

Making Our Way



A McMAHON / CHEYNE PODCAST

Season 2 - Episode 12

11/27/24

Carpe Diem

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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Carpe Diem

Season 2; Episode 12

11/27/2024

Hosts: Jan, Rob, Dee, & Jim

Hudson's Thanksgiving Day Parade. The World Chess Championship between Ding Liren and Gukesh Dummaraju. The passing of Tony Campolo.

[Music]

JIM: Happy Thanksgiving to all who are listening in a timely manner. To everyone else, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Happy Birthday, whatever fits.

[Music]

JIM: In Detroit, back in the 70s, when Hudson's was on Woodward Avenue, I used to march in the Hudson's Thanksgiving Day Parade as part of The Salvation Army band, which reminds me of a Bill Himes story.

The parade started very early each Thanksgiving Day, and Bill Himes is not now, nor has he ever been a morning person. If you find him up at five in the morning, it's most likely because he's still up at five in the morning. So, Bill, who lived in Flint, Michigan, one time slept on our couch the night before the parade to shorten his commute. You might know Bill is a graduate of the University of Michigan, whose marching band under Dr. William D. Revelli was known for its precision. That year, I marched directly behind Bill, so this was my chance to see how they did things in the Big Ten. Someone gave a command, the drums gave a cadence, and off we went.

Everything was normal at first, but then Bill started marching erratically. He'd go along just fine, then make a sudden move to the right, then steady ahead again, then another move to the left, and that's when I realized we were marching behind some horses. I quickly learned to follow Bill step by careful step.

There's a lesson here. This Thanksgiving, when you sit down to dinner and that crazy relative decides to bring up the election, just keep marching. And be careful not to step in it.

We have two segments today, beginning with this. One of my interests is chess, but when I suggested to the gang that we do a segment on the current World Chess Championship in Singapore, I was laughed out of the room. But I'm going to do it anyway.

My interest in chess began in 1972, when Bobby Fischer played Boris Spassky for the World Chess Championship. It was the US versus the USSR. The Cold War played out on a chessboard in Reykjavik, Iceland. I was traveling in Yugoslavia at the time. The match inspired me to buy a chess set, a wood carved one I saw in a small shop in Dubrovnik's Old Town.

I set about studying the game, and when I went back to school that fall, I saved my lunch

money to spend on every chess book I could find. Over the years, I've acquired a good collection, most of which is now on loan to the chess club at Mitchell High School, where Deanna teaches.

The thing about chess, it's concrete. There's no randomness. Nothing is hidden. It doesn't involve a roll of the dice, or a deck of hidden cards. On one level, the drama of chess is played out player against player. On a more fundamental level, it is really each player against himself or herself. This very human drama, along with how I identify with the current world champion, is why this is my subject today. With apologies to Jan, Rob, and Dee.

The current world champion is Ding Liren of China, for whom I have a strong affinity. Ding won the title in 2023, the first player from China to do so. That world championship match went the full 14 games of regulation and ended in a draw. So, a four game mini match with rapid time controls was used as a tie break. After three games, that mini match was also dead even. And the fourth game was headed for another draw, when Ding made a move that surprised everyone watching the game, including the commentators. And yes, that's right. You can watch chess online complete with full color commentary. If that's news to you, you're welcome.

That single move caused his opponent to stumble, and Ding went on to win the game and the championship. But for me, that's where the drama really starts.

I watched that last game and noticed something strange, something quite emotional. Usually, championship victories in any sport are met with big smiles, fist pumps, hands raised in victory to the cheers of the crowd, then someone thanks Jesus or their mom. But this was not the way with Ding Liren. His opponent resigned the game and left the stage. Ding was left alone, sitting at the board. He did not smile. He did not raise his hands in victory. He was not swarmed by his fans. He didn't move. He sat alone with his head in his hand, hiding his face, exhausted, perhaps not even fully aware of what he had just accomplished.

Ding is someone I recognize. He looked uneasy at the awards ceremony. He doesn't do well in the spotlight. He's a quiet man, reflective, given to poetry and philosophy. Very emotional, but one who calms himself when necessary with logic and rationality. He is mostly solitary and reflective. He's not the guy you want to sit next to at a party, assuming he's even at the party.

People have speculated that winning the world championship, great though his achievement was, somehow broke him. Over the next few months, he did not participate in any tournaments, claiming fatigue, even depression. Few know the anxieties that being on top can bring. Shakespeare had Henry IV say it this way, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." When Ding finally returned to the game earlier this year, his play was almost unrecognizable. He could get early advantages in games, but then let them slip away to draws or even losses, several losses. As world champion, his ranking dropped to number 23 in the world, the lowest ever for a world champion or even for a challenger. Ding has reached the pinnacle of chess, the summit. But as someone once noted, "When you finally reach the summit, the only way to go is down."

In the past, when asked how he summoned the strength when the odds were against him, Ding was philosophical, quoting of all people, Camus, saying, "I remember how Albert

Camus talks about the concept of resistance. The idea is that if you see that you cannot win, do everything in your power to resist. And that memory gave me the determination I needed."

Earlier this year, though, Ding expressed concern about this match, admitting to worrying that he might lose and lose badly. "Maybe I am not so eager to play," he said. "I don't have the same ambitions to win the game." This, I understand. Still, Ding did score one significant victory this year, defeating the rising star from India named Gukesh Dummaraju. If you are given to irony, as I am, you might think, "Boy, wouldn't it be something if that's the guy Ding ends up playing for the championship?" Well, yes, it would be something. In fact, that is the guy Ding is playing right now for the championship.

But is he ready? Will he lose badly as he fears, or will he rise to the moment to defend his title as the first world champion from China? This game of chess is all emotion, and stress, and expectation, and doubt, and disappointment. Will he succumb, or will he ground himself again in his rationality, his logic? When arriving for the contest, Ding said, "This time, I feel peace, and with a lot of energy."

You know, not one professional pundit believes Ding will win this, but there are always surprises, and win or lose, I hope that he can achieve contentment with his efforts.

For our other segment this week, we collect our thoughts on the passing of someone very significant to how we've made our way in our social and spiritual lives, that is Tony Campolo. Before Jan and Rob hit the road, yet again this week, I was able to get them to the microphone to share some thoughts.

JIM: So, uh, was it yesterday we lost Tony Campolo?

DEE: Two days ago?

JAN: Two days ago.

JIM: Two days ago we lost Tony Campolo, and we have some books by him. One is called "A Reasonable Faith." "Partly Right." Brian McLaren and he collaborated on a book called "Adventures in Missing the Point."

JAN: Yes.

JIM: And Shane Claiborne, and he collaborated on a book called "Red Letter Revolution." He was known as a "Red Letter Christian" - red letters being the words of Jesus in the Bible. And "20 Hot Potatoes Christians Are Afraid to Touch." And you've got a book called...?

JAN: "Speaking My Mind; the radical evangelical prophet tackles the tough issues that Christians are afraid to face." And we heard him speak on this book.

JIM: And the other one you have?

JAN: I have. "Carpe Diem - Seize the Day."

JIM: Well, I mean, I was aware of Tony Campolo, and then he was a speaker at the 1985 International Youth Congress for the Salvation Army in Macomb, Illinois. He was engaging. He was funny. He would say things like, "We're only given so many hormones. If you want to use yours to grow hair, that's your business." *[laughter]* And then he would talk about

how The Salvation Army doesn't have the same baptism as everybody else. He said, "That's okay. You baptize your way. We'll baptize the Lord's way." [laughter] You know, that's just a way to win over the audience. And then there was a cartoon, because when he's in spotlight sometimes on this stage, there'd be, like, wisps of moisture coming out of his mouth while he's talking. And so in the daily paper they produced for this Congress, the next day there was a cartoon, and it showed Campolo drawn there with, kind of, water. And it says, "Campolo baptizing his way."

[Laughter]

JAN: That's a good one.

ROB: When I saw him at the Youth Specialties out in California, there were some guys in the front row that had umbrellas. [laughter] They pulled him out when he got up to speak. He thought that was hilarious.

JIM: Why did you go to this conference?

ROB: I was the YPSM at the Clearwater Corps.

JIM: Young People's Sergeant Major.

ROB: Sergeant Major.

JIM: You were the Jean Hawson of the Clearwater Corps.

ROB: Yes, I was.

JAN: It's scary, isn't it?

ROB: Pauline was the...

JAN: Pauline Kerr.

ROB: Yeah, Pauline Kerr was the Sunday School superintendent. So she was my boss.

DEE: I've never heard of that.

JIM: Excellent. So you go to this conference, and it was a Youth Specialties?

ROB: Yeah, Youth Specialties. And he was one of the keynote speakers.

JIM: I've heard him a couple of times since then. There was one time he had been through some sort of an illness. He looked a little off-color. Dee, you and I were there. And he just at one point said, "Men, you've got to face it. Sooner or later, you're going to face prostate cancer," which has been on my mind ever since I had prostate cancer. I remember Tony saying something like this. I also saw him completely out of his context as a minister. Someone was out around South Beach, Miami, South Beach, just grabbing random people to say, "Hey, what's your impression of South Beach?" And Tony Campolo was one of them with his wife.

JAN: I love that.

JIM: So there he is at South Beach, which, you know, has a certain reputation. And so. "What do you think about this?" And he just said, "This is the wildest thing. This is just wild." And that's all he said, nothing more than that. He was just talking about - and I'm, "What's he

doing on there?" And they just said, "Tony from Philadelphia," or something like that. You saw him speak in Orlando?

JAN: Yeah.

DEE: I think we were at the same time.

JAN: I do, too. I think the four of us went, to be honest with you. It's either the four of us or the three of us?

DEE: I think we have that book. I think we got him to sign it.

JAN: Yes, that's what this is. He signed that book for us.

JIM: A very engaging speaker, very smart.

ROB: Eastern University. I was trying to remember where he taught.

JIM: Yeah. Which is a Christian school.

ROB: Yes.

JIM: Is it a private school? Private Christian school.

JIM: Okay. And he is, the field is sociology.

ROB: Right.

JAN: I love this book. I mean, the theory behind this book...

JIM: That's the "Carpe Diem" one?

JAN: Yeah, because Tony Campolo was like this. He lived fully. And that's the point of this book, is to help people live fully. Sometimes Christians don't do that as well as they should. But he said, "For people who want to stay alive until the day they die, this is the book for them."

DEE: I had, back when tapes were the thing, listened to him speaking a lot. And he talks about being alive, the moments when you're alive. And he talked about, I think it was at the Empire State Building when he was a little boy or something. And he goes up to the top of the Empire State Building, and he said he has this feeling of being alive. And, "Remember this moment, grasp this moment when you really feel like you're living." He said those moments are rare, and when they hit you, you need to hold on to them. I mean, he has a lot of things that really stuck with me that I ended up using in the Christmas Choral Celebration one year. And it was him talking about animals, how every creature was created by God to worship God, and that when we allow animals to go extinct - and he was talking specifically about whales - you've silenced that unique voice that was created to worship God.

ROB: He never really disavowed his evangelical roots.

DEE: No.

JAN: Not to my knowledge, no.

ROB: He stuck with it. I mean, he was a - I mean, he's - they called him radical, but he was...

DEE: I mean, he used to be on Bill Maher a lot. He would be on Bill Maher often.

JAN: I think he claimed the word for what it meant to him...

DEE: Yeah.

JAN: ...and didn't allow for the deviations that occurred over time. Going back to "Seize the Day," there's a Puritan ethic that sometimes runs through evangelical Christianity, where, like, if you're having fun, you're not working hard enough. You know? "If you love your job, there's something - you must not be working as hard as me," you know. And what a tragedy it is to think that you have to go through your life as if you're doing penance for something, or you're not allowed to enjoy it. Because he does a good job - he does - he talks about party a lot in his books. Being part of the kingdom of God should be like a party.

DEE: Right.

JAN: We should all be enjoying that experience. And I need to remind myself of that every day. But that's part of living fully, I think, and I think he understood that.

DEE: Yeah, and he would do this a lot, I think, in his - like when we would go to hear him speak, talking about the Puritan thing, and he would just slip in a curse word. And then he would go on to say, "Now, you're all thinking about that word I just said, and you're not thinking about what I said after. And, you know, basically, where are your priorities?"

ROB: He did that in California when we were there, yeah. And I don't remember what he said, but something like, "Ooh." And then he followed it up with that, and it's like everybody goes, "Oh, geez, yes, he's right."

DEE: Yeah, yeah.

ROB: So concerned about that word.

DEE: And it was like - he was down to, "Here's what's important. Here are the things that are not important, so why do we spend so much time worrying about them?"

JAN: A lot of respect for him. He led me on a journey that was to a place that was bigger, you know, a kingdom of God that was bigger than I had imagined before. And that journey has continued, to be honest.

DEE: Yeah, it was a - it's a faith that's inviting as opposed to heavy-handed.

JAN: That's a good expression.

ROB: You know what I think of when I think of somebody who can't enjoy life, is the character in "The Big Chill," Richard, who confesses at the table in the middle of the night with the other two guys that, "You know, nobody said it was supposed to be fun."

JAN: Right. No, he - that's true. It was like life was an assignment for him.

ROB: I know some people like that.

JAN: He had to follow all these rules.

ROB: Yeah.

DEE: Yeah, I would say out of a lot who I've read, he's the one I keep coming back to in

different moments. And the one I think about a lot is that thing about the Empire State Building and going to the Grand Canyon. You know, sitting and watching the sunset in the Grand Canyon, I think of Campolo talking about feeling alive in that moment.

JAN: Recognizing the awe of it all. It is just basically an approach. You know, you're going to be aware. You're not just going to be passive in the situation. You're active in the observation. So think about the people that he influenced, a lot of them are progressive.

DEE: Progressive. Christian.

JAN: Yeah.

JIM: The thing I've noticed about that - his Empire State Building thing - those things can't be synthesized. If he were to go back to the Empire State Building again to try and get that experience, it won't be there. And then people kind of think, "Oh, what's wrong with me? I'm here at this place where this amazing thing happened to me once, and nothing's happening now. Somehow I've failed." I think those moments are unique, and I think they surprise us. And it could be, you're looking, "Okay, I'm going to do this great adventure, and when I get there, I'm going to go, aha." You know? "I'll watch Old Faithful go off, and then I'll be like, 'Oh, there it is. That's - my purpose in life has been fulfilled now.'" And you just go and you say, "Oh, okay, that was it." And then another time you can just watch the way a father and child interact and have an ecstatic moment.

JAN: But what I wanted to really reference was those moments of awe that you can't really plan for, and I agree with that. I think sometimes they come serendipitously. But I also think there's an approach to life that makes you more open to them. When you go into an experience open to what it might bring to you, you are more likely to have those moments of awe. There are examples where you anticipate them, like when you go to the Grand Canyon. You know, you know you're going to see something spectacular, and you do. Sometimes it's more, and sometimes it's less than you expected, but it's probably always impactful. But even in our walks in the park in the morning, I walk frequently with somebody who's very aware of the small things that we see. And that's one of the reasons I enjoy walking with her, is because we look at the moments. A certain bird flies by, or there's something particular on a tree, or shoot the the water's like glass, and you take the time to observe them, and because we're open to them I think we have more of those moments of awe than somebody who's just walking through the park not paying attention. So for me it's about being mindful and paying attention and waiting for those moments to come. So, ergo, the book "Carpe Diem," which is Tony's challenge to live fully in the moment.

[Music begins]

JIM (voice-over): With that, again, let me wish you a happy Thanksgiving. Let's celebrate the gathering of friends and family. Let's honor the retelling and ordering of this year's blessings and difficulties. Let's keep our priorities straight. Let's pause for rejuvenated gratitude. March ahead, and don't step in it.

Until next time.

[Music ends]