By Madonna Dries Christensen
This month I’m celebrating my silver anniversary as a published writer. Twenty-five years ago, knowing next to nothing about submitting work for publication, I innocently took the plunge. I mailed a Christmas essay to two publications: the weekly newspaper in my hometown in Iowa and my local paper in Virginia. Both papers ran the piece, and the Virginia paper paid me fifty dollars. Hey, that was easy, I thought.

Through on-the-job training, I soon discovered that writing and publishing are not easy. I never imagined that over the years I would create what is called a body of work. Nor that at age 75, I would still be churning out articles, stories, and books.

Along the way I gathered a host of friends. Some 15 years ago, I subscribed to a publication called Creativity Connection and submitted a few articles. Although I’ve never met the publisher and editor, Marshall Cook, I consider him a friend. Coach invited me to write a column for CC, and later, for Extra Innings.

Now, after a lot of extra innings of my own, I’m presenting here my first published work, which I consider my good luck charm. I trot it out nearly every Christmas season and find a home for it (more than a dozen now). It has undergone minor revisions, as writers are wont to do, but it’s basically the same piece.

Simply Delicious
Christmastime surrounds us with a potpourri of memorable scents: fresh pine, eggnog, gingerbread, cinnamon, pumpkin pie, and a plump turkey stuffed with sage dressing roasting in the oven. In church, incense smoke mingles with the inexpensive perfumes and shaving lotions children gave their parents as gifts. That special blend can be intoxicating, often overpowering, but it wouldn’t be Christmas without it.

For me, the definitive scent of Christmas is apples. It drifts toward me from the 1940s, reminding me of a time when life was far different than it is today, when simple gifts were ever so special.

Just before Christmas each year, Uncle Bud stopped by our house with a wooden crate of apples, his gift for the family. He also brought a bottle of brandy, and the two brothers sat down to sip and visit and smoke cigarettes. My dad’s were hand-rolled, using Prince Albert tobacco. Uncle
Bud’s were store-bought and tucked into a cigarette holder.

The apples were as tempting to us kids as those in the Garden of Eden had been to Adam and Eve. And like those in the biblical garden, these apples were forbidden fruit. Poppy stashed the box under his and Ma’s bed in the downstairs bedroom, and we’d been told that we could not help ourselves. Given free rein, we would have gone through those apples like a horde of grasshoppers in a prairie cornfield.

It’s not that we never had fruit. We had an apple tree in the backyard, which bore tasty produce after we cut around the worm holes and bruises caused by a fall to the ground and where birds and squirrels and ants and bees had feasted. But summer had long passed in rural Iowa and with it the fruits of the season.

The Christmas apples were special; perfect, uniform in size, each the same shade of red, shiny and polished, and each nestled in a Prussian blue tissue paper blanket.

Poppy doled out the apples as bedtime treats, cutting each in half with his pocket knife to stretch them further. A half apple was better than none, and we were not disappointed in our portion. We broke through the rind, sank our teeth into the pulp and gnawed our way to the core and seeds. Each crisp and savory bite lived up to the name Delicious.

My sister and I saved the blue wrappers, first ironing them and then using them to make Christmas decorations or paper doll dresses. We tucked a few tissues into drawers for a scented sachet. Later, we lined Easter baskets or May baskets with them. Now and then, the used wrappers added a hint of cidery fragrance to the warm, dry, indoor air of winter and early spring.

It was apple harvest time in Virginia, where I lived when I received word that Uncle Bud had died. Miles and years removed from the place and time when I was a child, the aroma of his gift wafted over me.

Vladimir Nabokov wrote, “Nothing revives the past so completely as a smell that was associated with it.” The scent of apples remains a comforting Christmastime memory, evoked when today’s hectic pace and focus on expensive gifts makes me yearn for the simplicity of an era long past.

_Extra Innings_ does not generally accept advertising, but as we enter this season of ridiculous overspending, we’re making an exception. Linda Konichek passed along the vintage beauties you’ll find throughout the issue.

_Simply Delicious_ was last published in the e-book, _A Mix Of Holiday Memories:_

[www.epburkepublishing.com](http://www.epburkepublishing.com)

For Christmas giving this year, order several copies of Madonna’s latest book, _TOYS REMEMBERED: Men Recall Their Childhood Toys And Games_, edited by Madonna and including a remembrance from the Coach. While you’re at it, get some copies of last year’s _Dolls Remembered_, (which includes a piece from Mrs. Coach). Both are (or soon will be) available through Amazon and other major booksellers. Royalties from both anthologies go to Down Syndrome Association of Northern Virginia. Coach
Missouri Musings
Why charge when you can give it away?

By Perry Stone
Coach’s note: last issue we offered Perry’s fine memoir of working in a nursing home, Doing Unto Others, as a free ebook, and many of you took advantage of the author’s generosity. The book is still available. Simply email me at mcook@des.wisc.edu to get your copy.
Perry adds: Thanks to all those who are taking advantage of the free e-book. Thanks to Coach for making it happen, and thanks to Madonna for helping to get the words right.
Some readers have asked me why I gave my book away, so I’ll explain as best I can. I especially loved reading one woman’s response: “unlike you, I need the money and sought writing as a way to make it.”
First, an abundant bank balance was never a reason for giving away my book. My wealth is in having a good friend who believed what I wrote would be of interest to others.
In all honesty, years ago, after being disabled, I sought a way to make a few extra dollars and believed writing might be it. I wrote my best thoughts and sent them off to a wonderful fellow who offered a free evaluation of 1500 words or less. His reply-- and I still have the letter-- read: “Dear Perry: I have known only a few whose grasp of the English language falls to your low. However, with a lot of hard work some have actually forged ahead to become writers. Should you decide to continue I will help any way I can.”
Customers at the bars I tended got free verse with their drinks-- my poems. Machinists, exotic dancers, nurses aides, patients, carpenters, truckers, janitors, loggers and trappers were a few of the many I worked alongside doing all kinds of jobs. I put their feelings to rhyme and left the words behind when I moved on. If I needed more money, a got a second job or a third.
Disability brought fixed income, which meant making choices among the needs of wife, three daughters, and a grandson.

A year later among the few books I could afford was Leads and Conclusions, by a fellow named Cook. I still reread it a couple times a year. Cook was the first author I ever wrote a ‘thank you for the book’ letter to. His workshop was the first I enrolled in.
An acclaimed writer once made a statement to the effect—if one doesn’t write to be published one shouldn’t write. However, I never believed that, having written for years with little thought (notice I didn’t say no thought) of my books being published.
Old Abe said, “a friend is someone who loans me a book I haven’t read.” Coach asked , “would you like to offer your books free to the readers of Extra Innings?” And I, the hermit, thought: ‘why not give the books away and make a few friends?’
I can tell you after the fact, I could never be happier doing things any differently. I still have no real desire to charge for what I write. That would be like Walt Disney paying me a salary to take the girls to Disney World.
I don’t begrudge those who sell their work, though, and used book stores are a blessing.
From this experience I have learned three things.
1) People complimenting your effort can shoot the needle on the proud meter all the way up to the top of the red (sinful) mark.
2) The benefits received from giving are a hundred times greater than the ones received charging.
3) And if you want to find your errors, let others read your work.
A final thought: To give or not to give away our writing isn’t a question writers usually need ask. However, writing should always be the answer.
Bless you and yours,
Happy Holidays
Paw Joe
A few of the responses to Perry’s book follow.
Mail Call

Clutterbuck loved Perry’s Doing Unto Others

Very moving. Some vignettes made me smile; others made me tearful; others had me saying, yes, I know that feisty old broad!!! ... I'm sure every DON was happy to have him on his/her team.

Thank you for making this available. I'm going to share it with my sisters, if I may do so.

Sandra Clatterbuck
New Market, VA
Perry says it’s all about sharing. By all means, pass it along.

Another rave for Perry’s memoir

hi coach,
I just finished the book. loved it! it goes to show you that one is never too old to learn a few new life lessons. Joe is certainly one rare, compassionate human being. You can tell him i said so.

Thanks for sharing,
diane (via email)
You just did.

Burke embraces the 13th

Thanks for another great edition of Extra Innings. [our 13th]

Since I consider myself different than most, I welcome Friday the 13th. In fact, it has proved to be my lucky day ... my wife and I married on Friday the 13th! Even enjoy black cats and walking under ladders.

So bah! to superstition ...

Ooops! just broke my bathroom mirror. Rats! Now I'll have 7 years bad luck. Or, maybe not ... if I don't look at my reflection.

N

[Ned Burke, publisher and author]

*If you ever need to "fill a hole" in your newsletter you are free to use any of my stuff. Let me know.

Thanks, Ned! His “stuff” includes the wonderful online newsletter The Perspiring Writer.

Coach

Schachte wore a poppy for Veteran’s Day

I would love to have a copy of the nursing home book. My mother is in assisted living now. I know she will soon move to the “big house” for more care. I would love to read what the people who work there see and hear on a daily basis.

Thank you for the story about the poppies. [Meandering with Madonna, last edition] I remember getting to wear one on Veteran’s Day, wrapping the stem around the button of my school blouse. I am happy to know how it all got started.

Have a wonderful November and December.

Susie
Susie Schachte
Greenwood, Indiana
(And by the by, on the blogging thing – I’m with Rex.
That was Rex Owens’ rebuttal on the value of blogging. More responses follow.

Moorehead appreciates Veteran’s Day piece, too

Hello Marsh,
Thank you for your September response to my query about how an anthology could be published using writings from people associated with the Big Sur Camaldalese Monastery in California. Thank you, also, for the November issue of Extra Innings. My father was a World War I vet, so I especially appreciated the piece on Armistice Day and the context for the poem, "In Flanders Field."

P. C. Moorehead
If not poppies, try newspaper roses

Truly enjoyed this #13 Extra Innings! Thank you for sending it. I really enjoyed reading about Flanders Fields and the poppies. My sister visited from Colorado Springs a few weeks ago. She taught me how to make newspaper roses. They are so pretty! I made one out of the grocery ad, and one from the sports page! I was thinking maybe she would know how to make the poppies. That would be nice for November. Thanks again for your nice eletter.
Sincerely, Bonny [Bonny Conway]

Flander's Field poem has Robinson in tears

Hi, Coach.
Rereading McCrae's poem after these many years left me in tears. Thaniks.
Greg [Robinson]

Poet seeks publication

Dear Coach,
Thank you for producing another great newsletter. I love all the pictures and your recommendations for movies. I would like to submit a poem for your newsletter. Where should I send it?
Thank you,
Marion Young
Send 'em to me at mcook@dcs.wisc.edu, Marion.
PS: She did, and you can read it on page 14 of this issue!
Coach

Blogging not for Paw Joe just now

Read every word.
Thought it was great as always.

Loved all the pictures. I was fascinated with the Poppy's story. I remember always buying poppies from the Vets when we went to town.

Blogging, I saw both views. It's not for me right now. On the other hand, I'm happy it's an option for those who find happiness in doing it without abusing the privilege. There are people who would find a way to abuse an anvil, so we have to live with that-- take the good with the bad.

Now that a new day has begun, I will put in a couple hours with John and Polly [characters in current work in progress] before napping readies me to go to the doctor

Have a great day
Paw Joe [Perry Stone]
Remember, you can still get a copy of Perry's memoir, Doing Unto Others. It would make for great Christmas-time reading. All you have to do is ask: mcook@dcs.wisc.edu.

The last word (?) on the Blog Debate
Burris doesn't want to leave her writing out on the curb

Hi Marsh,
I really enjoyed this month's issue! What most caught my eye were the piece by Madonna on poppies, which I'd always wondered about, and Rex's position on blogging. He invited us to weigh in on that topic, so of course, I couldn't pass up an opportunity.

My first thoughts were all about how I couldn't find the time to create and maintain a blog. But as I wrote, I had to face the fact that I'd have plenty of time if I really wanted to do that.

The truth is, filling a blog with my hard work would be like spending a year nurturing, house-breaking and training a puppy only to turn it loose on the street.

I want my work to go to a good home where it's wanted and most likely to be appreciated so I'd rather direct it to those places.

Furthermore, I agree with Rex that most of the blogs I've seen read more like daily diaries than creative writing.

And while my life is cozy and wonderful, I'm certain that lengthy descriptions of it would be a real yawn to others. Does anyone really care to hear about our new fireplace insert or the fact that we're working harder on cleaning Alex's teeth? I doubt it.

So I'll not be joining the bloggers or the people with Facebook pages and walls and whatever they have. At least not this week!

Meanwhile, my essay “Possible Dreams” was picked up by Patchwork Path for their anthology, Mother's Life, due out early next year. And the Chicken Soup for the Soul folks sent me a final edited draft of my story for their dog book due out in April. Still not counting my chickens on that one even though the publisher's assistant tells me that if it got this far, it has a 95% chance of being included in the book I'll let you know as soon as I've been told it's a definite go.
Writing still gives me an absolute rush, whether or not publishers accept my work. But I'm just not ready to leave it out on the curb.

Keep all the good stuff coming! I look forward to every issue.

Barbara [Burris]
Most of the good stuff comes from my readers, Barbara; this letter is a good example of that.

You can make a difference!

Save a word today!

This just in from alert reader Betsy Lawson:
“According to the venerable smarty-pants at Oxford Dictionary, each year we lose more words from the English language, and as of now 90% of everything we write is communicated in only 7,000 words. Help Oxford Dictionary and A Word A Day reverse this trend by adopting your favorite word from the English language at their cool Save The Words site. No, seriously, do it. We're asking you kaleusmatically.”

It's quick and easy, and you’ll feel SO good!
Just go to http://savethewords.org/ and scan the screen full of orphaned words. (Keep the sound on, so you can hear them beg you to “Pick me! Pick me!”) Takes a couple of seconds, and the word is yours to love, nurture, and protect.

In honor of my dear friend Perry Stone, I have adopted the word “Mulomedic.” Let me know what word you adopt!

And now another word from our sponsor

Extra Innings #14
Dedicated to writers, their enablers, and all who believe in Santa

Madison, Wisconsin, December 2010
Columnist this issue: Perry Stone, Jim Herod, Madonna Dries Christensen
Film critic: Jacob McLaughlin
Book reviewers: Jeffrey L. Brooks, Sofia Rodriguez
Poet: Marian Young
Humor editor: Laurelynn Hardy
Minister of defense: Warren Pease
The Masked Man: Brace Beamer
Editor-in-Coach: Marshall J. Cook
Professor Emeritus, UW-Madison Department of Continuing Studies
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

Extra Innings comes to you through the good graces of the folks of the writing program at the Division of Continuing Studies, Liberal Studies and the Arts, University of Wisconsin-Madison, led by Christine DeSmet. Find out about their workshops, courses, conferences, and critiques services at:
www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing

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.
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 halfwitticism.
www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing/extrainnings
By Jim Herod

I remember when libraries had card catalogs. The catalogs were large, wooden boxes with small, sliding drawers. Every item for loan in the library was listed on a three-by-five card, and all these cards were kept in one drawer or another in the card catalog.

Pull a drawer open; there would be the smell of the library, as well as everything you might want to know about holdings in that library. Some cabinet maker in the United States must have had the monopoly on making those card catalogs; they all looked alike.

I first came to know about card catalogs at the Carnegie Library in Selma, Alabama. Miss Betty Keith greeted all grammar school students coming into her library the same way. “Shhh!” I’d turn my head, pretend to ignore her, and go directly to the children’s section.

I don’t recall how old I was when she stopped giving that admonition. What I know is that I began to pick books that had more words than pictures. It was a natural evolution, and I sensed that Miss Betty Keith approved.

That approval stopped one afternoon when I walked up to her desk and stretched to place the book I wanted to check out in front of her.

“I don’t think your mama would want you reading this book,” she said as she pulled the book off the counter and placed it on her desk.

“It’s on the … the … the reading list. My uncle, he … he told me to read it,” I stuttered.

Her eyes narrowed. She looked toward the room where books of fiction were kept, then the other way toward the room where children were not allowed. Not satisfied, she began the interrogation, “What’s the name of your uncle?”

“Uncle J.G.” I answered. That’s the way we knew him. “Uncle J. G. Roy.”

She was frowning now. “Do you mean James Roy?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

I thought she stamped the ink pad and the Date Due sheet glued in the front of Elmer Gantry harder than was necessary. But, I was young and scared. I now understand that she said the next sentence hundreds of times every day. At that moment, it seemed like a threat:

“The book is due back in two weeks. Don’t forget.”

I promised. I would have crossed my heart and given her the Boy Scout pledge if she had asked.

Gradually, things changed between me and Miss Betty Keith. One day, she pointed to a stool so that I could get to the Aa drawer in the card catalog. There I discovered James Agee and his Let Us Now Praise Famous Men. I had to go into the Reference Room to get that one, and she said “Shh!” when I walked toward that door.

But there I was. This room had metal shelves, lined in rows, attached to the floor and ceiling. What I recognized at once was that this room had the same smell as the card catalog.

I smiled when grownups wandering among those shelves looked at me. I was now in the library. Like them, the card catalog had given me access to more than books having colorful covers facing toward the wanderer. The card catalog was the way to know the library and what it contained.

Years later, I found enormous card catalogs at The University. Undergraduate students were employed to update the catalog continuously. There were two groups of catalogs there. Books were classified by author and also by a strange-to-me numbering system. I began to understand all those numbers: books classified in the Q section were about science and mathematics. I asked and was given permission to wander the stacks.

Gradually, I came to study at a desk as close to the QA section as I could get.
Some time, years later, card catalogs disappeared. “Where did they go?” I asked the lady at the check-out desk in the Georgia Tech library.

“Computers, you know.”

I expressed my sorrow. I felt this was a loss of information. Librarians older than me agreed. Those younger would shake their heads, “We’re updating everything.” And they would politely ask me if they could look something up for me.

“I want to browse, to prowl the library,” I protested.

With a dismissal smile, they’d wave toward the stacks. “Have at it!”

And there we were. Well, there we are, actually.

Except something exciting happened in the Grove Hill, Alabama in the late afternoon of August 24. The Library Board voted unanimously to adopt the 21st Century counterpart of the card catalog.

We will create an electronic library card catalog of books in the Grove Hill Public Library. The catalog can be searched again. Readers can prowl, browse, go looking! Our listings will be accessible to any person in the world through the World Wide Web. “Have at it!” the Library Board says with pride.

The only thing missing is the smell of books. To get that, order a container of Library Scent from the Amazon book store. Then spray it about the room as you go to https://grovehill.biblionix.com/atoz/catalog/ -- the location for the Grove Hill Public Library’s electronic card catalog.

Have you hugged a mulomedic today?
E.I. Kid’s Lit Review
for and by kids
Sofia celebrates with Penny’s Christmas Jar Miracle
By Sofia Rodriguez
Penny’s Christmas Jar Miracle, by Jason F. Wright (Shadow Mountain, 2009)
I like: Building snow creations with my brother, reading chapter books and playing tag with my friends.
This book was about: A little girl named Penny. Every year her family would have a hot chocolate stand, and they would collect money, put it in a jar and give it to somebody who needed it. This year, they decided to give it to everyone in the neighborhood. Then the neighbors decided to help Grandpa Charlie.
The best part was when: They had a big Christmas party with everyone in the neighborhood, and they all gave money to Grandpa Charlie — a neighbor who was sick.
I laughed when: Butterflies fluttered in Penny’s stomach.
I was worried when: Grandpa Charlie became sick and Penny thought he wouldn’t be able to come to the party.
I was surprised that: The whole neighborhood came to Grandpa Charlie’s house for the Christmas Eve party.
This book taught me: To give money to the poor or the homeless or to someone who might need it.
Other kids reading this book should watch for: Penny’s different idea for how to use the Christmas Jar this year.
Three words that best describe this book are: Christmas, Penny, and giving.
My favorite line or phrase in this book is: “Penny motioned for Grandpa Charlie to lean down. ‘We’re not giving away our jar this year,’ she whispered. ‘We’re having a fancy party instead. I’m making invitations for everyone in the neighborhood. But shhh – it’s still a secret.'”
You should read this book because: It’s a good book about the real meaning of Christmas.
Reprinted with author’s permission from Read, Write, and Report: Inside the mind of a children’s book lover.

E.I. At the Movies
GWTW makes two top-15 lists
Last issue Pat Fitzgerald challenged us to list our top 15 movies, off the top of the head, without pausing to think about it. Here are two responses.
Presley tops favorites
I am an Elvis Presley fan and have watched several of his movies on TV. I think my favorite is Clambake. My other 14 are:
Gone With the Wind
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn
To Kill a Mockingbird
Marty
Wuthering Heights
Jane Eyre
Little Women
Pride and Prejudice
While You Were Sleeping
Rebecca
Black Beauty
South Pacific
Cinderella
Fiddler on the Roof
I found Perry Stone’s piece on secrets intriguing. Found Madonna’s article on Poppy Day informative and the poetry inspiring.
I don't blog or twitter; am not on facebook. Have all I can manage to keep up with emails, my writing group and my writing.
Andrea [Schoenthal]
Fitzgerald answers her own challenge
I just hadda make another list. This one took me about three minutes, but I did it just before bed and I was tired. Hence, it took a little longer than my Facebook list.
1. Gidget (honest. Gidget)
2. The Days of Wine and Roses
3. Winter’s Bone (2010 winner at the Sundance. I didn’t want to blink while watching it, for fear of missing something.)
4. Hud
5. A Touch of Evil
6. the original Dracula
7. Sleeping Beauty
8. *The Girl Can't Help It* (Jane Mansfield classic, but I always thought Freddie Bell and the Bellboys stole the movie with their song, *Giddyup Ding Dong*)

9. *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*

10. *African Queen*

11. *Barton Fink*

12. *Gone with the Wind*


14. *Vertigo*

15. *From Here to Eternity*

This time I veered away from Westerns. I probably could make a list of 15 of those.

Coach replies: I’m glad you explained that. How else to explain the omission of *Shane, The Magnificent Seven, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (much derided by critics at the time), *The Shootist, The Searchers.*... I could go on.

For my dough, *Dumbo* makes the list but not *Sleeping Beauty,* but you pays your money and you takes your choice, huh?


Parent Trap (the Hayley Mills version, of course) makes my list.

Gone with the Wind is *NOT* on my list. Sorry.

How about it, movie fans? Anyone else want to share a list?

---

**Coach’s Bullpen Briefs**

**Would you read a profile that began...?**

“The steam engine king of Cadott got into the Army during World War II because he reached out and, well, borrowed a cupful of urine from the young man going next to him.”

How could you not??

That’s how the great feature writer Sandy Mickelson opened a profile honoring a vet on Veteran’s Day. Sandy writes some of the best stuff I’ve ever read, lavishing her talents on the good people of Fort Dodge, Iowa who read her columns and features in the *Messenger.*

She knows Dylan.

She knows Billy the Kid. And now...

**Pat knows cookies!**

Since relocating to Billy the Kid country out under those clear, broad New Mexico skies, our Old West correspondent, movie buff, and regular book reviewer, Pat Fitzgerald, has learned to bake tasty and unique cookies. Her secret: she adds green peppers.

Trust me, it works. And Coach knows cookies from the eating point of view!

**Everson unveils second mystery/romance novel**

Rosemary Everson has published *Outburst of Love,* the second novel of a projected three book series. You can find it and the first in the series, *Fact or Fool,* on the author’s website: [http://rosemaryeverson.com](http://rosemaryeverson.com); it’s also available from Lulu.com; Amazon.com, and other web outlets.

*Outburst of Love* begins with a December wedding for protagonist Maggie Benson, a journalist, and Rye Bennett, in Indiana Beach, Indiana.

But trouble begins to plague them on that very day, and the book will take us to Paris and Venezuela as we attempt to unravel the mystery.
WRWA spring contests open January 1

WRWA News Release
For the first time, the Wisconsin Regional Writers Association (WRWA) has opened its Jade Ring Writing Contests to nonmembers. The only requirement for entry is that each submission touch on a Wisconsin theme or be written by a Wisconsin resident.

Spring contests open January 1, 2011.
Entries must be received by March 15.

Kim Suhr, Director of RedBird-RedOak Writing, was a winner in two categories in 2010. “These contests provide two valuable incentives for aspiring writers,” she notes, “the opportunity to have their work recognized among some excellent writers in our region and -- to be perfectly frank -- a deadline. There's nothing like a contest deadline to give a writer the kick-in-the-pants she needs to put the finishing touches on that story, poem or essay and get it out!

WRWA Spring contests include the Florence Lindemann Humor Contest, for nonfiction essays or articles with a humorous theme, and the Al P. Nelson Feature Article Contest, for nonfiction articles with a link to Wisconsin. Reminiscences have dominated previous contests, but profiles, essays, how-tos, travel, humor, and round-up articles have made their mark, too.

Entering WRWA’s writing contests is straightforward. The contest rules can be found on the WRWA website at www.wrwa.net/contests/ContestRules.pdf.

Lost in the Mail
I’m embarrassed to admit that I neglected to get the letters into last issue. The explanation? I’m an idiot. Here are a few of the best.

Coach-in-Chief
Madonna appreciates ghosts and naked ladies
Lots of giggles in this issue: Your recipe piece, the comment about the naked lady, September Morn, and the baseball quotes. Thanks for the smiles. It soothed me after the scary ghost story. And I related to Perry Stone. Sometimes I can't find the words for something and I think, Hey, a writer should know what to say.

Happy Birthday EI.

M. (Our very meandering mind-expanding columnist, Madonna Dries Christensen)
Thanks, Madonna. You can't really miss with ghosts, naked ladies, and baseball.

Is writing enough?
Marsh:
I enjoy Extra Innings. Thanks.
I’m still writing, still not publishing--but I enjoy the writing process. Maybe that will have to be enough.

Brenda Smith
More than enough, I think. Writing fills life to the brimming. Glad you liked the letter.

Coming in the January edition:
At last: the definitive word on the difference between men and women! Don’t miss it.

And in February, Jacob McLaughlin presents his TOP 10 MOVIES OF 2010. Why not send in your own lists of top 10s for the year (movies, books, Conan O’Brien jokes-- by or about him...)
Perry starts his day the *E.I.* way--but at 3:00 a.m.!

I loved this issue, especially the fact there was a lot more pages to like. Read the last half at 3:17 this morning for the same reason I hate to put a good book down. NOW maybe sleep will come.

Rainy and cool. The plan is --no plan, take it as it comes and enjoy the minute the hour the day. *Extra Innings* got me off to a great start, Thanks.

Thought about blogging a few times. It always came down to: I wasn’t smart enough to say anything the world really needed to know, though it has been my belief after random blog reading that that’s not why the majority actually do it.

Have a great day stay dry

Paw Joe

Our mischievous Missouri Muse, Perry Stone Coach replies: Obviously there’s no intelligence test for bloggers, nor any sort of “need-to-know” standard for what they write. I guess that’s part of the joy of it, a completely democratic medium. I haven’t found time to read, let alone write, a blog.

As for you having something to say, you’ve been proving that you do for years, first in *Creativity Connection* and now here. Just consider this your blog-- except it’s got an editor.

**Good things come in bunches--just like carrots**

YAY YAY YAAAAAAAY! How fun to get the *Extra Innings* on the same day I got my FIRST paycheck for a real article that was published!!! :) My article "Keeping Guide Dogs Safe" is in the autumn/current issue of *Fetch* magazine. I'm hoping they'll take my pitch on a few more ideas.

I've been enjoying my volunteer work on the Wisconsin House Rabbit Society newsletter. The org is covering my registration to take the UW employees InDesign class next month. Pretty cool. I'm such a low tech person!

Amy Free

You may be low tech, but you sure do know your bunnies! And now you’re a professional writer. Congratulations! I hereby invite every *E.I.* reader to get up and applaud for you, a virtual standing ovation.

---

**EI writers earn praise from one of their own**

Hi Marsh,

*Extra Innings* #12 was an amazing issue.

Mary C. Chace's flash fiction story was haunting and beautifully written. I could relate to Lisa Krenz's piece about having passion for children's literature. I enjoyed getting to know Troy Taylor through Madonna's insightful interview. Perry Stone's article was poignant. And then your book review and article. *The Shadow of the Wind* is one of my favorite books. I didn't know that he had published another; so thanks to your review, I promptly reserved the book at the library. I can't wait to read it!

Your article about cooking and writing—priceless I won't ask for the recipe, but you just about gave it away. It sounds yummy and I may have to play around with those ingredients.

Looking forward to many more issues of *Extra Innings*.

Randi

That’s Randi Lynn Mrvos, who modestly neglected to mention that her “The Writer’s Life” column was a part of that amazing October issue.

More praise for Perry

I neglected to tell you how much I enjoyed this month’s issue of *Extra Innings*. I hadn’t read my own essay [“My not-so-secret love affair (with children’s literature)!”] in quite some time, and it was a pleasure to read it and think, “Yeah, I agree with that. That’s what I meant.”

I especially enjoyed Perry Stone’s column [“‘Real writers’ would have the words when a friend dies, wouldn’t they?’”], broke my heart really because I have felt the same way. Indeed don’t doubt that the Lord gave us tears for when words just couldn’t be enough.

Lisa Krentz

Your piece and Perry’s were two of the finest I’ve had the pleasure of publishing in 21 years.
A Christmas Story
I'm sure everyone who is reading this has seen this film at least once. Maybe 50 times. This film is a Christmas classic. The Red Ryder BB gun, the kid who gets his tongue stuck to the pole, the soap in the mouth, the pink bunny suit, the leg lamp, all great elements to this memorable film. I find myself watching it on TBS every year. It's just that good. I'm sure it'll be remembered for a long time like other classics such as Miracle On 34th Street and It's A Wonderful Life. The only new film that has come close is Elf, but there really aren't any memorable classic Christmas films being made anymore. But that's fine with me. As long as this one's around, I'm satisfied.

Santa Claus Conquers the Martians
Wow. I can't believe this film was ever greenlighted. It's a Spanish imported film from the 60's. The story, such as it is, is that there is a race of martians that don't understand Christmas and want to kill Santa. Sounds like a happy kids film, doesn't it? The martians are just normal people with huge, green helmets. Ridiculous. Later in the story two children get abducted with Santa, who magically helps them escape the ship, and they end up back at the north pole. But the martians return, and Santa's toy machine starts to go haywire. Santa and the kids meet a martian family and teach them what Christmas is really about without actually telling them a darn thing. I have no idea how that works.

This is one you'll likely never forget, because it's so painfully horrible. And if you've seen the Mystery Science Theater 3000 episode, you know it's one of their best.

Santa Claus
This another Spanish imported Christmas film, and it's every bit as bad as Santa Claus Conquers the Martians. This time around, Claus is duking it out with a devil named Pitch. That's right, a Christmas film with the devil. That's clearly what we were all waiting for in a Christmas film.

The film opens with Santa's headquarters on a magical cloud, inhabited by children from all over the world. They all sing songs. Cut to the bowels of Hell, where we see a dance number with a bunch of demons before we're introduced to Pitch. His mission is to make kids do bad things so they don't get any presents for Christmas.

A little girl named Lapita, who comes from a poor family, really wants a doll she sees at a shop. Pitch tries to convince her to steal it. It doesn't work, but what fascinates me is that Lapita isn't absolutely terrified that the devil is right in front of her. Guess she's too focused on the doll.

Santa starts delivering gifts, and Pitch decides to do some mischief. The most evil thing he does is move a chimney. That's it. Does this affect Santa's night? Nope. So the film pretty much ends with everything happy, and Pitch just gives up. That's the story.

The laughing reindeer scene still haunts me. Santa doesn't have normal reindeer in this movie. He has wind up, mechanical reindeer who have a horrifying laugh. You know a movie is bad when laughing, mechanical reindeer are scarier than the devil. The only way to see it is on Mystery Science Theater 3000.
THE FOUNTAIN

By Marion Young
With pen in hand I slide to the other side,
Where fireflies shatter twilight’s veil,
Pine needles crinkle on the path,
Moonbeams whisper a melody,
Chanting waves enthrall,
Rushing winds caress,
Stars above glisten,
Skin tingles as I
Drink from the
Fountain
Of words

For 20 years Marion Young taught students with visual impairments and blindness. Her poems and a short story have appeared in Fine Lines Literary Journal.

PUNishment

A man's home is his castle, in a manor of speaking.
Dijon vu - the same mustard as before.
Practice safe eating - always use condiments.
Shotgun wedding - A case of wife or death.
A man needs a mistress just to break the monogamy.
A hangover is the wrath of grapes.
Dancing cheek-to-cheek is a form of floor play.
Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?
Use condoms on every conceivable occasion.
When two egotists meet, it's an I for an I.
Will: a dead give away.
In democracy your vote counts. In feudalism your count votes.
A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.
If you don't pay your exorcist, you get repossessed.
The man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered.
Local Area Network in Australia - the LAN down under.
Money is tainted - Taint yours and taint mine.
He had a photographic memory that never developed.
A midget fortune-teller who escapes from prison is a small medium at large.
Once you've seen one shopping center, you've seen a mall.
Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis.
Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.
Acupuncture is a jab well done

Don’t forget your mulomedic this Christmas!

Thanks to Judy Lawton
A pregnant pause for some paraprosdokian prose

A paraprosdokian is a statement that ends in an unexpected way. For instance, “The car stopped on a dime, which unfortunately was in a pedestrian’s pocket.”

Groucho Marx loved paraprosdokians. Three of his most famous paraprosdokians were:

“I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got in my pajamas, I’ll never know.”

“I’ve had a perfectly wonderful evening, but this wasn’t one of them.”

“Outside of a dog, a book is a man’s best friend. Inside of a dog, it’s too dark to read anyway.”

Paraprosdokianist, Bob Monkhouse, wrote:

“I want to die peacefully in my sleep like my grandfather, not screaming and terrified like the passengers in his car.”

“When I told them I was going to be a comedian, they laughed. No one is laughing now.”

Here are a few more:

“There are a bunch of different crunches which affect the abs. My favorite is Nestle.” Schmuel Breban

Here are a few more we couldn’t attribute:

The last thing I want to do it hurt you. But it’s on my list.

Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit.
Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
The early bird gets the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.

A bus station is where a bus stops.
A train station is where a train stops.

My desk is a workstation.
Dolphins are so smart that within a few weeks of captivity, they’ve trained humans to stand on the edge of their pool and throw them fish.

You do not need a parachute to skydive.
You need it to skydive twice.

I always take life with a grain if salt, plus a slice of lime and a shot of tequila.
I used to be indecisive. Now I’m not so sure.

Thanks to Mary Ramey and Wally Littman
E.I. craft book review
Our writing shapes, defines us
Reviewed by Jeffrey L. Brooks
In Writing With Style, John R. Trimble pours all of his heart and soul into his writing. Reading it makes me feel as if I have a true friend by my side, because he writes as if he’s right there with you. His writing helps me to take a closer look at myself, as he explains, “each time we write, we’re making a choice as to the kind of person we prefer to be.”

“A writer isn’t self-sufficient until he has learned to think well,” Trimble says, and I agree totally. Writing requires deep concentration and allows us to be creative. But we do not have to be original to be creative. We are creative because our thoughts make us unique, and our uniqueness gives us the privilege and the opportunity to be heard.

In the eighth chapter, Trimble defines three major writing styles: informal, which is conversational; formal, which is pretentious; and general, a “happy compromise” between the two. General Style is the most difficult of the three to write, he says. Of the three, I prefer the informal, because you don’t have to use big words to make a bold statement.

The difference between an experienced and an inexperienced writers, he says, is that in inexperienced writes writes to impress himself and/or others. But an experienced writer “writes to serve his reader.”

For this reason, he considers writing an applied psychology, because it is “the art of creating desired effects.” He reminds us that “good writing is good manners.”

Above all, he says, writing is like romancing: “ones heart must be into it.” Otherwise, “no amount of expertise will do,” he notes. I couldn’t agree more. If you’re not passionate about what you’re doing, you shouldn’t be doing it.

Hemingway states it clearly: “Writing must be a labor of love or it is not writing.”

Did I read that sign right?
TOILET OUT OF ORDER. PLEASE USE FLOOR BELOW

In a Laundromat:
AUTOMATIC WASHING MACHINES:
PLEASE REMOVE ALL YOUR CLOTHES WHEN THE LIGHT GOES OUT

In a Memphis department store:
BARGAIN BASEMENT UPSTAIRS

In an office:
WOULD THE PERSON WHO TOOK THE STEPLADDER YESTERDAY PLEASE BRING IT BACK OR FURTHER STEPS WILL BE TAKEN

In another office:
AFTER COFFEE BREAK STAFF SHOULD EMPTY THE COFFEE POT AND STAND UPSIDE DOWN ON THE DRAINING BOARD

Outside a secondhand shop:
WE EXCHANGE ANYTHING - BICYCLES, WASHING MACHINES, ETC. WHY NOT BRING YOUR WIFE ALONG AND GET A WONDERFUL BARGAIN?

Notice in health food shop window:
CLOSED DUE TO ILLNESS

Spotted in a safari park:
ELEPHANTS PLEASE STAY IN YOUR CAR

Seen during a conference:
FOR ANYONE WHO HAS CHILDREN AND DOESN'T KNOW IT, THERE IS A DAY CARE ON THE 1ST FLOOR

Notice in a farmer's field:
THE FARMER ALLOWS WALKERS TO CROSS THE FIELD FOR FREE, BUT THE BULL CHARGES.

Message on a leaflet:
IF YOU CANNOT READ, THIS LEAFLET WILL TELL YOU HOW TO GET LESSONS

On a repair shop door:
WE CAN REPAIR ANYTHING.. (PLEASE KNOCK HARD ON THE DOOR - THE BELL DOESN'T WORK)

Thanks to Sandy Mickelson, who gets the penultimate word. The last word is, of course:

MULOMEDIC