

Making Our Way



A McMAHON / CHEYNE PODCAST

#80 • Season 3 • Episode 19

1/21/2026

"A Tale of Two Nurembergs"

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

"A Tale of Two Nurembergs"

#80 - Season 3; Episode 19

1/21/2026

Hosts: Jan, Rob, Dee, & Jim. Guests: Lillian and Larry

Lillian, Larry, Jan, & Rob recall last year's initial visit to Nuremberg and compare it with this year's return. Both visits were through Viking River Cruises. One visit was by land (2025), one by sea (2024); well, by river. Close. 2024 was a brief visit, and was less than satisfactory. 2025 provided enough time to discover Nuremberg is much more than our travelers had remembered.

[Music]

JIM (voice-over): Okay, what do we have today? Searching online for "Nuremberg." Boy, that's an old keyboard. All right, let's see. Russell Crowe? Nope. 2025 film? Nope. Nuremberg Trials? Nuremberg Laws? Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg? Ah, here we go. TripAdvisor, Nuremberg Reviews. What do they have to say?

One review: "It was the best of towns. Five stars." Okay.

"It was the worst of towns. One star." Oh.

"We have the best memories. Five stars." All right.

"We have the worst memories. One star." Hmm.

"It was a place of belief."

"It was a place of incredulity."

"It was a place of light."

"It was a place of darkness."

I tell you what, let's get the real story about Nuremberg from real people who have just returned from their second visit. Yes, it's Lillian, Larry, Jan, and Rob, and this is "A Tale of Two Nurembergs."

[Music]

"Spring of hope."

"Winter of despair."

"All going directly to Heaven."

"All going directly to..." [fade out]

[Music ends]

JIM (voice-over): Lillian and Larry joined us by way of video conference.

LARRY: If you remember last year, Nuremberg was our least favorite place. And for me,

Nuremberg is now one of my favorite places.

JIM: And so what made the difference for that?

LARRY: You have time. We saw Nuremberg in the morning.

JIM: On your last trip, you saw it in the morning?

LARRY: We saw it in the morning, and then we were only in Nuremberg, I would say, three and a half or four hours, and then we had to move on to our next destination. And this time we had a tour we got to see the old city day and night

JAN: After we went last time, I will acknowledge that I was on the verge of depression in Nuremberg for many reasons. It was post-our election. I was not in a good place to go back to a situation from World War II where Hitler had been recruiting. So the things about last time were: it was a rainy day, we didn't have the best tour guide, we didn't really see the whole city, like Larry just said. But it was Lil, I think, afterwards who noted that the city really isn't just one place, it's two places. You've got the old city and then you've got the other part of the newer city. She was intrigued by the older city that we didn't really get to spend time in. And until she said that, I probably never would have gone back to Nuremberg. I had no desire to go back there. It turned out to be the best decision I think we made on this trip, was to go back to that city and see it with fresh eyes, immersed in it right across from Old Town. And not only was that part wonderful, it's beautiful, but also the in-depth tour that we took of the sites of Hitler with a guide that knew how to talk about that history, ending with our time in the courtroom from the Nuremberg trial, changed everything I thought about Nuremberg. There's a lesson there in being open to going back a place like that, recognizing that it had so much more than what we saw the first time.

LARRY: We had agreed that we would give Nuremberg a second chance. And what we learned in Nuremberg was mind-boggling, actually. That World War II experience, we had a historian from the Documentation Center, and he was excellent. And he was talking about that Hitler required everything to be bigger and better and more beautiful. He said Hitler was a megalomaniac. And I made the comment, "We have one of those." *[laughter]* Really shouldn't have said that. I looked around the crowd and I saw a light bulb coming on here or there. And some laughter and, like, there is a parallel. But an example of him, there's granite being mined in Nuremberg that they could have brought in to build this huge Colosseum that's going to be one and a half times or whatever bigger than the Roman Colosseum. And it never did get built because of the war, but he has to bring in Italian marble on [...] the Jewish slaves, of course.

JAN: There was a lot familiar about that experience. It resonated with all of us that we spoke with anyway.

LARRY: It's ironic. He wanted this whole thing where he could see down into Nuremberg from this Zeppelin Field. On the first year we drove by it and the guide says, "There's the Zeppelin Field over there where the Nazis would rally." But this year we got to go in there. It was just a whole different experience. And then to go to the courtroom, that was unbelievable. And to learn that the American Jackson, he pushed, because all the others wanted to just hang him. at the Nuremberg trials. And he said, "If we do that, then the world would just say, 'See, they just did the same thing.'" He said, "We're going to hold legitimate trials," and actually many of them got to go free.

JAN: That was a really cool lesson to learn about how we ended up with credibility in trials. By actually going through the process and not assuming that we knew everybody was guilty. added credibility to the international court. I never knew that came out of the American for that. I mean it would have been so easy to just be done with all of them for what had happened.

ROB: Two of them were acquitted.

JAN: Right.

ROB: So it was fair.

DEE: Wasn't that trial the first time the phrase "crimes against humanity"...

ROB: Humanity.

DEE: ...became a...

ROB: Yes.

DEE: ...qualifying argument...

ROB: Yeah.

DEE: ...for trying someone?

JAN: Yeah.

LILLIAN: So there was a lot of work to do. [...] the Russians, the Americans, and the British - to put this tribunal together. And they had to determine what were the charges going to be, and that "crimes against humanity" was something that pretty much covered everything that had never really been considered as a crime. In our first visit, so you know we're kind of going around on a bus and there's, there's the rally grounds and there's a Colosseum and we're gonna go to Old Town. We're gonna walk around for a couple hours. That's great, but to have the experience of someone taking you actually to the rally grounds and saying, "Now look; look straight down this area where Hitler's soldiers gathered," and you're looking right at the Old Town. He wanted a path from the old to the new, the Third Reich to the First Reich. There was so much about the way that he did things. Like Larry said, everything had to be bigger and better. But, you know, I never really thought about, you know, when you think about the the plight of the Jewish people and them being sent to the concentration camps and the tremendous amount of planning that had to go into building. those gas chambers and the crematoriums and so forth. This was actually very well thought out. Okay? [On] top of that, they were sorted and they were used as slaves. It never hit home with me that the healthiest were used as slaves, and then moved on to the camps. So, they were only able to try 24 in the original Nuremberg trial, but there were thousands, hundreds of thousands, should have been tried.

LARRY: We had asked our guide, "How did this come about? How did the German people get behind him and and agree that this is a good thing?" And he explained that they were like, "Now I belong to something." I'll never forget him saying, "Now I can belong to something. I'm part of this party," you know, and looking back, they're for sure regretting that they got involved or followed that. It was incredible the amount of information that I learned from that World War II tour.

LILLIAN: And what they present at the documentation center, which was not fully open because it's being renovated, but certainly anyone who ever goes to Nuremberg, I would highly recommend going through the documentation center if you're not traveling with Viking, and trying to find a guide, a historian, from the Documentation Center to help you with your travels in Nuremberg.

JIM: What is the Documentation Center? I'm not sure what that means.

LILLIAN: So the Documentation Center is, it's like a museum, and it is built in a portion of that Colosseum that Hitler was building and never finished. You had these grandiose plans, but they never came to fruition because of the war. So they've taken a section of this Colosseum and modernized it. It's a historical center. It's a learning center.

LARRY: Schools tour it.

LILLIAN: And it's within walking distance of the rally grounds. It's around the lake. So you could pretty much tour that whole area and get a sense of what Hitler's plans were.

JIM: So it wasn't something that the Nazis had instituted for careful documentation of things. This is something that came up after that?

LILLIAN: Right.

LARRY: It's actually documenting all of the things that happened.

JIM: Okay.

ROB: Yeah, leading up to the war, the time during the war, and then...

JAN: Since the war.

ROB: ...since the war.

JIM: Okay, so this is a modern idea of presenting the story of what was going on there?

ROB: Yeah.

LILLIAN: There's so much back there and behind what you're seeing that you don't know. And when you start learning that history, I mean we all hear it. But when you step into it.

LARRY: Stepping into the courtroom was about the Nuremberg trials, but to actually step into that courtroom and sit down and learn about that was - And that's the whole Viking experience, is that you're actually immersing yourself physically into these places, and you're learning how the people live, how they thought back then, how they think now, just so different.

LILLIAN: And as you move on from that and you move to the Old Town, it's a step back in time and it's a different world.

JAN: Yeah.

LILLIAN: And it is a beautiful city that was almost completely destroyed in World War II.

LARRY: There's a wall around it.

LILLIAN: Yeah. Some of the wall is still there, the old castle, some of it's still there. And it's

beautiful, it's vibrant, and it felt very different with the time that we spent this time versus last time.

LARRY: One of the things that happened on a lighter note. We had gone into the Old Town and we were walking around when we got into Nuremberg. We decided to stop and get a snack and a beverage, and it was getting dark. So we go into Bar Celona. *[laughing]*

ROB: Cafe Bar Celona. Yeah.

LARRY: There was some German folks, some locals, two couples, that were sitting at a table next to us. And they were drinking and eating. All their food was gone and all their beverage was gone. And they left. The ladies' purses were there. Well me, I saw the purses and I'm like, "Oh, they forgot their purses." So up and out the door I head, and I track them down the street. They're standing right down the street, right outside of the place. And I said, "Excuse me, do you speak English?" And they said, "Yes." And I said, "You left your purses at the table." And they said, "Oh no, we're just coming out for a smoke." And so they said, "You're American." And I said, "Yes." And they said, "Well, thank you for thinking of us." And I said, "When you go to America, don't do that."

[Laughter]

JAN: That was a great moment of learning about cultural differences.

ROB: Yes.

JAN: Oh gosh.

ROB: Yeah, the Old Town was charming. I just really enjoyed walking up and down. I had totally forgotten that the year before we had toured the castle. I didn't remember that at all. I think I blocked Nuremberg right out. And we ended up the last day before we took off to Regensburg to get on the ship, we had a couple hours, so what do we do? The four of us, we say, "Well, let's go walk somewhere." So we walk up the hill to the castle. There's this great restaurant. It's called the Bratwurst House that Larry had scoped out. We had the best meal there. That was where - we were talking about that earlier about Jan telling the waitress that she was a vegetarian, and that, "Oh you can't eat sauerkraut, sorry." But brought - there was this nice plate of cheeses...

JAN: I got mustard. That was a big deal.

ROB: ...mustard with pretzel. There's pretzel and bread, different types of bread and the potato salad. Great restaurant. Lotta locals in there. It's great atmosphere. It's really, really nice.

LARRY: Dogs sitting at the tables with us.

ROB: That's right. Dogs inside.

DEE: Perfect.

LARRY: It was great. And I never thought anybody would match the sausage in the - from the sausage at Regensburg, but that place in Nuremberg was right up there.

[Laughter]

JAN: It does all come back to the sausages.

LILLIAN: At the end of the meal, she came to us and she said, "Well, how about dessert? And of course we were stuffed, but, "What have you got?" "Well, I recommend the apple strudel." So when, you know, you get an apple strudel here, it's it's a pastry on a plate. That's it, right? This is a production. It is a work of art. One of the best things I've ever eaten in my entire life. It was absolutely beautiful, and it was such a nice end to the meal. It was a very special.

ROB: And the other thing about the Old Town was the walk we took the next day. It was just such a beautiful fall day, and the leaves on the trees were golden. And the water and the reflection, going over the little bridges and things. It was - I had a great time in that walk. Yeah.

LARRY: We came upon a knight on a horse. And I'm like, "Whoa, what's going on?"

JAN: I forgot that.

LARRY: They're filming a movie.

DEE: Oh, cool.

JAN: I was just going to mention the gingerbread.

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: We're going to talk in the future about Christmas markets. Nuremberg was getting theirs set up. It hadn't started yet. But our guide told us where the best gingerbread was. And so that's where we went. That's again a local experience that you could only have there. You can't - you can try to bring it back as we did for Jim and Dee, but it's not the same as eating that gingerbread standing in the cold, you know. It was a great - food was an important part of this trip, right?

LILLIAN: I'll tell you, Nuremberg was a lesson for me in that you look at things and you take the information you have and you draw a conclusion based on your experience. And, for me, I drew a conclusion about Nuremberg, and it really left kind of a bad feeling. But sometimes you get a little more information and you think again and you see a whole different picture. And that's how I feel about Nuremberg. I left there feeling, like, I'm so glad that we did this.

LARRY: Oh yeah.

ROB: The extra time we had to spend there, it wasn't just a day, and then we were off. We spent the night, and we got to see it in the dark. We got to spend an entire whole day. You see it in a whole different light when you spend more time there. For a lot of people these cruises are just the first stepping stone in going back to places and spending more time.

LILLIAN: For what we paid, for me personally, if we had only done Prague and Nuremberg, what I got from it was worth every dime I paid.

JIM: From the last talk we did about Nuremberg, the image I got was a colorless place. Now you're putting color on it, Rob's put some gold into the autumn leaves. I want to know how the people there approach visitors to their city. Did you get any sense from the people who

are there of how they're feeling about these two sides of their city.

LILLIAN: The big part of the culture that wants to remember the past. and to honor the dead, and also to show the world that there's something new, and that there's life there, and that they've moved beyond

JAN: One of the things about the historic places that we went, all the Hitler sites, is that it takes money to keep those places maintained. And there's an argument that could be made for letting it go, because they're investing in those places. So I think that is a demonstration of their interest in remembering the history, not ignoring it, not forgetting it, not burying it, but remembering it, and also taking us beyond that place, like Lil said. Nuremberg is a vibrant, current city. If we've created an image of something that's back in time, it isn't. There are places that are back in time, but again, you look around the people that are in the streets, they're young people. This is a city that is alive. And I would never have seen that the first time, but I see it now.

LILLIAN: There's a sign at Zeppelin Field. And there's several different educational signs around the field as you're walking. One of them says, "What does all this have to do with me?" I think it's something that's important to the people of Nuremberg to keep this part of history alive so it's never repeated.

LARRY: Well they actually were going to let it just deteriorate or fall down. And they started building the podium area where Hitler stood, and it's an astronomical amount of money to do that. They were saying that some of the people wanted to let it go. And then some of the people said, "No, we need to remember this." So they're actually having to rebuild it because it's all crumbling down.

JAN: I love that question. "What does this have to do with me?" Because there is a way you can go to any of these places. and not make that connection. I did. We paused at that sign and took pictures of that because that's a reminder that we still live today with propaganda. I mean, Hitler was effective because of propaganda, and because of people feeling isolated and not being part of something. All of those are familiar to us today. There are lessons to be learned from what happened there that we should carry forward with us, both from what we're experiencing, but also going someplace like that, learning that history, making the connection for me as an American, how does this relate to me today in 2026? That's something worth considering, both because of that sign and also because of the tour guides we had in both Nuremberg and also last year in Regensburg, you're connected to "how can we not let this happen again?"

LARRY: If you just stay in the United States and you don't go over there and immerse yourself into it, the thinking is, "Well, that's history and it'll never happen again."

ROB: It's happening.

LARRY: It's starting. There's a lot of similarities. But, I mean, it's just so easy to not care enough. But once you've gone there, like when we did the Grand European last year, it made me think differently about how things can be and how things could be. You know, it's just crazy that we would even be thinking about something that happened in the 1930s and 40s happening in the 2020s. That's why I like the Viking, is because you immerse yourself into these cultures and their history. We don't have that here. We just have the books and the lessons and everything, but we aren't there physically standing there.

JAN: It is the gift of travel to go a place like that. I know I've said this before. Rick Steves used to say, "You should travel before you vote." You should see other places, see the world, understand both what we have and maybe what we don't have that we could aspire to. To recognize that those are all people in Germany whose ancestors lived through a horrible thing. And they've come out the other side. What did they learn from that and what can we learn from that? It does change you to be there in a way that reading a book or seeing a movie doesn't do.

LILLIAN: Yeah, it does change you. Absolutely, I agree.

JIM (voice-over): [fade in] "...It is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known." Wow, these TripAdvisor reviewers sure have sharpened their style.

So, Nuremberg; foreign, yet familiar. So familiar, in fact, that it can be received, as someone once said, "in the superlative degree of comparison only." History does not repeat exactly, but it does rhyme.

[Music]

Next week, Lillian and Larry, Jan and Rob conclude their immersive Viking River Cruise experience in the waters of the beautiful Blue Danube from Regensburg to Budapest.

Thank you for your company today. Please join us again as we continue making our way
Until next time.

[Music ends]