bank unbowed by demagogic pressures; instead, Powell tries to project a pro forma resistance to the president’s lies and falsehoods as illustrated by his July hard-hat press appearance with Trump, where he could be seen quibbling over figures before receiving a back-slap while being nagged to lower interest rates.

A serious Fed chair would refuse to even meet with any president, especially this one. Powell is willing on the other hand to be part of a humiliating spectacle at his own building because he is just another Beltway player, more interested in what other villagers are saying about him than emphatically defending the independence of one of the country’s key economic institutions.

Bertie goes to the Christmas Pageant

How much have these spectacles changed in a century?

The other protagonist of the Jeeves stories—that being Bertie, for whom Jeeves does the butler work—has occasion in one story (from *The Inimitable Jeeves* by P.G. Wodehouse) to visit his friend who is making an effort at working at a school out in the country, and in the event has been charged with leading the schoolchildren in the annual Christmas festival show:

For the next three weeks I didn't see Bingo. He became a sort of Voice Heard Off, developing a habit of ringing me up on long-distance and consulting me on various points arising at rehearsal, until the day when he got me out of bed at eight in the morning to ask whether I thought "Merry Christmas!" was a good title. I told him then that this nuisance must now cease, and after that he cheesed it, and practically passed out of my life, till one afternoon when I got

back to the flat to dress for dinner and found Jeeves inspecting a whacking big poster sort of thing which he had draped over the back of an arm-chair.

"Good Lord, Jeeves!" I said. I was feeling rather weak that day, and the thing shook me. "What on earth's that?"

"Mr. Little sent it to me, sir, and desired me to bring it to your notice."

"Well, you've certainly done it!"

I took another look at the object. There was no

doubt about it, he caught the eye. It was about seven feet long, and most of the lettering in about as bright red ink as I ever struck.



This was how it ran:

**TWING VILLAGE HALL,
Friday, December 23rd,
RICHARD LITTLE
presents
A New and Original Revue
Entitled
WHAT HO, TWING!!
Book by
RICHARD LITTLE
Lyrics by
RICHARD LITTLE
Music by
RICHARD LITTLE.
With the Full Twing Juvenile
Company and Chorus.
Scenic Effects by
RICHARD LITTLE
Produced by
RICHARD LITTLE.**

"What do you make of it, Jeeves?" I said.

"I confess I am a little doubtful, sir. I think Mr. Little would have done better to follow my advice and confine himself to good works about the village."

"You think the things will be a frost?"

"I could not hazard a conjecture, sir. But my experience has been that what pleases the London public is not always so acceptable to the rural mind. The metropolitan touch sometimes proves a trifle too exotic for the provinces."

"I suppose I ought to go down and see the dashed thing?"

"I think Mr. Little would be wounded were you not present, sir."

* * * * *

The Village Hall at Twing is a smallish building, smelling of apples. It was full when I turned up on the evening of the twenty-third, for I had purposely timed myself to arrive not long before the kick-off. I had had experience of one or two of these binges, and didn't want to run any risk of coming early and finding myself shoved into a seat in one of the front rows where I wouldn't be able to execute a quiet sneak into the open air half-way through the proceedings, if

the occasion seemed to demand it. I secured a nice strategic position near the door at the back of the hall.

From where I stood I had a good view of the audience. As always on these occasions, the first few rows were occupied by the Nibs—consisting of the Squire, a fairly mauve old sportsman with white whiskers, his family, a platoon of local parsons and perhaps a couple of dozen of prominent pew-holders. Then came a dense squash of what you might call the lower middle classes. And at the back, where I was, we came down with a jerk in the social scale, this end of the hall being given up almost entirely to a collection of frankly Tough Eggs, who had rolled up not so much for any love of the drama as because there was a free tea after the show. Take it for all in all, a representative gathering of Twing life and thought. The Nibs were whispering in a pleased manner to each other, the Lower Middles were sitting up very straight, as if they'd been bleached, and the Tough Eggs whiled away the time by cracking nuts and exchanging low rustic wheezes. The girl, Mary Burgess, was at the piano playing a waltz. Beside her stood the curate, Wingham, apparently recovered. The temperature, I should think, was about a hundred and twenty-seven.

Somebody jabbed me heartily in the lower ribs, and I perceived the man Steggles.

"Hallo!" he said. "I didn't know you were coming down."

I didn't like the chap, but we Woosters can wear the mask. I beamed a bit.

"Oh, yes," I said. "Bingo wanted me to roll up and see his show."

"I hear he's giving us something pretty ambitious," said the man Steggles. "Big effects and all that sort of thing."

"I believe so."

"Of course, it means a lot to him, doesn't it? He's told you about the girl, of course?"

"Yes. And I hear you're laying seven to one against him," I said, eyeing the blighter a trifle austerely.

He didn't even quiver.

"Just a little flutter to relieve the monotony of country life," he said. "But you've got the facts a bit wrong. It's down in the village that they're laying seven to one. I can do you better than that, if you feel in a speculative mood. How about a tenner at a hundred to eight?"

"Good Lord! Are you giving that?"

"Yes. Somehow," said Steggles meditatively, "I have a sort of feeling, a kind of premonition that something's going to go wrong to-night. You know what Little is. A bungler, if ever there was one. Something tells me that this show of his is going to be a frost. And if it is, of course, I should think it would prejudice the girl against him pretty badly. His standing always was rather shaky."

"Are you going to try and smash up the show?" I said sternly.

"Me!" said Steggles. "Why, what could I do? Half a minute, I want to go and speak to a man."

He buzzed off, leaving me distinctly disturbed. I could see from the fellow's eye that he was meditating some of his customary rough stuff, and I thought Bingo ought to be warned. But there wasn't time and I couldn't get at him. Almost immediately after Steggles had left me the curtain went up.

Except as a prompter, Bingo wasn't much in evidence in the early part of the performance. The thing at the outset was merely one of those weird dramas which you dig out of books published around Christmas time and entitled "Twelve Little Plays for the Tots," or something like that. The kids drooled on in the usual manner, the booming voice of Bingo ringing out from time to time behind the scenes when the fatheads forgot their lines; and the audience was settling down into the sort of torpor usual on these occasions, when the first of Bingo's interpolated bits occurred. It was that number which What's-her-name sings in that revue at the Palace—you would recognise the tune if I hummed it, but I can never get hold of the dashed thing. It always got three encores at the Palace, and it went well now, even with a squeaky-voiced child jumping on and off the key like a chamois of the Alps leaping from crag to crag. Even the Tough Eggs liked it. At the end of the second refrain the entire house was shouting for an encore, and the kid with the voice like a slate-pencil took a deep breath and started to let it go once more.

At this point all the lights went out.

* * * *

I don't know when I've had anything so sudden and devastating happen to me before. They didn't flicker. They just went out. The hall was in complete darkness.

Well, of course, that sort of broke the spell, as you might put it. People started to shout directions, and the Tough Eggs stamped their feet and settled down

for a pleasant time. And, of course, young Bingo had to make an ass of himself. His voice suddenly shot at us out of the darkness.

"Ladies and gentlemen, something has gone wrong with the lights——"

The Tough Eggs were tickled by this bit of information straight from the stable. They took it up as a sort of battle-cry. Then, after about five minutes, the lights went up again, and the show was resumed.

It took ten minutes after that to get the audience back into its state of coma, but eventually they began to settle down, and everything was going nicely when a small boy with a face like a turbot edged out in front of the curtain, which had been lowered after a pretty painful scene about a wishing-ring or a fairy's curse or something of that sort, and started to sing that song of George Thingummy's out of "Cuddle Up." You know the one I mean. "Always Listen to Mother, Girls!" it's called, and he gets the audience to join in and sing the refrain. Quite a ripeish ballad, and one which I myself have frequently sung in my bath with not a little vim; but by no means—as anyone but a perfect sapheaded prune like young Bingo would have known—by no means the sort of thing for a children's Christmas entertainment in the old village hall. Right from the start of the first refrain the bulk of the audience had begun to stiffen in their seats and fan themselves, and the Burgess girl at the piano was accompanying in a stunned, mechanical sort of way, while the curate at her side averted his gaze in a pained manner. The Tough Eggs, however, were all for it.

At the end of the second refrain the kid stopped and began to sidle towards the wings. Upon which the following brief duologue took place:

YOUNG BINGO (*Voice heard off, ringing against the rafters*): "Go on!"

THE KID (*cloyly*): "I don't like to."

YOUNG BINGO (*still louder*): "Go on, you little blighter, or I'll slay you!"

I suppose the kid thought it over swiftly and realised that Bingo, being in a position to get at him, had better be conciliated, whatever the harvest might be; for he shuffled down to the front and, having shut his eyes and giggled hysterically, said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I will now call upon Squire Tressidder to oblige by singing the refrain!"

You know, with the most charitable feelings towards him, there are moments when you can't help thinking that young Bingo ought to be in some sort of a home. I suppose, poor fish, he had pictured this as the big punch of the evening. He had imagined, I take it, that the Squire would spring jovially to his

feet, rip the song off his chest, and all would be gaiety and mirth. Well, what happened was simply that old Tressidder—and, mark you, I'm not blaming him—just sat where he was, swelling and turning a brighter purple every second. The lower middle classes remained in frozen silence, waiting for the roof to fall. The only section of the audience that really seemed to enjoy the idea was the Tough Eggs, who yelled with enthusiasm. It was jam for the Tough Eggs.

And then the lights went out again.

* * * * *

When they went up, some minutes later, they disclosed the Squire marching stiffly out at the head of his family, fed up to the eyebrows; the Burgess girl at the piano with a pale, set look; and the curate gazing at her with something in his expression that seemed to suggest that, although all this was no doubt deplorable, he had spotted the silver lining.

The show went on once more. There were great chunks of Plays-for-the-Tots dialogue, and then the girl at the piano struck up the prelude to that Orange-Girl number that's the big hit of the Palace revue. I took it that this was to be Bingo's smashing act one finale. The entire company was on the stage, and a clutching hand had appeared round the edge of the curtain, ready to pull at the right moment. It looked like the finale all right. It wasn't long before I realised that it was something more. It was the finish.

I take it you know that Orange number at the Palace? It goes:

Oh, won't you something something oranges,
My something oranges,
My something oranges;
Oh, won't you something something something I forget,
Something something something tumty tumty yet:
Oh—

or words to that effect. It's a dashed clever lyric, and the tune's good, too; but the thing that made the number was the business where the girls take oranges out of their baskets, you know, and toss them lightly to the audience. I don't know if you've ever noticed it, but it always seems to tickle an audience to bits when they get things thrown at them from the stage. Every time I've been to the Palace the customers have simply gone wild over this number.

But at the Palace, of course, the oranges are made of yellow wool, and the girls don't so much chuck them as drop them limply into the first and second

rows. I began to gather that the business was going to be treated rather differently to-night when a dashed great chunk of pips and mildew sailed past my ear and burst on the wall behind me. Another landed with a squelch on the neck of one of the Nibs in the third row. And then a third took me right on the tip of the nose, and I kind of lost interest in the proceedings for awhile.

When I had scrubbed my face and got my eye to stop watering for a moment, I saw that the evening's entertainment had begun to resemble one of Belfast's livelier nights. The air was thick with shrieks and fruit. The kids on the stage, with Bingo buzzing distractedly to and fro in their midst, were having the time of their lives. I suppose they realised that this couldn't go on for ever, and were making the most of their chances. The Tough Eggs had begun to pick up all the oranges that hadn't burst and were shooting them back, so that the audience got it both coming and going. In fact, take it all round, there was a certain amount of confusion; and, just as things had begun really to hot up, out went the lights again.

It seemed to me about my time for leaving, so I slid for the door. I was hardly outside when the audience began to stream out. They surged about me in twos and threes, and I've never seen a public body so dashed unanimous on any point. To a man—and to a woman—they were cursing poor old Bingo; and there was a large and rapidly growing school of thought which held that the best thing to do would be to waylay him as he emerged and splash him about in the village pond a bit.

There were such a dickens¹ of a lot of these enthusiasts and they looked so jolly determined that it seemed to me that the only matey thing to do was to go behind and warn young Bingo to turn his coat-collar up and breeze off snakily by some side exit. I went behind, and found him sitting on a box in the wings, perspiring pretty freely and looking more or less like the spot marked with a cross where the accident happened. His hair was standing up and his ears were hanging down, and one harsh word would undoubtedly have made him burst into tears.

"Bertie," he said hollowly, as he saw me, "it was that blighter Steggles! I caught one of the kids before he could get away and got it all out of him. Steggles substituted real oranges for the balls of wool which with infinite sweat and at a cost of nearly a quid I had specially prepared. Well, I will now proceed to tear him limb from limb. It'll be something to do."

¹ The use of the term "dickens" is a good reminder to also bring up one of the most influential works of literature about Christmas, [A Christmas Carol](#) by Charles Dickens: this well-known story serves as a classic holiday tale but also as a clear critique of the inequality in capitalism

I hated to spoil his day-dreams, but it had to be.

"Good heavens, man," I said, "you haven't time for frivolous amusements now. You've got to get out. And quick!"

"Bertie," said Bingo in a dull voice, "she was here just now. She said it was all my fault and that she would never speak to me again. She said she had always suspected me of being a heartless practical joker, and now she knew. She said—— Oh, well, she ticked me off properly."



"That's the least of your troubles," I said. It seemed impossible to rouse the poor zib to a sense of his position. "Do you realise that about two hundred of Twing's heftiest are waiting for you outside to chuck you into the pond?"

"No!"

"Absolutely!"

For a moment the poor chap seemed crushed. But only for a moment. There has always been

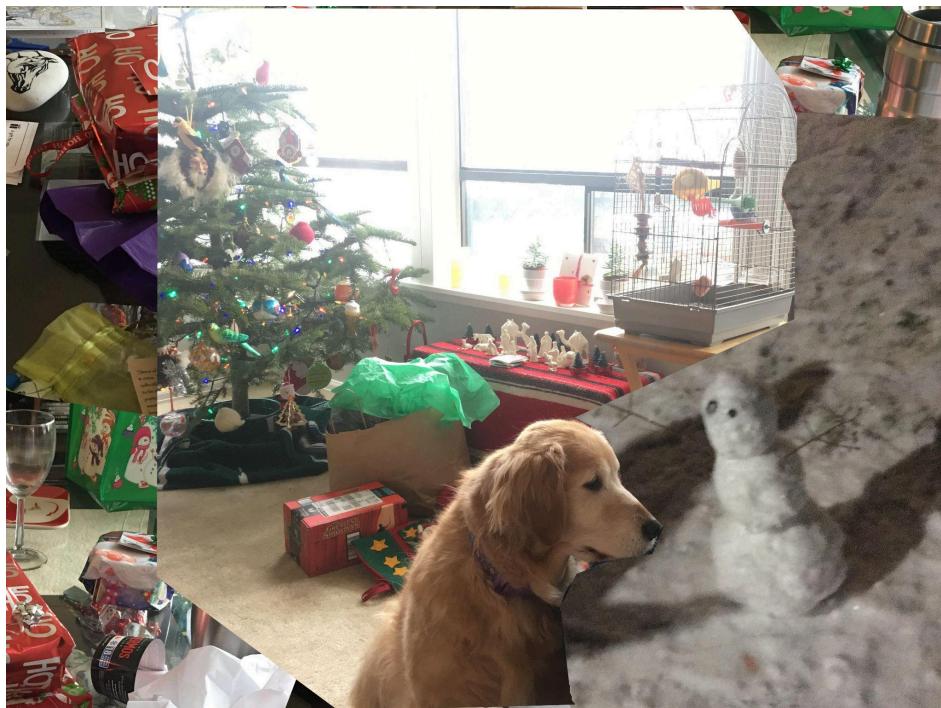
something of the good old English bulldog breed about Bingo. A strange, sweet smile flickered for an instant over his face.

"It's all right," he said. "I can sneak out through the cellar and climb over the wall at the back. They can't intimidate me!"



Christmas 2017 in Washington

Reminiscing about a time not too long ago—but also somehow far in the past



We celebrated Christmas 2017 in Washington state, at our new place. My partner and I had moved across the country from Ohio and rented a place in Seattle for a few years. Now we had moved up north a bit to our new place, where we happened to see

a Christmas tree lot set up in the shopping center right across from us. So we went and picked out a nice little tree that we carried back and situated in the old fashioned base that we had lugged around with us and decorated it with many bird ornaments and colored globes and plenty of old Christmas tree decorations from both sides of the family from years past.

We were joined that year on our Christmas Day celebrations by our beloved parakeet Bogey and my mother-in-law as well as my sister Katie and her dog Stella.

We enjoyed coffee and champagne and opened presents and took in the wintry vibes—there was enough snow that year in the Seattle area that we had actually built a modest snowman the day before.

Remembering that Christmas now, I think of the good times we had and also feel quite sentimental about Bogey and Stella, who were both incredible pets and very loved. I do think I appreciated what a special time that was then, but it's a reminder to always be present and aware of those special holiday moments, as there will probably be more in the future but they will always be a little different.

My Childhood Chicago Christmas Eves

A personal recollection by Daniel J. McKeown



Joseph and Patricia Chaput in Florida, December 2003

The wave of excitement that pulsed through my Grandma's house when she would come around her L-shaped staircase and announce: "I HEAR SOMETHING...I THINK SANTA WAS JUST HERE!" is such a vivid memory. A few of the older grandkids would inevitably bound up the stairs with Grandma (was she bounding in those days back in the 80s, sort of I think) and we would come across a seriously close getaway--an open window (the fireplace was downstairs after all) and a massive pile of gifts in huge bags (that seemingly had come out of nowhere) were the only signs that the famous sleigh and the giant reindeer had just been up there on the roof of that barn-style house on Lake Avenue in Wilmette, Illinois.

That was one of the first Chicago-area-set Christmases that I ever watched, but over the years I have seen many others in movies.² So as the world's imagination turns to those made up Christmases in Chicago back in the late 20th Century, my thoughts often turn back to those magical holiday celebrations featuring that side of the family, with my Grandma shopping, decorating, and hosting for a memorable holiday. It was always crucial to have plenty for everyone to eat and drink, and when my Grandparents moved from the Wilmette house to a new house out in Des Plaines in 1990 they continued the annual tradition of having everyone over every Christmas Eve. There the living room and overlooking kitchen would be a crammed scene with aunts, uncles, cousins, and probably a priest every year all claiming a folding chair or one of Grandpa's rolling seats or some standing room and waiting with anticipation for when my grandparents would finally get to their gift, and there in the cold Midwest in December we would have the windows and screen door open to cool the crowded house off.

They had so much, but people wanted to give them stuff because of how generous my grandparents had been to them. Whether it was a cool tape player for the kids at Christmas or help paying for vacations, my grandparents showed up for everyone in their family in many ways. Grandpa Joe was a very bright and generous person, living to 100 and being celebrated for his accomplishments at a big party to mark the occasion. But so pivotal to all of it was my Grandma Patricia and her personal touch with people. She was kind and generous to everyone in all the interactions I can remember, but I think my Grandma had a special love for her grandkids and great-grandkids. As I look forward to the Xmas ahead, I hope that I can capture just a little bit of the joy and celebration of those early Christmas Eves with my Grandma, who loved tinsel and white lights and those glass fake icicles on her tree and when I see those decorative elements they often remind me of her and how much she helped make Christmas something to be excited about when I was a kid.

² '[Christmas Vacation](#)' with Chevy Chase is based in the Chicago area, and the church in '[Home Alone](#)' was right there on Lake Avenue, two houses down from my Grandma's old place

Bob Dylan's Take on Xmas Music

"[Christmas in the Heart](#)"   is a 2009 recital of classic songs

Bob Dylan is the subject of multiple movies, many books, and thousands of music nerd rants. Conventional wisdom has come down about him to casual music fans (the 1965 Newport Folk Festival does a lot of work here) but the many facets and eras of the man and his music make him a complex subject. So without going too far into all that, many Dylanologists hold "later" albums (notably 1997's 'Time Out of Mind') up as valuable original work. In addition, years of ongoing touring had given Dylan and his band a strong rapport. With that in mind, Bob Dylan's Christmas album 'Time Out of Mind' from 2009 is a well played set of old-timey Christmas tunes that mostly look back to Dylan's youth and the days of churchy songs and caroling tunes before that.

Harmony vocals give a folksy start to 1947's "Here Comes Santa Claus," which brings in country instruments while choral vocals sing the parts back and forth with Dylan. The next song, 1962's "Do You Hear What I Hear?" is a full-throated recitation of the Cold War song. After that, Dylan goes back to 1934 for a country-inflected "Winter Wonderland" where another chorus shows up for a few vocal lines and an outro harmony. Then they meet up in the next song to croon the 1739 carol "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." The tone turns more reflective for a downtempo recitation of the 1943 classic "I'll be Home for Christmas" that features piano and a chorus (the one from the first song, from the sound of it). After that the songs include "Little Drummer Boy," "Have Yourself a Merry Christmas," "Christmas Island," and "O' Little Town of Bethlehem."

Bob Dylan's take on Christmas music is pretty traditional but he certainly seems to like the songs and he sings them with enthusiasm, so while this album might be outside the typical rotation of holiday party records it works for the occasion and it might be fun to notice who at the party recognizes the voice of the guy singing the Christmas tunes.

