“Corey, Corey, Corey!”

Milwaukee Brewer outfielder Corey Hart wins the May 28th game at Miller Park against the New York Mets with a two-out, walk-off home run. Why do they call them “walk off” (rather than “jump up and down, scream and shout”) home runs? Look at the Mets players (lower left)

The home run thus averted the necessity of Extra Innings, but here at the International Headquarters of Your Newsletter, we feel that more baseball and more good talk about writing are always good things.

*Photo by Marty Josephson, owner and general manager, The Milwaukee Polka, Stay At Home Dads non professional fantasy baseball league.*
From the Nethermost

Getting Out of Stuck

By Jim Herod

In Extra Innings 2, Marshall Cook asked where we imagine, compose, and write. Interesting replies came in the later issues. No doubt, we have all gone to those places wanting nothing more than to do just that: to write. Sometimes, at our writing place, we sit with fingers poised over the keyboard and can find nothing more than the intellectual desire. The passion and the joy of being with our characters cannot be summoned to drive our fingers in a frenzy of typing. In a word, we are stuck.

It’s not an unusual state. A writing friend wrote me in the late winter saying that he was stuck. I wrote back saying, “This, too, will pass.” After all, he is a consummate writer. I was not surprised for him to write a month or so later saying that he was all afire with his story.

It’s a wonderful feeling – getting unstuck – a feeling that can bring tears to the eyes of a grown man. I know this for I am recovering from being stuck.

My characters had chosen to move into a perilous situation. They tried to prepare for whatever lay ahead. The jeep contained the dad and his son, an interpreter and a driver. Neither they nor I knew what was to happen around the curve and over the hill. What I knew, and what they feared, was that the rest of their lives would be different because of what was about to happen.

Something big would start on the next page. But what? I did not have the slightest idea. I followed them to the curve and … and nothing. The next page was blank.

All kind of doubts arose. “It’s over, Jim. Go back to mathematics.” Later, I wondered if I could let the reader fill in the blank. I could let the chapter end and start the next chapter with, “Two months later, they realized that things would never be the same.”

I decided to turn away from the keyboard and go out to run. I ran and then ran again. Yet my mind kept returning to those guys setting out on that hazardous journey.

Maybe that was the key. Maybe I should write about the anxiety and fear of not knowing what is ahead. Another choice was to leave them alone and write something else completely unrelated to my characters and their peril, something that I might never show anyone. I needed to write! Write something! Almost anything. Just write.

I remember where I was when the log jam broke loose, dumping a flood of images into my head. “Holy catfish!” I said aloud. I decided not to start with a record of dialogue as I usually do, or to do what is hard for me: to write the where. Instead, I outlined. I almost never outline. But, I outlined.

Then, what? Celebrate, right? The answer was not so clear. Number one: I was still doing homework in preparation for the Write-By-The-Lake workshop. I did not want to attend this event unprepared. Number two: I was reading Five Quarters of the Orange by Joanne Harris and thoroughly enjoying it. Number three: I had some responsibilities of a literary nature to the community. Number four: I needed to run.

By the time you read this, the workshop in Madison is over. I apologize if I seemed distant and distracted. You see, I was writing. I was recording. I had broken through being stuck. And it felt good.

Jim’s a regular runner, writer, and contributor to this newsletter. Just now he’s in Taos, New Mexico at a writing conference on Writing Place. There are worse places to be and things to be doing!

Dean Koontz said it:

"Writing a novel is like making love, but it's also like having a tooth pulled. [And] sometimes it's like making love while having a tooth pulled."
Meandering with Madonna
Linked through an autograph book

By Madonna Dries Christensen
Last month Coach published an excellent piece about Internet writing. Yes, we bookophiles prefer holding a volume in our hands, and we’ll cling to our overloaded book shelves until death do us part. But as Coach said, and has proven with his new monthly, Extra Innings, online publishing is no longer the wave of the future, it’s here. And while I’ve been using the Internet for a good many years, I’m still often startled by its speed and coverage. A case in point from recent months.

Because I like vintage autograph books, I published an article about them in Yesterday’s Magazine. I described three books that had belonged to three generations of one family: William Lord, his young daughter Ethel Lord, and the adult Ethel’s young daughter, Evelyn Pruitt.

The Lords lived in San Francisco when young Ethel collected verses in her book, dated from 1900-1903. The front cover is ivory-colored celluloid, on which is a landscape scene. The back cover is burgundy velvet. The first page in the book has a drawing of a table, on which sits a vase with flowers laid beside it. In the corner is a spider web. The page is dated October 8, 1900. The person who drew the picture and wrote the verse used script resembling calligraphy. He wrote:

Dear Ethel: We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing.
while others judge us by what we have done. ~~

Kingsley Cannon

It appears, from the maturity of the verse and drawing, that Kingsley Cannon was an adult. He used black ink, whereas most of the children wrote in pencil, and their faded verses are no longer legible. Perhaps he was a friend of the family and had given the book to Ethel for her birthday or another occasion.

Three years after my article about these books appeared online, the publisher, Ned Burke, received an e-mail from a reader, Leesa Cannon. Leesa explained that she found the story while
using Google to research her great-grandfather, Kingsley Cannon, of San Francisco. He was a lawyer, who adopted a son and named him Kingsley W. Cannon, Jr. Leesa’s father is Kingsley W. Cannon III. Leesa wrote, “Thanks for the familial clue.”

As a genealogist myself, I know the thrill and value of such clues. Since I had no family connection to the book, I responded to Leesa and offered to send her the book. She was delighted and, on receiving it, commented: Thank you for your generosity. Aside from the obvious family interest, it’s an amazing piece of history. I know that these sayings are passed down through generations; therefore, when asked to sign someone's book, I plan to use my great-grandfather’s quote. It’s also interesting to see the similarity between the written name in the corner and my father’s handwriting. But my dad is funny.

He said, ‘How do I know it’s him?’ I find it valuable—even if he does not.

More than one hundred years ago, Kingsley Cannon sketched a picture and penned a verse to a little girl. She kept the autograph book in which it was written, and her daughter later kept the book. Neither would have imagined that one day, through an electronic conduit, the book and the verse would be treasured by the great-granddaughter of the man who wrote it. Madonna meanders here monthly and always invites us along.

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**Extra Innings**

*For writers, their enablers, and farmers outstanding in their fields*

**Number 10  Madison, Wisconsin, August, 2010**

Columnist this issue: Madonna Dries Christensen, Perry Stone, Jim Herod
Personal psychiatrist to Mr. Cook: Manny Skruz Luce
The Masked Man: Brace Beamer
Your announcer is Fred Foy
Editor-in-Coach: Marshall J. Cook
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I publish *Extra Innings* monthly and distribute it free to an open-enrollment mailing list. To get yourself on the list, email the Coach at mcook@dcs.wisc.edu

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*Extra Innings* is a proud booster of

**Write by the Lake**
**The Writers Institute**
**The Rhinelander School of the Arts**
**Weekend with your Novel**
**and the Odyssey Project**

No added sugar, honey. No carbs, no trans fats, no salt—pretty tasteless all in all. Like its predecessor, *Creativity Connection*, this newsletter contains your recommended daily dose of nouns, verbs (transigent and intransigent), gourds, adjectives, adverbs and other artificial sweeteners, pronouns, antinouns, prepositions, propositions, conjunctions, contradictions, contractions, eruditions, bloviation, chiasmus, charisma, metanoia, paranoia, trace metaphors and the occasional half-witticism.
by Perry Stone
In Wichita, I taught a Chinese cook how to make biscuits and gravy.
Chinese cuisine beaneries weren’t on every corner in the Ozarks where I grew up. Actually, that was the only one I remember seeing in Wichita in 1968. There might have been others. There could have been a whole Chinatown, but we, my wife and I, didn’t see it. I didn’t look.
This was during the seventh or eighth month of an extended honeymoon, between my first year and a half year in the army and my second year and a half of service.

Eighteen-month honeymoons take money, so we worked. My wife was an exotic dancer. I was whatever was needed in the city we were in. In Wichita that was a bartender at the “It’ll DO Lounge.”
The beer parlor closed at one in the morning. The last show at the Burlesque Theater was midnight. The restaurant, theater and bar were all within walking distance of each other. Dancers and bartenders go out to eat after work, which is how we ended up in the Chinese restaurant, it being the only eatery in the area.

Different culinary table settings have never been a problem for me. But beans sprouts were something we hoed in the garden until they bushed out and supplied us with beans. Chicken showed up on the plate in pieces big enough to take a bite out of, not in sliced-off table scraps. And, to my taste, Soy lacked the sweet tang of molasses any good barbeque sauce has. Thus I looked for something familiar, which I found on a lady’s plate at another table.
“Is that biscuits she has?” I ask the waitress.
“They are like biscuits, only they are brushed with butter and sprinkled with sugar,” the waitress answered.
Well now that is just how we fixed them at home, except we put the butter and sugar in the middle after we cut it open.
“And is that cream gravy on that other stuff?” I asked.

“It is rich thin cream gravy,” she confirmed.
“You just can’t make gravy any thinner than some of the water gravy I grew up on; as for rich, bacon grease rates right up there with gold.
“I’ll have biscuits and gravy.”
“I’ll have to ask the cook. It’s not on the menu.” The waitress smiled.
“Just take four or five of them little biscuits and pour a couple cups of that gravy over it.”
A few minutes later here came Hop Sing’s uncle*, smiling from ear to ear. “You show,” he said. He led me to the kitchen and handed me a Wok. “You show,” he said, again, taking time to stir stuff cooking in another wok. While he did that I located the steam table.
“We don’t need this,“ I told him setting the wok aside before taking a plate off the rack. Four little sugar-topped rolls torn in half covered the plate. Two ladles of cream gravy covered the biscuits without running over the edge.
“Walla! Biscuits and gravy.” My smile was as big as his.

“Bliskets and Glavey! You come back; I remember.” You had to love his enthusiasm.
We did go back every morning after work the short time we were in Wichita. I even ate bean sprouts and chicken scraps along with egg rolls. But my biggest pleasure when it came to Chinese food was watching the cook splatter black sauce on the sides of a hot wok. Steam would rise from the hissing just before he would add some green and white and purple stuff, throw in slivers of meat and roll it all around; stir it with a wooden spoon. Mostly, I remember a happy little man, taking the time, going out of his way to satisfy a customer, to make a friend.
Wichita, back in 1968, it took about two minutes to teach a Chinese cook how to make Biscuits and Gravy. Sharing the story has brought smiles for over four decades. Now I’ve spent almost a week writing about an instant in my life.
Good times never really end, if they aren’t forgotten. In fact, they can get better the more times you enjoy the moment.

* Reference to Hop Sing dedicated to Monette Bebow-Rinehard, author of the Bonanza novels The Felling of the Sons and Mystic Fire.
So what IS an English major supposed to do after college?

A listener named Andrea wrote to Garrison Keillor asking him this fundamental question, one that has plagued so many of us. Here's Garrison's answer:

This is the beautiful problem that confounds us all, Andrea, and we must face it every morning with as much wit and bravery as we can summon up. What you do, exactly, is get out of bed, pee, put water on to boil for tea or coffee, put bread in the toaster, choose between the apricot and blueberry yoghurt, eat slowly and thoughtfully, take a shower, and put on clean clothes, and by this time you likely will know what comes next. Merce Cunningham faced this problem and so does Michelle Obama and Brett Favre and the Queen of Tonga. If I believed in the efficacy of long-range planning, I'd recommend it, but I believe in luck and improvisation and the gyroscope in your heart and the built-in b.s. detector that English majors are supposed to acquire, having created so much of it in our term papers. You don't have ENGLISH MAJOR tattooed on your forehead so don't consider it a limitation. Just remember that your youth and energy and confidence and ambition are great assets in this world: you are needed somewhere. Remind yourself every day to do things that make you cheerful, which might include strenuous physical exercise or meditation or simply being with friends who make you laugh. Have a good life, in other words. They say that one good tactic in finding happiness is to help people who are worse off than yourself. I wouldn't know about that, but I know people who recommend it. And now I am going to go work on my novel, which is confounding me, and I wish you were here to tell me what to do with it. HEY. There's an idea. Be an editor. Why not? Start out by going over this letter and cutting out all the clichés and reducing it to the one sentence that actually makes sense. And then tell me what that is so I can go do it myself.

Prairie Home Companion newsletter 7/31/09
Metric conversion chart

a public service of *Extra Innings*
courtesy of Professor Emeritus Steve M. Born

- 2,000 mockingbirds = 2 kilomockingbirds
- 52 cards = 1 decacards
- 1 kilogram of falling figs = 1 FigNewton
- 1,000 milliliters of wet socks = 1 literhosen
- 1 millionth of a fish = 1 microfiche
- 1 trillion pins = 1 terrapin
- 10 rations = 1 decoration
- 100 rations = 1 C-ration
- 2 monograms = 1 diagram
- 4 nickels = 1 paradigms
- 2.4 statute miles of intravenous surgical tubing at Yale University Hospital = 1 IV League

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The REAL reason why your printer keeps jamming
another public service of *Extra Innings*

Your mouse got stuck
in it again!
Keep the Day Job

Writing your way through depression

By Marshall J. Cook

Writers as diverse as Norman Mailer, Walker Percy, Neil Simon (and singer-songwriter Paul Simon, too, for that matter), Charles Schultz and Kurt Vonnegut all lived and wrote through paralyzing clinical depression.

Yes, the wise, funny writer who dismissed life’s horrors with a cheery “So it goes,” Kurt Vonnegut, suffered from depression, as did the man who created, scripted and drew Peanuts, with good old Charlie Brown, crabapple Lucy, Bible-quoting, blanket-toting Linus and piano prodigy Schroeder -- good old Charles Schultz.

William Styron (Sophie’s Choice, Confessions of Nat Turner) was one of the very brave who not only wrote through depression but wrote about it, in his memoir Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness.

Journalist Tracy Thompson also tackled the subject head on and tried to destroy the stigma attached to it in her book The Beast: A Journey Through Depression.

We’re not talking about feeling funky here. We’re talking clinical depression, where life has lost all meaning and savor, where you wake up certain that you’re even more worthless than you were the day before -- if you were lucky enough to be able to sleep at all. You feel horrid now, can never remember not feeling horrid, and will always feel horrid, world without end, amen.

The forever lie is the second biggest fraud perpetuated by a disease that does nothing but lie and cheat and steal. The biggest is that the way you feel is your own fault. If you were only stronger, better, had more faith, weren’t such a mewling little pissant, you would snap out of it, lift yourself up by your spurs, and be happy, damn it!

You don’t hate the disease; the disease makes you hate yourself.

When you’re depressed, doing anything, including deciding what to have for breakfast or bothering to eat breakfast at all, is a bitter battle. But to write? Writing is tough enough for the “sane,” and every writer probably feels at least some self-doubt at times (as in “What you’re writing is tripe, and you should be shot for writing it”). To write while depressed is way beyond heroic.

Yet the list of those who have done so in extensive and includes the founder of the Catholic Worker movement, Dorothy Day, cartoonist/writer Jules Feiffer, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Hermann Hesse (if you’re of a certain age, you’ve read his Siddhartha more than once) and many more.

Poet Anne Sexton’s depression probably led her to commit suicide in 1974. She’s far from alone in seeking what can appear to be the only way out of the agony.

The incidence of depression among writers is high enough to establish a correlation. (If you’re a writer, you’re statistically more likely to suffer from depression than if you aren’t a writer.) Those called to the writing life seem more prone to depression than a random sampling of the populace.

But does that establish or even imply a casual link (writing makes you depressed; being depressed makes you write)? Researchers have gone to great lengths to find such a link between mental illness and creativity, but our knowledge of brain wiring and chemistry is still too primitive for anyone to say for sure.

And as my friend Lisa Krenz points out, “not writing makes me depressed.” I’m that way, too. I think for many writers, forming words into thoughts and images is a way of maintaining mental stability and some degree of peace in our lives and possibly even staving off depression. This column originally appeared in The Perspiring Writer. It’s all part of my research for what a hope will become a book called How writers learn what they really need to know.
Coach’s Bullpen Briefs

Order your copies now!

As mentioned last issue, Kathie Giorgio’s first novel, *The Home for Wayward Clocks*, will be available soon. Here are the details: publisher is Main Street Rag, and release date is December 13, 2010. The novel will sell for $13.95 (already a bargain), but you can get it for just $9 by preordering from the MSR online bookstore. Learn more by visiting Kathie’s author page at: [www.mainstreetrag.com/KGiorgio.html](http://www.mainstreetrag.com/KGiorgio.html).

I just received a handsome volume titled *Out of Nowhere*, a first novel by Margo A. Ahrens, and it’s a beauty. I’m looking forward to reading it. I worked with her on a previous project several years ago and can tell you that the lady can flat-out write.

I don’t have ordering details but can pass along requests for information to Margo if you’re interested.

Purely personal

You’re receiving your August *E.I.* a week early so I can clear the decks for this year’s edition of the School of the Arts in Rhinelander, where I’ll have the joy of teaching a class on memoir writing.

Oh, that explains it...

Pat Goetz spotted this sign on highway 21 just West of Oshkosh, WI (yes, home of the overalls): **NEUTER OR SPAY YOUR BEST FRIEND.**

“Farther on down the driveway we discover it’s a pet shop,” she explains. “Sure glad they made that clear.

Ain’t ‘lambs’ quarters’ the place where all the sheeps live?

Hi Marshall,

I enjoyed Leah's *Extra Inning's* article about Just Oak and More. It brought back memories of driving past that sign, when I would take leisurely drives from Racine to those fun writing conferences in Madison. That sign drove me crazy. Just Oak and More made no sense. Why not call the it Oak and More? Like Leah, I tried to figure out the history of the sign. Certainly it must’ve started out as Just Oak. But More what? More wood, I supposed. So why not take the "Just" off the sign? Also like Leah, I never did stop to see what the store sold. I kinda thought firewood. Oh well. We'll never know now.

My all-time favorite sign is much akin to yours. I saw it somewhere between Milwaukee and Memphis. Closer to Memphis, I'm quite sure. It was **Guns, Ammo, Liquor, Picnic Supplies.** Must've made for some bang-up picnics.

Now I must look up how to cook lamb's quarters. Is it cooked? Eaten raw as a salad? I bought some at Capitan's meager farmers’ market, where nothing was offered but lamb's quarters and lettuce. (How I long for those abundant Wisconsin farmer's markets.)

I swear lamb's quarters were considered weeds back in the Midwest. That's not to say it ain't good. Live and learn.

Best, Pat

[Pat Fitzgerald, Hell ‘n Gone, New Mexico]

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In Memorium

"A public address announcer should be clear, concise, correct. He should not be colorful, cute or comic."

Bob Sheppard

Voice of Yankee Stadium

October 20, 1910 - July 11, 2010
Out of the mouths’ of babes
sent along to us by Sandy Mickelson

NUDITY
I was driving with my three young children one warm summer evening when a woman in the convertible ahead of us stood up and waved. She was stark naked! As I was reeling from the shock, I heard my 5-year-old shout from the back seat, 'Mom, that lady isn't wearing a seat belt!' 

MORE NUDITY
A little boy got lost at the YMCA and found himself in the women's locker room. When he was spotted, the room burst into shrieks, with ladies grabbing towels and running for cover. The little boy watched in amazement and then asked, 'What's the matter, haven't you ever seen a little boy before?'

POLICE # 1
While taking a routine vandalism report at an elementary school, I was interrupted by a little girl about 6 years old. Looking up and down at my uniform, she asked, ‘Are you a cop?’
“Yes,” I answered and continued writing. ‘My mother said if I ever needed help I should ask the police. Is that right?’
“Yes, that's right.”
“Well, then,” she said as she extended her foot toward me, ‘would you please tie my shoe?’

POLICE # 2
I parked my police van in front of the station at the end of the day. As I gathered my equipment, my K-9 partner, Jake, was barking, and I saw a little boy staring in at me. 'Is that a dog you got back there?' he asked.
'It sure is,' I replied.
Puzzled, the boy looked at me and then towards the back of the van. Finally he said, 'What'd he do?'

ELDERLY
While working for an organization that delivers lunches to elderly shut-ins, I used to take my 4-year-old daughter on my afternoon rounds. She was unfailingly intrigued by the various appliances of old age, particularly the canes, walkers and wheelchairs. One day I found her staring at a pair of false teeth soaking in a glass. As I braced myself for the inevitable barrage of questions, she merely turned and whispered, 'The tooth fairy will never believe this!'

DRESS-UP
A little girl was watching her parents dress for a party. When she saw her dad donning his tuxedo, she warned, 'Daddy, you shouldn't wear that suit.'
'And why not, darling?'
'You know that it always gives you a headache the next morning.'

DEATH
While walking along the sidewalk in front of his church, our minister heard the intoning of a prayer that nearly made his collar wilt. Apparently, his 5-year-old son and his playmates had found a dead robin. Feeling that proper burial should be performed, they had secured a small box and cotton batting, then dug a hole and made ready for the disposal of the deceased.
The minister's son was chosen to say the appropriate prayers and with sonorous dignity intoned his version of what he thought his father always said: 'Glory be unto the Faaather, and unto the Sonnn, and into the hole he goooes.'
(I want this line used at my funeral!)

SCHOOL
A little girl had just finished her first week of school. 'I'm just wasting my time,' she said to her mother. 'I can't read, I can't write, and they won't let me talk!'

BIBLE
A little boy opened the big family Bible. He was fascinated as he fingered through the old pages. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible. He picked up the object and looked at it. What he saw was an old leaf that had been pressed in between the pages.
'Mama, look what I found,' the boy called out. 'What have you got there, dear?'
With astonishment in the young boy's voice, he answered, 'I think it's Adam's underwear!'

The last word:
Edward Hopper said it:
"Maybe I am slightly inhuman. ... All I ever wanted to do was to paint sunlight on the side of a house."