

2018 Week 5: The Week Ending Saturday, February 3rd

Paul R. Potts

Monday

I didn't get to write anything at all yesterday because the day was packed, but here's what happened. Merry and Pippin were up before I got breakfast made, and ate leftover cake and ice cream for breakfast. I made them bacon and pancakes with blackberries. The blackberries were too big and trying to cook the pancakes with these huge berries in them didn't quite work out right when I flipped them, so I have to do it differently next time. Probably macerating the berries and putting them right on top of the finished pancakes would work better.

Then Grace and I got out briefly to a "Sunday Socialism" DSA meetup at [Cultivate](<http://www.cultivatepsi.com/>). We drank a pour-over of Kenyan coffee and ate some pastries and finally reached the caffeine quota that allowed us to start to feel almost normal again.

When we got home, the sun was out and it was in the forties, which felt unbelievably warm for the season, so we raced to get the kids packed into the car and out for a walk at Rolling Hills Park. There was some complaining from Pippin and I had to carry Merry, who now weighs 40 pounds, on my shoulders for the majority of the walk. But it was great to get out.

From there we managed to get to Mass on time in Saline. Pippin was not in the best shape and spent most of Mass having a kind of low-grade tantrum. But we made it through, and sometimes that's the best we can do.

We had black bean burgers and steamed broccoli for dinner and then Grace and I headed downstairs to work on the podcast. We frantically skimmed some of the articles we wanted to talk about. It was almost 10 p.m. by the time we actually started recording. I really don't like doing the shows this late, because however the actual recording session goes, I know I still have at least an hour, and usually closer to two hours, of post-production work to do, to get everything finished and uploaded and tested. There are some simple changes I can make to my **bash** scripts that should speed things up a bit and make the process less error-prone, but I need to put the time in actually make those changes. Maybe this week.

So I everything wrapped up and got to bed about 2:00 a.m. My sleep was a little uneven. I usually have an alarm set for 7:15, but knowing I was going to be short-changing myself on sleep, I turned the alarm off.

Interviewing Trump Supporters

I woke up about 8:30 and got a bath. I didn't have time to read anything but some BBC News headlines on my phone. Saginaw, Michigan is in the news.

(Incidentally, if I search "Saginaw" on the BBC site today, by typing "Saginaw" into the search box, but before I press "Enter," I see a suggested match: "My Unusual Vagina." But after I go ahead and hit "Enter," the story above shows up.)

Anyway, in that story, yet another major news source is interviewing Trump voters and asking them what they think. This seems like a pointless exercise since so far, every time I've seen a news source do this, the voters in question say the same thing, in lock-step. (Lock-jaw?) They say that Trump is making America great again, and a lot of folks they don't like are talking trash about him, but we should give him a chance, and not worry about being so politically correct, and that's about the extent and the depth of it. There is no indication that the journalist doing the interviews pushed back, or dug harder; he seemed to act mostly as a stenographers for Trump supporters:

On the next table, Sue Lynn, 63, also admires the president. But her language is more colourful; more Trump-like.

"If you've got an infestation of rats, you call the guy to come in," she says.

"You don't care if his crack's showing. You don't care if he's swearing.

"You don't care if he's got tobacco-stained teeth.

"You want the rats taken out."

Anyway. My wife, a better person than me in all respects, tells me that there *is* such a thing as a Nativist sentiment that is not inextricably intertwined with racial resentment. Personally I have my doubts about that, but maybe we will discuss it in a future podcast. Whatever kind of interactions we should be having with Trump voters, I don't think just reprinting their sentiments unchallenged, in such a simplistic, talking-point form, does any good whatsoever. We're just giving them platforms to signal each other. Because that's valuable to liberals, for some reason.

While I was bathing and getting dressed, Grace got up and made coffee and eggs so I could eat at home and get out as quickly as I could. I got out the door at about 9:20, which I suppose is not too bad considering how late I got to bed, but I'm not getting to work early enough. I clocked in at 10:10. The driving conditions were bad. This morning the weather abruptly shifted back to winter

mode and we have a little blizzard happening, which makes me even more glad that we managed to get out yesterday and walk in the sunshine. The drive in to work was slow but I made it in safely.

I'm actually supposed to be at work at 9:00, as my boss reminded me this morning.

When I started doing this daily blogging, as an experiment, I imagined that the notes for most days would just be quick bullet points laying out the bare facts of what was going on. It hasn't really turned out that way, but maybe I can be brief today. Even if only because I'm tired.

Tuesday

I tried to get in at 9:00 this morning. So last night we went to bed pretty early.

When I got home the kids had wheeled the recycling bin down to Crane Road, but not the trash bin. So before bed we made them take the trash bin out. Apparently with their usual attention to detail they started to take the trash and recycling out and somehow got sidetracked.

For dinner we had pasta with ground beef and yeast sauce which looks a little unappetizing but tastes OK. I'm not quite the fan of nutritional yeast that Grace and Veronica are. They call it "nooch."

Picard and Dathon at El-Adrel (*Star Trek: The Next Generation* Season 5, Episode 2, "Darmok")

We watched one of my favorite episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the one called "Darmok," about a meeting with an alien race that speaks entirely by using metaphors taken from their mythology.

Benjamin's gums are all inflamed and red and bleeding quite a bit after his dentist appointment, and he has some kind of a cold sore on his lip.

This morning I was trying to update a spreadsheet. I was saving the file and quit OpenOffice. OpenOffice crashed so hard it blue-screened my computer. Then it somehow thought it was un-registered. Then when trying to open the spreadsheet, it would not bring up the file repair wizard but instead tried to import it as a plain text file, and locked up. I tried to repair the installation from the Programs control panel. That failed because it insisted that it was already running, even though the task manager didn't show any instances of applications or even processes that looked like they were part of OpenOffice.

I managed to get OpenOffice running again by running the standalone installer again, but the file seems to be completely corrupted.

Fortunately Dropbox has previous versions accessible. I've rarely seen an application crash so badly. It's a reminder that I shouldn't put much trust in OpenOffice. But what is a better alternative?

Grace has made a follow-up appointment for Benjamin, tomorrow. We'll see how his mouth is doing tonight.

My knee, or actually the area just below my knee, is hurting somewhat. This seems to be related to twisting my leg about ten days ago. I think the hike on Sunday aggravated it. I think it's not out of the question that there could be a small fracture in there, on the head of my tibia or something. I will try icing it tonight and see how it feels tomorrow. I feel like a broken bone ought to hurt more, but I know from experience with one hand and one foot that small breaks (spiral fractures, "green-stick" fractures, little stress fractures) are not always that obvious. The thing is, I don't want to over-treat it and wind up with a cast or something out of an abundance of caution; I think that would be worse than just having some pain and trying to go easy on it for a few weeks.

Actual arrival time after traffic slowdowns was 9:10. Better. This means I'm leaving relatively early. Although I'm waiting a few more minutes because there's a crash on I-94 heading East.

Tonight is the State of the Union address. I think we're going to watch more *Star Trek*.

I had a reasonably productive day at work.

I'm considering trying to taper my caffeine using some pills that combine caffeine and -theanine. If I can get it down to about 200 milligrams a day, maybe then I could go forward on one small cup a day combined with a separate -theanine supplement. I've been curious about -theanine's properties as a nootropic for some time.

Wednesday

Well, we didn't watch *Star Trek*. We putzed around for a while waiting for soup to cook, then had chicken soup and pan-roasted brussels sprouts that were very tasty.

Brushing Merry's teeth involved a huge screaming fight again and his gums on the top bled quite noticeably. I know sometimes after a cleaning, or if I floss too hard, my gums will bleed a little bit. If the kids haven't had a deep-cleaning for a while, their gums will bleed a bit. But this was enough to turn the whole toothbrush red. I shone the flashlight all around in his mouth again trying to figure out what was up. No pus, nothing that looked too shocking. The bleeding doesn't continue after brushing. He has some little sores that look like cold sores. His gums on the top look kind of inflamed. There is a little dried blood around some teeth. But nothing that looked like it should be the source of all his pain and bleeding. Nevertheless, even with my extra-soft brush, some of his top teeth seem to ooze quite a bit of blood when I brush them.

It stresses me out.

***The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien, Chapter 8: “Flies and Spiders”**

I read the kids a bedtime story: the first half, or so, of Chapter 8 of *The Hobbit*, called “Flies and Spiders.” Bilbo has just climbed to the top of an oak tree and seen butterflies in all directions. In the book, he can’t see to the edge of the forest or get any sense of how far it is to the edge. In the movie, he can see the Lonely Mountain. They’re about to have a series of frustrating encounters with feasting elves — the wood-elves are serious assholes in this book — and meet the spiders, the descendants of Ungoliant (Shelob).

I got in again at 9:10. I tried harder, but just sat in traffic longer. Had breakfast at Harvest Moon Café, a breakfast BLT sandwich with hash browns that were again too pale.

Grace took Merry back to the dentist this morning, and they could not find anything seriously wrong. They think this is probably a virus. It could be his Fifth disease. They just recommended giving him children’s Motrin before brushing. So maybe we’ll try that tonight.

Apparently this is pretty common and he doesn’t have any of the worrying side effects (fever, sore throat, refusing to eat). Sigh. It’s just no fun to have your four-year-old screaming and fighting as hard as he can when you are trying to (very gently) brush his teeth.

If he was old enough to do it, I’d be giving him salt water to rinse with, but I don’t think he can rinse and spit without swallowing it.

Work today involves trying to solve some problems that manufacturing was having, programming some of our devices. I can’t reproduce the problem. There doesn’t seem to be a real underlying reliability problem with the software or the flash memory. My best guess is that it was a transient problem with the PC we use to program all these devices. It is running a whole bunch of USB devices and occasionally seems to crap out and need a reboot. But this isn’t a satisfying “root cause analysis.”

I’ve got leftover chicken soup with gingery broth going for me today, which is nice. These crackers I just bought from Costco are half-rancid, though, which isn’t.

I’m trying to decide if I want to take my sore leg to the urgent care across Jackson Road to try to figure out if there really might be a small fracture.

I think I’m just going to pick up some new cold packs, since the kids destroyed all our flexible cold packs. Icing my leg helped quite noticeably last night.

Tomorrow is Grace’s birthday. I have to remember to make sure she got the new license plate sticker onto her car.

Thursday

Grace's birthday

Today is Grace's birthday. On the way home from work last night I waffled until the last second, then just went ahead and got on I-94 to drive to Carpenter Road. I drove up to Meijer and bought a reusable cold pack with a strap, shaped to fit on the knee. I picked up a couple of birthday cards.

I was feeling pretty bad last night, honestly: physically tired, and anxious. I skipped a post-lunch dose of caffeine, and I think that had something to do with it. I didn't feel up to going to urgent care and having to fill out forms and talk to people and wait. I also am feeling like I really don't want to be over-treated if there is a fracture. Grace rubbed my knee for a while last night and reminded me that I can refuse treatment if I think it's overkill.

I honestly didn't feel like doing much of anything last night. I had the kids sign one of Grace's birthday cards. Joshua apparently couldn't remember how to spell his own name. I tried to read a bit in the bed and wound up napping for a while. The kids made some salmon burgers and ate half a salmon burger. Grace has all this roasted squash. She tried making deep-fried squash fritters. They were tasty right out of the hot fat but still liquid in the middle, so she tinkered with them for a while trying to find the best texture, and couldn't really settle on an ideal formula.

This morning I was on track to make Grace and myself a bulletproof coffee but I discovered that the ground coffee for the press pot was almost gone, so I had to try to supplement it with some Turkish grind boiled in a pan. The kitchen was trashed and it took me forever to find the bottom part of the hand blender (it was buried in the sink). She and I asked the kids to do kitchen cleanup last night and they did next to nothing; they left butter and cream cheese sitting on the counter, and a bag of buns sitting open. The sink and counter were piled with dirty dishes. Our big Le Creuset dutch oven has been sitting out dirty for days and days. I've asked Veronica numerous times to wash the pot. She's done other hand-washing, but just moves the pot around.

Mice Again

We have at least one more mouse, apparently. This morning there were mouse tracks in the cooled lard in the cast iron pan we were using for deep-frying. Did mice come in from outside? How did they survive the last cold snap? I'm baffled. The butter the kids left sitting out was, I think, the last of our butter. I was not too keen on the fact that it had been left out with a mouse running around on the counter, but I didn't see any footprints or nibble marks — the mouse apparently preferred the lard. There weren't a lot of other options, so I put the butter into the bulletproof coffees.

Grace got in the tub when I got out and I brought her a bulletproof coffee and kissed her goodbye, but I feel bad that I left her with a very trashed kitchen. It

needs several hours of work. Had I felt better I would have done at least some cleanup last night.

Work has been demoralizing because a number of projects are in holding patterns, waiting for vendors to finish some parts for us to test.

My Injured Knee

I brought the cold pack to work and I've been icing my knee. If I'm not feeling just awful tonight I will go to the urgent care after work and see what they can find out. My expectation is that there is a small fracture, most likely in the top of the fibula, the smaller bone in the lower leg. At least, that's where it aches. The actual injury could be nearby. I took a strange sort of fall, standing next to my car with the left car door open. My left leg was on slippery, snow-covered ground, and my right leg somewhat "wedged" under the steering wheel, the car was slowly rolling forward, and I slipped. I think the weight of my body might have been sufficient that it gave me extra leverage to twist my leg, enough leverage to create a fracture.

It's been about two weeks. If it was a serious, separated fracture, I think it would hurt more than this, and I think there would be noticeable swelling and bruising. Instead it just aches and twinges and if I press on a spot at the head of the fibula. That seems to be the place where it hurts the most. It was not feeling too bad last weekend but walking a couple of miles with a 40-pound 4-year-old on my shoulders seems to have aggravated it.

I think the big reason I haven't gone to see a doctor before now is that it's very inconsistent. If I'm settled into a comfortable sitting or lying position, the pain goes away completely. So for most of my work day, I tend to forget it is there. And it behaves inconsistently when I walk. Yesterday I had to walk up and down stairs a few times. The first time it was twinging, but by the third time it felt like it had loosened up and felt better with use. That's usually how a muscle or tendon injury behaves (feeling better when you warm it up and stretch it out), not a bone. So, it's been sending me "mixed signals."

My best guess is that that there is a small fracture in there. People often think "oh, if you break a bone, you'll know it!" Of course that's true if you completely snap a bone in half, or if it is poking out through the skin. In fact I've had two broken bones before, one in my hand, and one in my foot. Neither one was completely separated. They were not obvious on an x-ray unless you really knew what you were looking for. And they both felt something like this — quite a bit of pain immediately after the injury, but then they settled down and were just "achey," and "twingey." For some reason I've always had a high tolerance for pain, also. That's not really a good thing.

Money Anxiety

Another source of my anxiety is money. We had a margin for error in our account before the holidays. Not the 3 months worth of expenses that is the recommended emergency fund, in case of job loss, but enough to cover an extra mortgage payment. That was eaten up by some big car repair expenses and our margin for error, in terms of cash on hand, is only a couple hundred dollars. I'm back to carefully working out "what-if" scenarios, such as "what if this charge goes through a day early." It's not doing good things for my mental health.

The undeniable truth is that we've got to get out from under the ongoing expenses related to the old house. I've been avoiding facing the consequences — demands for money, possibly being sued for the debt, and possible hits to our credit.

Friday

Money came into my account, and I sent it out of my account. Our big mortgage payment went through. Things are still going to be tight with a couple of cash flow "bottlenecks." I am concerned about taxes. I expect a Federal refund but last year the amount I owed to the state was higher than my Federal refund. I have tried to adjust my withholding but it never seems to work out to anything close to a break-even point for state withholding.

Urgent Care

Last night I went to the urgent care at the IHA West Arbor Medical Center. It's very close to my office. I didn't have to wait very long, as these things go — only 15 minutes or so at each stage. They examined my knee, rotated and flexed it, and took 3 x-rays. I took a look at them with the x-ray tech. To me it looked like there is a small closed crack in the head of the right tibia, a little vertical line. But I don't know for sure, of course. That could be a normal feature of the bone. The radiology technician pointed out some swelling inside the knee, which would explain the feeling that there is a nerve sending out some kind of distress signal, not quite pain but more like an tiny electric shock.

The official notes from the radiologist who read the x-ray found that the knee looked normal and indicated "no effusion." The treatment recommendation was RICE. So at least one fear that was causing me to avoid going to an urgent care clinic — the fear that if I sought medical attention, the treatment would be more of a pain, in terms of inconvenience and time, than the pain itself — has not come to pass. I still remember how annoying it was to have to go around a plastic half-cast on my hand for weeks because of a tiny fracture.

R. I. C. E.

R. I. C. E. stands for, I think, rock, indie, calypso, and electronica, so I'm sitting in my chair with my leg propped up, wrapped with an ace bandage and an ice

pack, listening to a *very* eclectic playlist on my headphones. I think the music is helping but I can't help wishing they would prescribe some ambient chill-out songs to go with the ice pack, like Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works 85-92*. I think that would take down swelling effectively. But I'm just a DJ, and they are MDs, so I'll have to take some Aleve instead.

Also, I should probably not walk a couple of miles with a 40-pound child on my shoulders like I did on Sunday, for another couple of weeks.

My hip and lower back are aching a bit on that side too, and quite honestly, today I would just like to go back to bed. Both Benjamin and Joshua are slightly sick and Elanor was cranky. I was tired again last night. I am finding it difficult to adjust to the earlier schedule, and so is Grace. It also means traffic during my morning commute is *much* heavier and merging is sometimes harrowing. This is an old stretch of freeway that has not been renovated to accommodate higher speeds and heavier traffic. Many of the merging lanes are quite short, which makes things difficult when traffic is both very heavy and moving at speed. In fact there are a lot of accidents on this stretch of I-94, often involving collisions between big trucks and passenger cars. This is part of *why* I have tended to shift my schedule.

Having driven in this region for over 25 years, it honestly seems to me like Trump's attitude towards the vulnerable is flowing downward through the men in their Silverado pickups (inevitably, it seems, the most aggressive drivers). It seems to me like there's less of a sense of common safety. I get the sensation that many of these drivers are not just indifferent, but would *like* to cause me to wreck. That everyone feels that he is a tribe of one, and allowing a middle-aged guy in his elderly Honda to merge safely would be to show weakness. But maybe it's always been like this and I'm just over-interpreting the effects of increased traffic on the old infrastructure.

Last night Benjamin was eating a bowl of chili before dinner while Grace was talking on the phone, and then wandered away and did not come back when we all sat down and started dinner. We moved his bowl over to his usual spot so that all the kids could sit in *their* usual spots. When he came to the table, he refused to eat from his bowl because it had been moved. He had a screaming tantrum, and took his bowl and fork and ran into the bathroom and put it in the diaper pail. I pulled it out and put it back on the table. He then threw it to the floor and smashed it.

So it goes.

I would so like to have a low-key, restorative weekend, but past experience suggests that probably will not happen.

Saturday

ADC Calibration

Friday afternoon I finished up the work week with some progress on code that will calibrate the analog-to-digital conversion in the MX family of instruments using some built-in voltage sources that my co-worker Patrick put in there. I am collecting data and looking at how the readings change over time to see what strategy for calibration is likely to be effective. ADC chips always have a little inherent error, even high-end ones. There are different kinds of error. One kind is *offset error*, where all the voltages read a little high or a little low and ground does not read at exactly zero. To get rid of offset error you can watch over time what the offset is and just add or subtract a small correction to each reading.

Another common type is *gain error*, which you also might think of as scaling error. In gain error, your zero voltage might read zero, but 2.5 volts might read 2.6, and 5 volts might read 5.2. The voltages as they are read “scale” up or down on a line that is tilted slightly too high or too low. So you have to come up with a gain factor you can apply to correct the “tilt.” In this case, you’d scale every value by about 0.962. That will get the 2.5 and 5 volt values reading about right. If it’s a straightforward, consistent gain error, this will correct the “tilt” across the whole voltage range.

Of course in reality, the error is much smaller than 0.1V (it’s usually on the order of a few millivolts), the voltage references themselves also have some error, the error of both the converters and the voltage references change over time, you want to do a lot of averaging so you aren’t literally trying to correct random noise, and you want to do damping so your corrections aren’t always overshooting one way or the other. Getting the algorithm tuned and working well for this particular collection of parts will involve some trial and error, but I enjoy this kind of thing. There are other kinds of error that are probably present to a lesser degree, like non-linearity, a curved response where there should be a straight-line response. That kind of problem is a little harder to correct. But the offset and gain errors are the “low-hanging fruit” that can produce a significant improvement without relying on complex and computationally-intensive algorithms.

Yo No Hablo Español

Instead of going directly to Costco after work, I arranged with Grace to meet her and the kids at St. Francis for Mass. This was Candlemas, a bilingual Mass (Spanish and English). But it was mostly in Spanish. Once long ago I took a couple of Spanish classes in high school, and then a couple in college. I would never say I was very fluent, but with cramming I managed to squeak by. I could read it, a little, and understand a speaker who was very patient with me, but following along at full speed was a bit out of reach. I would find myself thinking in Spanish, buying and reading poetry books in Spanish, and occasionally dreaming in Spanish.

In the decades since then, I'm sorry to say that pretty much any facility I ever had with Spanish has faded away. I could understand very little of the Mass. The homily was entirely in Spanish and I could get only vague impressions and phrases now and then. The priest told some kind of anecdote right at the end and the congregation laughed. I think it had something to do with a dog at a family reunion that kept licking everyone, but it's possible it was about something completely different.

We should try to teach the kids at least a little Spanish.

Anyway, after Mass there was a potluck dinner in the parish activities center and that was delightful. There were tamales. Oh, the tamales. I think there were six kinds. I thought I restrained myself fairly well, and only ate two and a half tamales.

It was nice not to have to cook and clean up a full meal when I got home.

***The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien, Chapter 8: "Flies and Spiders," Continued**

I finished reading the children Chapter 8 of *The Hobbit*, the chapter called "Flies and Spiders." There's a good recap for re-readers here. There is plenty of weirdness in this chapter. For example, I had forgotten that after he wakes up, following his dunking in the enchanted stream, Bombur can't remember any of their adventures since the events of chapter one!

He woke up suddenly and sat up scratching his head. He could not make out where he was at all, nor why he felt so hungry; for he had forgotten everything that had happened since they started their journey that May morning long ago. The last thing that he remembered was the party at the hobbit's house, and they had great difficulty in making him believe their tale of all the many adventures they had had since.

That seems a little cruel, and one can imagine the rest of the dwarves trying to convince him that all the outrageous things that happened to the party actually happened, while he expresses natural skepticism.

Tolkien modeled the enchanted stream after the river Lethe in Greek mythology. Tolkien was probably thinking of Lethe as it is portrayed in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; in that text, the river brings sleep.

After an early bedtime, and a pretty good night's sleep, I got up and out without too much delay this morning. I took Joshua with me and went to Costco. The exit from I-94 on to State Street going south is pretty terrible, involving a merge with southbound traffic that doesn't stop, with a need to get over two lanes quickly. I really should avoid that exit. But we made it. Our shopping list was relatively short since our weekly shopping now involves Grace buying most of our vegetables at GFS instead of Costco.

Feeding the Family

The list for this week was, for posterity:

- A giant pot pie (you just bake it and eat it)
- Coconut milk, in cans (this is real coconut milk, with the cream)
- Coconut milk, in boxes (this is a “coconut milk beverage” which has coconut cream blended with water and some additives to give it a texture more like cow’s milk; it is more drinkable as a beverage, while the canned stuff is what you want if you are using it as an ingredient)
- Salmon Milano (salmon fillets with pesto butter and dill, ready to bake and eat; we’ll probably eat this for dinner tonight)
- Two bags of clementines (unfortunately from California; we prefer to buy citrus from Florida when we can get it; we will buy from Morocco occasionally; we entirely refuse to buy oranges from Israel)
- Two bags of mini sweet peppers
- A two-pack of bacon
- Everything bagels
- English muffins
- Michigan raw honey
- Guacamole

I also picked up:

- Dried apricots (Grace will use them to make charoset)
- Pre-cooked ribs (they will make a dinner this week, and/or maybe some lunches for me)

Grace got some fruits and vegetables at GFS on Friday, too including big bulk packs of broccoli and cabbage, bananas, shredded coconut (Costco doesn’t carry an unsweetened version), pineapple, kosher salt, and pasta.

It’s not a trivial task (or expense) to keep our family of eight fed.

Dropbox, Again

Michael Martin got in touch on Facebook because the Dropbox link I sent him to the article I wrote at the end of 2017 was not working. I was reminded of another thing Dropbox doesn’t do right. If you move a folder that is shared, it doesn’t warn you or notify you in any way. That link just becomes unusable. (But of course it will always remind you that you are short on space and you can upgrade to the paid product.)

It doesn’t seem to actually implement the concept of “moving” a folder, in the UNIX sense; it adds a copy, and deletes the old one. That’s a reasonable implementation given that some platforms don’t implement `mv` semantics, in that it helps protect your content against deletion if the move goes wrong. But it also seems to mean that it doesn’t seem to know that the moved folder is the same entity in a new place, which seems dumb.

But then again, most things that Windows does with file system integration seems dumb, so maybe Dropbox is dumbed down in part because the APIs it uses, on some platforms, are dumb and limited. Apple gave applications a way to watch all file system events, but I don't think Windows has such an a feature. One consequence of this is that if you are watching a folder with the Finder, and the contents of the folder change, your view of it will be updated automatically. Windows Explorer in Windows 10, in 2018, still seems unable to do this trick.

Anyway. Still on my to-do list: finding and setting up an alternative to Dropbox. I could go full **git** and maybe Github, but I like Dropbox for this kind of basic writing and sharing between a few computers. It does things so transparently.

Well, except when it doesn't.

Back to Michael Martin, and my essay in progress. I sent him "review draft four," and then immediately noticed some typos (of course), and fixed those. It's not clear if he'll be able to use the piece in his magazine, but even if he can't, it's nice to be sharing a piece of writing again, and I'm happy to have gotten it this far. I am hoping to get at least one more draft done.

There's so much I'd like to do on the podcast today, so I'm going to try to spend an hour or two writing some content. I have not gotten in touch with folks who kindly gave us their e-mail addresses yet.

Brin, Again (*Existence* by David Brin, Continued)

I've passed the halfway mark in *Existence*. The book now is following a plot line which is doing one of the things I sort of despise in contemporary science fiction: anthropomorphizing animals.

This book just wants to be several novels: a non-fiction book of futurism, a first-contact story, and a novel from the *Uplift* sequence involving augmented dolphins.

In general I have just never enjoyed augmented-animal stories, or stories where animal thoughts or sounds are presented in monologue or dialogue. For example, I never had the slightest interest in reading Stephen Baxter's mammoth trilogy. I also tend not to like stories about early humans. I'm not sure I can even articulate exactly *why* I find these distasteful. They just always tend to seem childish to me.

I should probably try reading *Startide Rising*. I think I have a copy in a box downstairs. It won both a Hugo and Nebula. I read *Kiln People* a few years ago and enjoyed that. It was a pretty good, interesting standalone science-fiction novel.

Having crossed the halfway mark, I think I will probably finish *Existence*, if only to find out what happens in the first-contact storyline. But I regret that this book has eaten up so much of my reading time, and now I'm slogging through a chapter where there is no human in sight and the dolphins are doing things and

we're privy to their thoughts and comments to one another. I just want this part to be over.

Books, Music, Movies, and TV Shows Discussed This Week

This list does not include books, chapters of books, or other works that I only mentioned briefly in the text above.

- *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien, Chapter 8: “Flies and Spiders”
- *Existence* by David Brin
- *Star Trek: The Next Generation* Season 5, Episode 2, “Darmok”

Pittsfield Township, Michigan

The Week Ending Saturday, February 3rd, 2018

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