

Making Our Way

SLIDE



PROCESSED BY KEYNOTE

#84 • Season 3 • Episode 23

2/18/2026

Stop. Look. Listen.

Our Hosts

Janet Cheyne McMahon is a lover of family, dogs, nature, travel, books, and music. Born south of the Mason-Dixon line, she left after 9 months for parts north, landing eventually in Michigan, which will always be “where I’m from.”

Love of learning led Jan to a Bachelor of Arts (History, Political Science) at the University of Michigan-Dearborn (Go Blue), and a Master of Arts (Library and Information Science) at the University of South Florida. Amid all that, studied for a time with Rob at Colorado State University, a pivotal time in their lives.

Worked at the U of M-Dearborn Library, and then The Salvation Army Florida Divisional Headquarters, with the greatest reward being in serving as the Divisional Librarian. A librarian is who Jan is “in my soul.”

Jan and Rob have made our home in Florida since 1983, and live now in retirement with their dog, Skye, who makes it all the best adventure. They travel as much as possible, spending time in nature and in diverse places on this amazing planet. It has all been, and continues to be a fascinating journey, with hope of making a difference, in small ways, by being brave enough to speak and act on behalf of others.

Rob McMahon is a native Michigander, born in Saginaw and raised in the suburbs of Detroit. Rob attended Michigan State University, graduating in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He did graduate studies at the University of Michigan and the University of South Florida. Rob is retired, having spent 36 years in public education teaching both high school chemistry and biology and middle school science. He worked as a total quality management trainer for the Pinellas County School District and served four years as the president of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association. Rob cofounded a non-profit total quality management training center, The Learning Co-op, for Teacher Unions interested in applying the W. Edwards Deming continuous improvement principles to their day-to-day operations. He worked with teacher unions in Colorado, Maryland, New Mexico, North Dakota, Texas and Michigan. He also worked in a similar capacity with Jim Shipley & Associates. In retirement Rob has written a series of science related children’s books, and enjoys traveling with his wife, Jan, and their Black Labrador Retriever, Skye.

Deanna Cheyne, born in St. John’s, Newfoundland, earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Toronto (1996), studying with such luminaries as Elmer Eisler, Doreen Rao, Greta Kraus, Lois Marshall, and Rosemarie Landry.

Dee taught music at Mississauga Christian Academy, served as music director for Meadowvale Bible Baptist Church (Mississauga, Ontario), served as Assistant Divisional Music Director for The Salvation Army in Florida, is a former member of Tampa’s Master Chorale, and, for the past 18 years, has been a public school teacher.

Dee has visit 36 of the 50 U.S. states, and 12 countries. Her favorite destinations include France, Prague, New Orleans, National Parks, & Hawaii.

Dee & Jim live in Florida with Brigus (Golden Retriever) and Pip (Teacup Yorkie).

James Cheyne, born in Galesburg, Illinois, earned a Bachelor of Music degree (Theory and Composition) from Michigan State University (1978); and a Master of Music degree (Theory and Composition) from the University of Illinois Urbana/Champaign (1981), studying with David Liptak, Salvatore Martirano, and Ben Johnston.

Jim has served as music director for The Salvation Army in Central Illinois & Eastern Iowa, Orlando Area Command, and the Florida Division, served as a pastor with The Salvation Army, and was a public school teacher for 17 years.

In travel so far, Jim has visited 50 states and 27 countries. His favorite travel destinations include National Parks, New Orleans, Newfoundland, Argentina, Prague, & France.

Jim continues to write music and support Dee’s musical endeavors, and cooks whenever absolutely necessary. Jim & Dee live in Florida with their dogs Brigus & Pip.



L-R: Brigus, Jim, Deanna, Skye, Jan, Rob.
Inset: Pip

This transcript of the podcast, Making Our Way is housed at
cheynemusic.com/podcast/transcripts.
©2026 by James Cheyne, all materials, unless otherwise noted.
All rights reserved.

Stop. Look. Listen.

#84 - Season 3; Episode 23

2/18/2026

Hosts: Jan, Rob, Dee, & Jim.

Continuing our quest for that "carousel-worthy" vacation photo, the crew talks about their successes and the ones that got away. What makes one photo a scene while another tells a story? Photos as witness. With stops at The Art Institute of Chicago, and the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg.

[Music]

JIM (voice-over): Sometimes you take photos; sometimes you make photos. You can take a photo, like that one of your high school friends one last time. Or you can make a photo, such as Moonrise at Hernandez, New Mexico, by Ansel Adams. Either way, what are our aspirations as photographers? Maybe we hope to capture the Milky Way over Arches National Park; that would be beautiful. Or freeze frame a peregrin falcon in flight; that's tough. Or maybe we'd like to take just one good Thanksgiving picture without getting our finger in the frame. We dream.

"Jim, why is your finger always covering my mom?" "I don't know, Dee. Maybe it's time to upgrade my iPhone."

[Music]

Here, now, are some of our efforts at taking and making photographs - tales of catching some that are keepers, and tales of the ones that got away.

[Music ends]

DEE: I did not grow up in a similar home as you three. We weren't thinking about, "Oh, get the camera out," because I almost think that interrupts the moment as it's happening. It's kind of an afterthought. And I think I started taking some pictures because Jim would be very occupied taking pictures. So okay, what am I gonna do?

JAN: I need to take pictures, too.

DEE: Most of the time our vacations were taken with my Uncle Jeff and his family, and the way we would relive our experiences is sitting around the table and reminiscing...

ROB: Yeah.

DEE: ...and the pictures are in our mind and probably are enhanced more than they would be looking at the actual thing.

ROB: I think that's true. Sometimes you just have to be in the moment. An example. Alaska, this past summer. I was intent on getting a a video of a humpback whale breaching, and it was over and over doing it. I never got it. I was always in the wrong place. I couldn't see it. And because of that, I missed the whole thing. I never got to see this whale breach. That

made me sad.

DEE: Right.

ROB: And I was also angry because I couldn't get it on film...

DEE: Get the pic - get the picture.

ROB: ...either. But, yeah, you're right.

JAN: Well, I was just gonna say about Dee talking about her family. Newfoundlanders in general are storytellers.

DEE: Yeah.

JAN: And I think that speaks to a lot right there. You're gonna remember it in that way and you're gonna tell a story about it. And that's what I think about the whole Newfoundland culture. You're gonna tell a story. There's a way that photography can make you more mindful of what's happening. There's a way you can focus in on something, and you're more aware of what's happening because you're trying to capture it. But there's also a way you can lose the experience by focusing on the picture. And I've had it happen both ways where I thought I'm trying too hard to get this picture and I'm missing what's happening. You know, I tried to take the stars when we were in Big Bend National Park. We went outside. It's a Dark Sky Park. And I'm looking up and it was like nothing I've ever seen. The sky is filled. Well, I don't have the equipment to capture that. I tried. You can see a bunch of stars in my picture, but in that moment, that picture doesn't matter. What mattered was me standing and looking up at those stars and putting my phone away and just being in the moment. When I walk with Sandy when we're on vacation together, she's less likely to take the big landscape, and she's more likely to take the picture of the plant or the flower. Up close, that image. Those are the pictures I'm kind of interested in. You know, our dads took a lot of scenery. Not always a lot of people. If you go back and look at our slides...

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: ...you see the grandiose, you see the landscape before you. In my memory at least, there are fewer of us in that landscape than there are of the mountains. I would prefer to err on the side of making sure the people I'm with are in the landscape. That's just a preference. You know, these are the people that we had this experience with. We have this picture, this great picture of your family with all of us in Newfoundland where we're sitting on that rock with our dogs and everything.

DEE: Oh, yeah.

JAN: And to me, if I had to pick a favorite pic - well, there are a couple - but if I had to pick a favorite picture from that trip, which was spectacular, I'm gonna go for that picture...

DEE: Mm-Hmm.

JAN: ...of all of us together in the same way I'd go for the picture of us in front of Christian's Pub...

DEE: Mm-Hmm.

JAN: ...for when we did the screeching in because it's about an experience.

ROB: Are there pictures that you've taken that are now embedded in your brain that you can see vividly. I can see the picture of my dad, off the ground in the air, taken when John Ryer won the presidency of National Education Association. I don't know who took that picture, but...

JAN: It's classic.

ROB: ...it is amazing. And my big father off the ground, he's leaping in the air with his fists in the air.

JAN: And that's a...

ROB: There's an- Oh, go ahead. Sorry.

JAN: No, I just wanna say, that picture, that is your dad in a moment that kind of is like his life. He was happy for the teachers union. He was happy for his friend.

ROB: Friend.

JAN: And he's expressing joy in a way that I don't remember your dad doing with that much exuberance that often.

ROB: Not that often.

JAN: So it stands out in my mind as, that's Dave McMahon. Everything about him is in that picture.

ROB: Yeah. There's a picture of my dad in Alaska with his Pocket Fisherman, and he's holding up a Arctic grayling that's about six inches long that he's caught. He's so proud that he's caught this thing. And then there's the picture outside Christian's with Jim and Dee, and with Michelle and Mattea and Silvanna and Stacey.

DEE: Hmm.

ROB: That just meant so much. It was the experience.

JAN: Yeah, it was the experience.

ROB: And that picture...

DEE: It was a fun night.

ROB: ...encompasses that experience for me. Yeah. Oh, one more. I have a picture of Jim, Lance Duguay, John Michelson, and myself at CMI. We're in the old amphitheater, and um - it's just a special picture. Yeah.

JIM: I have great memories of pictures I did not take. We went to Hawaii. Our hotel was near the base of Diamond Head, and I never took a picture of Diamond Head.

JAN: Really?

JIM: I mean, what is wrong with me? Because we're right underneath it, I never had that perspective. I mean, we drove into the crater. It can be right there and you never take a picture of it.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: Another one I didn't take was in Springfield, Missouri. Dad and I were there for his sister's 50th wedding anniversary. This is 1986. Dad has a lot of stories of his childhood, and I find out a lot of them have to do with Springfield. So he finds the old house. We park across the street. He gets out, and I've got my camera ready, and there's dad who has just crossed the street and stops and he's just looking at his house. And, oh, what a great picture! And then I thought, "Don't make it a picture. Just remember what you're looking at." All the memories that must have been going through his mind as he's looking at that house.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: And I didn't take the picture. On the other hand, famous pictures, Dee, brother-in-law Duncan, you and me in Canmore...

DEE: I know what you're going to say.

JIM: ...Canmore, British Columbia. Tell us about that photo.

DEE: No, it's Canmore, Alberta.

JIM: It was Alberta?

DEE: Yeah.

JIM: Is Banff in Alberta?

DEE: Yes.

JIM: Oh. Okay, so we're in Alberta.

DEE: Yes.

JIM: And tell us about the photo.

DEE: My niece, Mattea, I think she might have been a kindergartner, they had one of these cute little automatic cameras that produced a picture, and the picture was probably this size of a slide. So we're in downtown Canmore shopping...

JIM: Alberta, right?

DEE: ...Alberta, yes. Mattea wants to take a picture of the three of us, and we're like, okay, so we're posing on this sidewalk. She's got the camera up to her eye, and her head is turned, and she's squinting. And then when the print comes out, it's just a picture of our legs from our knees down.

[Laughter]

JAN: That's a classic.

JIM: But that's a picture I want to put in a frame and keep forever.

JAN: That's a classic. It's a memory.

DEE: We just laughed our heads off and she was like, "Why is that so funny?"

[Laughter]

JAN: One of my favorite pictures is of - that Rob took of me and mom. And it's in 1986. We're in Alaska, and we're just walking along this beach area, having some kind of conversation, I don't remember what. She was younger than I am now. She was just beginning to have memory loss in a way that was noticeable, but she was brave and independent to go on this trip with us. And so that picture now is up in our living room, and we have a little plaque underneath that says, "A better time. A better place."

JIM: We are at the Grand Canyon. Gee, can you get a photo of that? And I go up to the rim, take a picture of the canyon and say, "There it is. I've got a nice scene." But it's not a story. Not yet, because I've just walked past a man, an elderly man, or as I might say today, someone my age, sitting on the bench. So I back up. Now I can see the Grand Canyon in the background, but mostly the frame is filled with the surroundings of it, and there's this man sitting on a bench looking at the canyon. And I take that picture, and now I have two pictures of the canyon. One is the scene of the canyon, the other is a story. And the story is nonspecific. What's he thinking? Why is he by himself? How long has he been there? Is he just waiting or is he is he tired? Is he okay? When a picture can do that, evoke from the viewer that involvement, personal involvement in a picture, even when it's anonymous, even when it's just two women walking on a stony beach in Alaska, the picture becomes a narrative. When I talk about the raising of the flag at Iwo Jima, everyone knows that picture. There are three men standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, pointing at the direction the shot just came from. Here's another one. If I say Napalm Girl, do you have that image?

JAN: Oh yeah. I think about photography as witness. If you're told somebody is shot by federal agents, you don't know him and you don't know under what circumstances, and maybe a story could be created for why that shooting was necessary. Currently, in a way, we're being called to be witness to what's happening, to have our cameras, to shoot the scene, because it's going to be the picture that makes the difference. I thought about that a lot during everything that's been happening in Minneapolis. If people hadn't been there to take the picture, the impact would not have been the same. But because somebody's there to take the picture, which I don't know that I would be the kind of person who would have been mindful enough to do that...

DEE: Yeah.

JAN: ...so grateful for the pink lady who did, you know? You take the picture, you've captured the history. And I know that we're in an age when things can be manipulated, but we can also know when those pictures are manipulated.

DEE: Right, yeah.

JAN: So being a witness to what's happening around us is a different level that I'd never really thought of before, but I think is important for us to just kind of be aware. If you see something, and you think something's gonna happen, take a picture. Be the person who's capturing that...

DEE: The truth.

JAN: ...truth, yes, that's the word. Capture the truth of the moment.

DEE: Yeah. Without that, we would probably believe all those horrible things that the

administration came out...

JAN: Yeah.

DEE: ...claiming right away. But no, there was the evidence to refute what they were trying to pull off.

JAN: So that's to me is a new aspect of photography that I've only thought about recently.

JIM: When I was at the University of Illinois, when I could get the money together, it would cost me \$30 to get a train ticket from Champaign to Chicago - end at Union Station and then you can go straight down to the lake from there, and you come to the Art Institute of Chicago. I love this place. And I would try and have enough money left over that I could get something to eat while I was there. And there was this painting there that I spent an afternoon looking at. It was a Georges Seurat, "Sunday Afternoon at the Isle of La Grande Jatte," this masterwork of pointalism. Your mind wanders, but you're also asking questions. "Why do all these figures seem to have little halo around them? Why is that person holding a monkey? Why are they dressed like this? Why is this person like that?" And you spend a lot of time doing that. When you put a frame around it, it becomes something that people stop and look at. They're trying to understand it if they can. They might just pass on to another, but there's some reason this picture is there. It must be worth something. And even if I don't get it, I appreciate that the thing is right there. And what the Art Institute does, what photography does, for me is, it prepares me then to walk out of the Art Institute and meet people, and look at them, and appreciate them for just being there, even if I don't get them. The way you can put a frame around a person. If you put a frame around an artwork, it says, "Look, this is important." So just, everyone you meet, put a frame around them and look at them and think about them. And maybe you won't get it. But at least appreciate that they are there. I was, um, watching a, uh, auction lately of Sotheby's. It was a Klimpt, and the auction starts at \$130 million. Finally sold \$205 million. It occurs to me the painting is not worth \$205 million. The painting is priceless. The \$205 million is the price someone will pay for saying that they own it. The prestige of owning the painting. I wish we could value each other the way that some people would invest in that, which is just some pigments on a canvas. By the way, it's a very nice painting. Just out of my price range. That was the pleasure of going to Chicago.

JAN: Yeah.

JIM: And there is where - Dee, you have a preference for Renaissance, right?

DEE: Yes.

JIM: But, you also like Renoir, I noticed.

DEE: Yes.

JIM: Yeah. Do you like Dalí?

DEE: Not as much.

JIM: Not as much?

DEE: He's a little weird.

ROB: A little. [*Laughs*]

JIM: I'm I'm sorry, I meant Salvador Dalí.

DEE: Yeah.

JIM: Are we talking about the same man?

DEE: Yes. [*laughing*] No, it's fine. I can appreciate going and looking, but I'm not I'm not gonna say. "Ooh, let's get that and hang it on the wall," so much.

JIM: If you go around [*unintelligible*]...

DEE: [*laughing*] Well, no, yeah, we do have one.

JIM: ...take a left, look on the wall on the left, you'll see a gift that we got from Jan & Rob.

DEE: Yes, no, no, no. No, no, that's fine, but I'm thinking of, like, the melting clocks, and the desert scenes, and...

JIM: Well, The Persistence of Memory, the melting clocks...

DEE: Yeah.

JIM: ...there's there's a change that happened in Dalí that you can see, and he becomes - from his melting he becomes more geometric. And so part of it is that Last Supper. It's this obsession with the number 12 that you see in Dalí's work, including the Dodecahedron with pentagons on it. But The Persistence of Memory he revisited. And it's the same sort of imagery, but he underlies it with these geometric shapes. And there was a change in his life there. We have, just in case people are interested, we have the largest Dalí collection outside of Spain is right here in St. Petersburg. One of the things I appreciate about Dalí, there is a picture at the Dalí Museum of a loaf of bread that Dalí painted. Do you remember it?

ROB: Mm-Hmm.

ROB: Mm-Hmm.

JIM: His mastery of the brush stroke in that painting tells me that everything he painted was as careful and deliberate as that, because that loaf of bread - you can easily imagine what it would sound like to bite into the crust on that bread. This is not some sort of a, "I'll just throw something up on canvas and let people bid on it at Sotheby's one day." Excellent technique. But that to me is a little bit of what I'm trying to do with a photograph.

JAN: It's interesting, Jim, when you talk about preparing to take a picture, to take a photograph, all that you go through to do that. I see that as the both the artist and the perfectionist in you coming out. And that process is very different than mine. Which is much less prepared, I guess, would be the way you would see it. I have great appreciation for artists, you know, for the creative person. The ability to look - this is really off subject, but I'm gonna say Bad Bunny. To look at a performer and say, "What is that performer trying to communicate? What is that photographer, that artist trying to communicate?" And to look beneath the surface of - Dalí is a good example. When I saw Dalí for the first time, I'm like, he would have been imprisoned without art. I still sort of think that. He was deviant in a lot of his handling of sexuality. But you want to look at what is he trying to convey? And what is

the message? And if you approach it with curiosity, you'll probably learn something both about the artist and yourself. I look at that with the Bad Bunny halftime coming up and all the controversy about a Puerto Rican artist talking about their country and bringing Latin culture into the Super Bowl. There's a way you can dismiss if you've just read one thing that you don't want to like about him. Or, you can try to figure out what is the message? Why does he sing the way he does? Why is he so popular? Why is he the most popular musician right now in the world? What is that? There must be something I need to see about that in order to understand where we are. So a lot of it, and what I appreciate, Jim, about what you're saying and the way you approach a picture is you're preparing to capture something in a much more disciplined way - I hate to use that word with you, but you know what I mean - a much more disciplined way than um than me. I'm much more likely - I think about it, but I'm gonna pick it up and snap it. And I'm not going to have gone to the length to make sure all the settings are right. I don't have this much patience, I guess, is what it comes down to.

JIM: Well, the point is you're satisfying yourself with what you're doing.

JAN: Right.

JIM: And the moment that you're not satisfied with the results you get, that dissatisfaction will drive out your, "Boy, it's going to be too much to learn." You'll say, "Oh, I'll have to do that better. Because right now I've got a beautiful picture of the ocean, but it seems to be falling off the right of the screen there. Why can't I do a good horizontal?" As soon as someone picks up a camera and says, "Okay, everyone get together and say, 'Cheese,'" that is a photographer. And then the other part is the processing that happens after. In the old days, that's film, you take the picture, and then you develop it. With Ansel Adams, you make the negative, then you make the print. These days, you take a picture and then you go to Photoshop, unless you're just doing an iPhone picture, which does all that inside; it takes care of all that for you according to the settings that you give it. So the next thing is then you do the processing. Who is going to process the picture? It's the person that takes the picture and says, "Wait a minute, someone had their eyes closed." That's going to be your photo editor. You want that person to correct whatever you've done, to straighten out the horizon, to make the color a little bit better, or, "Oh, I got it underexposed," and they fix that. And so it's like doing this podcast. Right now we're taking the picture, and then sometime before Tuesday at midnight, I will have to process this. And while I'm processing, I'm learning more about how to take the picture in the first place. Next time I'm out taking a picture, I've got to remember, take the lens cap off. That will help.

JAN: What drew me to this topic to begin with was, I saw a class being offered on photography and mindfulness. I thought about how the process of taking a picture changes my awareness. Also, noticing the small. Our friend Bernie takes bird pictures. He's amazing. But what I want to mention is the pictures he takes that no one else would notice. You'd walk by these things a hundred times, you would never stop. There's a bridge we have in the park, and on this bridge spiders gather and they build webs. I would never notice them. Bernie goes to those webs, but he'll notice them at different times. And one of the best pictures he has is when it was very humid. It was like foggy out. And so there's all this water, water beads, built up on this spider web. What he did was he caused me to stop and notice that in a way that I wouldn't have seen before. Because for him he wants to capture that image, but also it's this moment in nature that I would have totally missed. So that kind of

mindfulness, I think, opens up other worlds to us if we pay attention. We don't necessarily have to have a camera to have those moments, but having a camera kind of enhances, I think, your awareness of those moments. And that's the part of photography that I like. And I want to say it's actually spiritual for me. That aspect is a spiritual component of photography.

JIM: One of the things that provokes you to take a picture is, "Wow, I need to put this in a bottle somehow, so I can open up the bottle later and enjoy it again." And then you come home and you show someone the picture and they just don't get it.

JAN: Yes, exactly.

JIM: And then you say what to me is the death of my photography. "I guess you had to be there." Which means my photo failed. What I want to do, I want the person to have this moment of, "Wow, I want to go there," or, for those of us who are not able to do that, I want to hear something like, "Thank you for taking me there." It's a perfect analogue to writing music.

JIM (voice-over): I've discovered, I'll say, 2 small differences between a photographer like Ansel Adams and someone like, say, me. Just two. First, he knew his camera as well as Itzhak Perlman knows his violin. I've got a DSLR and I'm still practicing scales. Two: he's, well, he's Ansel Adams, and he sees things that we see only after he's shown them to us. I'll say, "Look, I've got a shot of Yosemite's Half Dome," but Adams reveals an ancient steel-grey monolith erupting from fresh Spring snow into an ink black sky.

[Music begins]

Actually, I've learned a few things both about and from photography. How to watch nature paint a scene with light, how to make the most of where I am and what I have, how to be ready in an instant, and how to slow an afternoon down to await that perfect instant.

Given time, and of course acknowledging that yawning chasm between the skill of Ansel Adams and ourselves, we should enjoy our time of sharing what we've learned as we've made our way. For now, I thank you for your company today.

Until next time.

[Music ends]