





Issue 2 Home

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First printing

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just finished my first rewatch of *The Sopranos* since it ended in 2007. That final scene is just as haunting as it was originally but I'll save talking about it for another time. The other thing about *The Sopranos* that haunts me is New Jersey. I grew up there in Soprano country. When I tell people I'm from New Jersey, the most common reaction I get is that I don't sound like it. I usually follow that up with the fact that I've lived most of my life in Texas but I don't sound like that either. For me, the thing about New Jersey, though, is just how much I hated it.

While there were (and are) many people I love and miss there, so many were just gross to me. Watching *The Sopranos* is a strange mix of the two. One minute it's like watching a movie about my Mom, my Aunt and my Italian family. The next it's about every toxic, shitty dude my Mom dated. And it all takes place where we lived. It looks and sounds just like I remember. And right there in the first season, the mobsters throw a guy off the bridge over the falls right down the street from my school.



Me & Mom At The Falls - 2005

When I was a kid, between the military and divorce, we moved all the time. Paterson, Fort Worth, Wichita Falls, San Antonio, Totowa, Clifton, and back to Paterson by the time I was 11. Then back and forth between Paterson and San Antonio a few more times before I finished high school. I never went to a school for more than two years.

Once, when I was 12, I first had a choice about where I wanted to live. Namely, with my dad in Texas or with my mom in New Jersey. I saw it as a choice between New Jersey and Texas but, of course, it was also a choice between Mom and Dad. I chose Texas and Dad. Now I see that this must have been absolutely devastating for my mom.

I'm so sorry Mom.

Summers in San Antonio with my friends were endless. Dad had a lot of friends—there were always interesting people around like Jim, who we watched 2001 with (see Grey Matter Gravy #2). But as much as I liked San Antonio when I was a kid, as an adult I resented how backward and small it seemed—especially with regard to the art and tech worlds I was interested in. But at the same time, Rebecca and I had gotten married and had kids and this is where our family was.



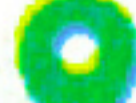
It was when I started working at Mozilla in 2010 and remote working became a real thing that I started to let San Antonio in. There really are a lot of things that I love about it. It helped a lot that I no longer felt that it was actively working against me. Being able to travel and work with people from all over the world really helped.

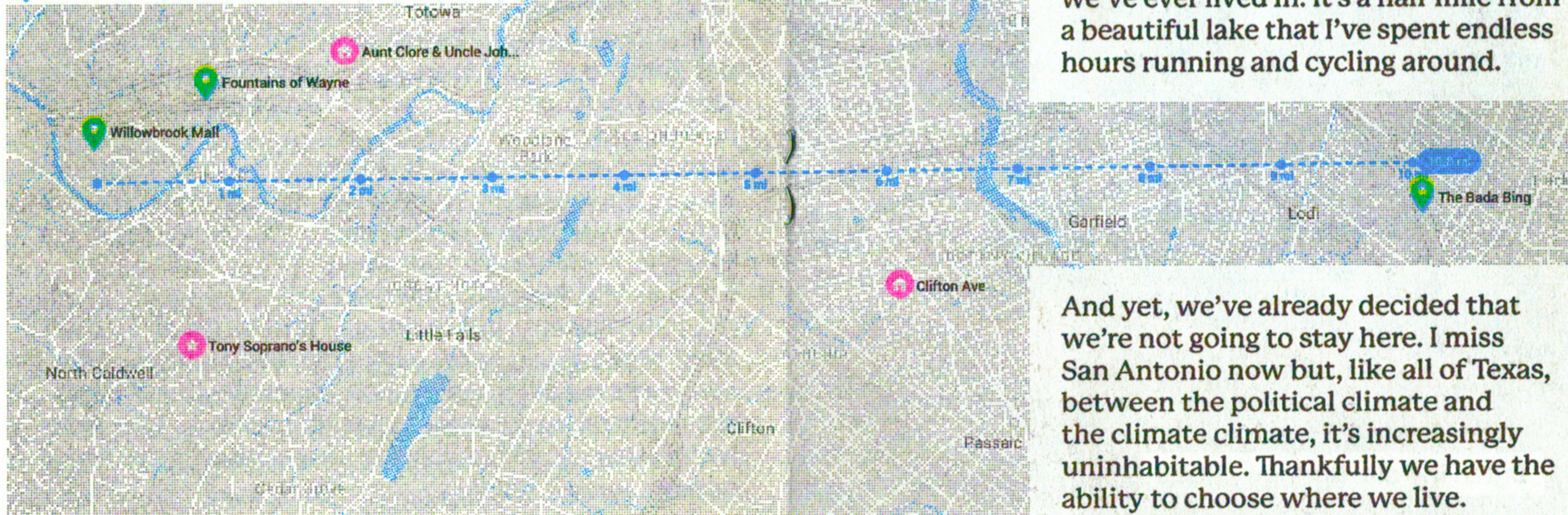
It's coming up on two years since we moved to Dallas for Rebecca's job. As we were packing up, I got a call from Steve asking me if I still had the video parts of a play we worked on in 1999 because there might be a chance to restage it. As I dug those tapes out, I found some others

I'd completely forgotten about labeled "NJ Tour." Back in 2005, I spent a bunch of time in New York working on video blogging projects (see Issue 1 Stardust) and while I was there I visited my Mom a few times. Once I took the bus to Willowbrook Mall where she picked me up and we drove around visiting all the places we'd lived. Apparently, I shot 2 or 3 hours of rambly, shakey video. Last year I finally sat down and edited it but I'm not going to show it to you yet. It's part of this epic Grey Matter Gravy issue that I swear I will finish.

What I do want to show you is this map I put together. It's got those places we lived laid out along with some Soprano's locations. When I was a kid, these places felt far away from one another and New York was a whole other world. We went down the shore way more often than into the city. But looking at it now, it's all so small. Most of these places are a bike ride or a short car ride away. For me at least, it puts it in perspective. All of those New Jersey towns are neighborhoods. New York is the other side of town. This makes much more sense now.

Soprano Country

-  Where I lived
-  Where Tony Soprano lived
-  Some places Tony and/or I went



Back to Dallas. We have a seriously cool house—certainly the fanciest house we've ever lived in. It's a half mile from a beautiful lake that I've spent endless hours running and cycling around.

And yet, we've already decided that we're not going to stay here. I miss San Antonio now but, like all of Texas, between the political climate and the climate climate, it's increasingly uninhabitable. Thankfully we have the ability to choose where we live.



So where to now? I don't know. We started auditioning places. A few weeks ago we spent the weekend in Palm Springs, CA. It's a cool mid-century town next to a beautiful desert. Yeah, it gets hot as shit there too (but it's a dry heat!). We'll have to test it out in the summer. And we'll keep trying out new cities.

Dylan in Palm Springs - 2023

P.S. While I was writing this, I traveled to NYC for a last minute work thing. I only had one evening to explore so I took the train down to Little Italy and had dinner at Mulberry Street Bar which served as the interior of the New York crew's office in *The Sopranos*. I had hoped to get a great picture but it's hardly recognizable anymore. Instead, here's a photo of one of Mom's favorite places, Ferrara, where I had an affogato for dessert. ▣



Fiction

I'm still working on that new issue of *Grey Matter Gravy*. I'm stuck on this fiction part—a choose-your-own-adventure story. It's really important to me that I figure it out and get it in there. Anyway, Joan Didion said this about the difference between writing fiction and non-fiction which sums up how I've been feeling about it. ▣

The experience of writing fiction is radically different from the experience of writing non-fiction. Non-fiction, you've got a bunch of stuff. You do the research first, you've got it there, and now it's a matter of shaping it—it's like sculpting. It's like making something out of granite. Fiction, there's a dread level, because you wake up every single morning with the idea that it's not worth doing it. And you're going to have to make up something out of nothing that day, once again.

— Joan Didion

All The Colors

This issue has all the colors! That's because I got two new color drums for my risograph. A risograph is like an automatic screen/stencil printing machine. Mine can print one color at a time. Each color is housed in a two-foot-long metal drum that gets a stencil wrapped around it. To print multiple colors, you have to let the ink dry, stack the paper up and run it through the machine again with a different color installed. I have four colors now—sort of a faux CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black - the colors used in the kind of full-color printing you typically see). I have aqua, fluorescent pink, yellow and black so things look a little different but in a good way. ▣



Mother's Day Flowers - 2020

