

site, which uses an algorithm to calculate the proximity of an address to amenities such as restaurants, movie theaters, grocery stores and public transit, doesn't factor in topography (scenic or otherwise), weather, street design, safety, or even whether there are sidewalks or not. "If you live across the lake from a destination," its Web site notes, "we are assuming you will swim."

I'm not a great swimmer, so I'm relieved that we didn't rely upon the Walk Score when we chose our new home. I've tested the bridge to St. Paul and it works just fine.

—Craig Cox

## The Pipes Are Calling

Every summer for the last few years, Thursday evenings have brought a magic moment. Just as the weather gets warm enough to have the doors open in the evening, and before it gets too hot to keep them open, a wild impossible music wafts in. Bagpipes playing fine old Jacobean tunes about Bonnie Prince Charlie drift wistfully on the breezes. They whisper of moors and crags, while tugging at some deep, genetic yearning.

I'm not ashamed of wanting Boies to be a little more like the moors, and a map ping oak looking for fairies.

For the longest time, we couldn't figure out where the sound was coming from. Was someone playing the music full blast on an iPod with honking large speakers? Was the sound creeping through a crack between universes? Was I nuts? No—my roommate was hearing it too.

Then, early one evening, I was coming home from some errands that had taken way too long and I heard the pipes, the pipes were calling, from glen to glen—or street to street. I followed the sound that drew me, like an enchantment, to a parking lot between St. Helena's Catholic Church and the grade school, where I found a motley crew of what appeared to be normal people standing in a circle with their pipes and drums, and playing as though there wasn't another soul on the planet.

They were in no mood to stop and answer questions, sealed as they were in their magical bubble.

I got home all full of wonder, and well-pleased at having cracked the mystery, only to discover that my roommate already knew

and hadn't seen her way clear to tell me. My thunder was seriously stolen.

She had done a little research and found out that the pipers belonged to the Minnesota Police Pipe Band. And, amazingly, they will teach anyone who wishes to learn how to play the bagpipes or the Scottish drums that accompany them and provide those stirring martial rhythms. You don't have to be a member of any police department. I thought of a young man I had known years ago who had learned to play from the police band. He was the best piper I had ever heard at the time, and I still remember him piping a hauntingly romantic salute to the sun during one of our group's events.

With the end of summer, the pipers also disappear, leaving our Thursday evenings merely ordinary, with only the hardy crickets left to sing to us. But we take comfort in the thought that when the weather warms next summer, our ears will once again rejoice to the wild and glorious sounds of the pipes.

Jinjer Stanton, with Carol Singer

More information about the Minnesota Police Pipe Band is available on their Web site ([mppb.org](http://mppb.org)).

## A Fair Celebration

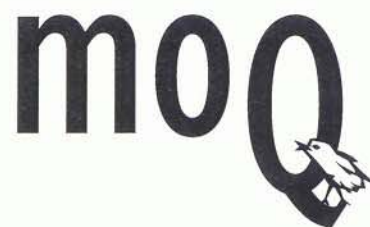
Most people love the resolutions, the big countdowns, and the popping champagne corks at midnight on December 31. Ever since I was a kid, however, I've found the traditional New Year's Eve and New Year's Day observances to be rather depressing, anticlimactic affairs. They just seem to mark entry into the aptly named dead of winter.

Fortunately, in adulthood, I discovered the Minnesota State Fair.

The State Fair is such a fitting conclusion to another year. It marks summer's gentle descent into September. The sunsets are earlier. The evening air is a bit crisper. And on a nearly sacred patch of land just north of Como Avenue, the people of Minnesota get together to celebrate our bounty and hail the output of the preceding 12 months, be it livestock, manufacturing, fruits and vegetables, flowers, food, creative handiwork, or fine arts.

With all that humanity amassed within the fairgrounds, we certainly get to see that we have different tastes. You might like the antique, steam-powered threshers on

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## ISSN

1940-8463

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## Thanks to

Dan Nordley and Triangle Park Creative; Evan, Joe, Ben and Rick, for making the new Observer world headquarters more functional and more beautiful; and our subscribers and advertisers, without whom there would be no MOQ.

MOQ is published quarterly by The Minneapolis Observer, 4521 45th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55406 • 612/721-0268 • [sharon@mplsobserver.com](mailto:sharon@mplsobserver.com) • We appreciate submission inquiries and will gladly send our guidelines along with a sample back issue to those who request it. To subscribe, send us a note along with a check for \$15 and we'll sign you up for a one-year subscription (four issues). Or visit our Web site to subscribe online, as well as to find occasional new or recycled content, a few dead links, and remnants of old addresses and other matter that we haven't figured out how to remove. Not that we're Luddites or anything, we're just not strong on technical skills, and our son's kinda busy with college these days. © 2010 Minneapolis Observer. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. [mplsobserver.com](http://mplsobserver.com)



