

Making Our Way



A McMAHON / CHEYNE PODCAST

#70 • Season 3 • Episode 9

11/5/2025

New Orleans Postcards

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

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Host: Jim.

| To celebrate their anniversary, Dee & Jim traveled to New Orleans and recording a few audio postcards from around the French Quarter.

[Music]

JIM: We are standing on the levees at Washington Artillery Park in New Orleans. The Mississippi River is behind us. Café du Monde is to the right. Ahead is Decatur Street with a line of mule-drawn carriages awaiting tourists. Ahead is Jackson Square with its equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans and seventh president of the United States.

Beyond the square is St. Louis Cathedral, the oldest continuously active Catholic cathedral community in the United States. On either side of the cathedral are The Presbytère on the right and the Cabildo on the left. On either side of Jackson Square, to the left and to the right, are buildings that New Orleans native Truman Capote once called "the oldest, in some ways most somberly elegant, apartment houses in America." They are the Pontalba Buildings. Each is a red brick four-story building running the full length of Jackson Square. Their ground floors house shops and restaurants. The upper floors, apartments.

At the back of the Pontalba building on the left is Tableau Restaurant, housed in what was once the Governor of Louisiana's residence. For our anniversary dinner we sat on their balcony enjoying all the activity of Jackson Square below.

[Ambient sounds]

First-time visitors to the French Quarter might suffer the line at Café du Monde for beignets so they can check an item off their tourist bucket list. But we prefer Royal Street, which runs parallel to Bourbon Street, but is one block closer to the river, and one block quieter. There we find Café Beignet, a small space.

Café Beignet is just three doors down from Bevolo Light Company, where we had three copper gas lights made - two for the garage and one for over the front door. Down a bit farther, near the cathedral and next to Reverend Zombie's Voodoo Shop, is The Hat Loft, Dee's favorite hat store, where she bought a classy item in memory of Diane Keaton.

Royal Street also boasts the former home of chess genius Paul Morphy, who died here in 1884, long after he had retired from the game. The building is now home to Brennan's Restaurant, where proper dining attire is preferred, and where gentlemen with kilts and bagpipes welcome the guests.

[Ambient sounds]

Whenever a long weekend allows, and Jan and Rob can take the dogs, we like to visit New Orleans [OR-leenz]. And that's how it's pronounced. We used to visit a city we called New Orleans [or-LEENZ], but now we know better and haven't been back there in years, which means we should talk about how things are pronounced here.

Dee and I visited Chartres [SHAR-treh] once, and while Dee has mastered French pronunciation, it's a skill I simply don't possess, as you can hear. Luckily, it's a skill I don't need in New Orleans. Ask a local which way is Chartres [SHAR-treh] Street, and you'll be given helpful and polite directions to Charters [CHART-erz] Street instead. Looking for Burgundy [BUR-gun-dee] Street? It isn't here, but they do have one called Burgundy [bur-GUN-dee] Street, and other street names are there just to frustrate outsiders. When New Orleans removed a statue of Robert E. Lee, outsiders came in to protest. In response, one local carried a sign that said, "If you can't pronounce Tchoupitoulas [CHOP-uh-too-lus] Street, leave us alone." It was a shibboleth test.

So, when we went to buy - what are they? Pralines [PRAY-leenz]? I first asked, "How do you pronounce this?" Which is why we now call them pralines [PRAH-leenz]. So when you visit, know that Calliope Street is Calliope [kal-ee-OPE] Street, Crayfish [KRAY-fish] are crawfish [KRAH-fish] and pecans [PEE-cans] might be helpful in an emergency, but here the nut is pronounced pecans [pe-KAHNZ].

Cafe Pantalba is at the corner of St. Peter and Chartres Streets. Its floor-to-ceiling windows swing open for all the sounds and sights of Jackson Square to pour in. The buskers and fortune-tellers, performers and vendors, artists and pedestrians, all blending with cathedral bells while we sip our drinks and eye the menu for - what will it be today? Fried Gator or Fried Fish Po'boy? Or blackened redfish etouffee? Or Creole Gumbo? Or maybe just some red beans and rice.

The iron fencing around Jackson Square has become a gallery where artists display and sell their creations. The city issues licenses for these artists with the conditions that all artwork displayed and sold is original, and that it is the artists themselves who are making the sales. That's where we met artist Jamie Chiarello, with whom we spoke for about half an hour one day, and a bit longer the next. A true starving artist, she said she once supplemented her income by working as a stripper. I almost replied, "I thought you looked familiar," but because of Dee, I switched to, "Yeah, that's how I started out, too." Even after all these years, Dee understands and puts up with me. And yes, we bought a print for our anniversary.

Bourbon Street, New Year's Day. The Presbytère is also part of the Louisiana State Museum. And on past visits, we had seen displayed there a small boat that Kenny Bellau used to rescue people from the flood waters after Katrina. He saved over 400 people, and whatever pets they had with them.

The museum has moved that boat elsewhere now. In its place are 14 photographs, 14 crosses, and an information sign that reads as follows:

"On January 1st, 2025, a terrorist drove a pickup truck into a crowd of people celebrating the new year on New Orleans's Bourbon Street. Fourteen individuals were killed and more than 50 injured, including two police officers. Victims of the attack ranged in age from 18 to 63. In the days following the

attack, visitors to the site began creating a memorial at the intersection of Bourbon and Canal Streets. To commemorate the lives lost, they left crosses, flowers, candles, beads, and other items. On January 5th, volunteers from Lutheran Church Charities brought and installed these 14 white crosses, each inscribed with a victim's name, on Canal Street. They invited family and friends of the victims and other visitors to the site to write messages of hope and love on the crosses."

[Music]

After viewing the memorial, we left the fortune tellers and vendors and pedestrians and buskers behind and entered the cathedral for a few moments of reflection.

[Gregorian chant]

Crescent City Books has been a French quarter tenant since 1992. The collection includes rare gems from estate sales, local authors, antique maps and prints, with prices ranging from a few dollars. to a few thousand. As I was paying for a volume of Philip Larkin poetry, a second line paraded by.

[Music]

Second lines used to be just for funerals. Brass bands would march with the hearse - that was the first line - while friends and strangers would follow behind. That's the second line. Dee and I had the honor of witnessing just such a funeral once. And while jazz parade funerals still happen, brass bands now hire out to anyone wanting to celebrate anything. And strangers who might not even know what the celebration is all about are invited to second line along with them.

Near our hotel on Decatur Street is another old bookshop with stacks of uncatalogued books and boxes all over the place. Outside, a busker plays Happy Birthday on his saxophone - the only song we ever heard him play. So we decided he wasn't playing Happy Birthday. He was playing Happy Anniversary.

[Music]