Baseball came into my life at Berryville Grade School over 60 years ago. Growing up just north of Kenosha, and across the highway from Lake Michigan, I began 3rd grade there in 1943, and by 4th grade baseball was part of my day. Recess, lunchtime, after school, we played anywhere we wanted to on three acres of field. For us, baseball was not delineated by the size of the ball, nor the strict rules of the game. If we had a ball and bat, to us, it was baseball.

How did we choose up sides for a “real” game? (Real game, as in two teams with at least five on each side) Well, somebody just yelled, “Hey, who wants to play ball?” Once a group formed, we had to pick team captains. Starting with any two, one tossed the bat vertically to the other, who caught it with one hand. Taking turns, they worked their way up the neck, one hand at a time, and the one whose hand didn’t fit at the top (thumb and four fingers included) was out. Last two in were team captains, who took turns choosing their teams, and off we went. Depending on how big our group was, this took maybe seven minutes.

Not enough for teams? No problem, we played “scrub.” All you needed was a batter, a pitcher, a catcher, and a fielder. (Better with two, but one would work if he was fast)

Scrub was played like this; batter gets three outs, batter is now fielder, catcher is now batter and pitcher is catcher; first baseman is pitcher, second baseman goes to first, you get the picture. Doesn’t take long for that fielder to get up to bat. This worked very well, girls and boys included. Scrub was great for a quick game at recess or lunchtime, quickly organized, not long to figure out who was who. Usually it was “I’ll catch…” and “I’ll pitch…” and of course there was always someone who wanted to bat first, which is usually when a brief argument occurred.

For an even shorter game we played “500.” That was the quickest to set up. Great for recess. Basic needs were; ball, bat, batter. One other person to field, of course, unless you wanted to play alone, and he’d better be quick on his feet. Two fielders were better and 10 was no problem.

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After you argued about who was going to bat (if it was your ball and bat, no contest) the other players got out in the field. Pick your spot, totally up to you, and the batter batted whatever and wherever he wanted to.

For a grounder, the fielder got 25 points, one bounce, 50 and a fly ball, 100. First person to 500, well, you guessed it, they became the batter. The argument usually started when somebody wasn’t real good at math and said they had 500 when they didn’t. (Or did!)

Some of the older kids played on county leagues, and once we’d begged a ride from somebody’s parent, a bunch of us would just pile into their car and head for Pet’s.

Petrifying Springs, riddled with hiking trails and thousands of trees, unending camping and picnic areas and playgrounds, was topped off by Pike’s Creek meandering all through it. Close to a winding road, our diamond sat alone, the outfield bordered by thick woods. With lights blazing, night games were best. The bleachers held about 200, but for us, 20 or 30 was good-- country people, all.

 Heckling the players was mandatory.

“Hey batta batta! No hitter!”

“Pitcher’s blind! Home run comin’ up!”

“Fielder’s sleepin’! Hit ‘er to center!”

Get about 50 kids and adults yelling that non-stop and you got joyful pandemonium!

Our last year at Berryville, my best friend and I joined the 8th grade girls’ league. She was the pitcher; I was the catcher. I can see that wind-up yet for her famous slingshot pitch- right arm high, down-swing a blur, ball leaving her hand like a rocket, headed straight for the batter’s strike zone. It amazes me how she got that ball over the plate. Our team won the coveted award for best 8th grade girls’ softball team of 10 country schools. That was May, 1949.

Come September, 1949, all 16 of us 8th graders would be herded into various city schools, but this last spring at Berryville belonged to us. We owned the field, the playground, the roof we secretly sat on during hot summer nights. We owned our classrooms with creaky floors that no longer exist; we owned the diamond at Pets. And we all belonged to each other; we just didn’t know it then.

It was my best years of baseball, and of school, of my life.

Batter up.

Extra Innings #18

In which we celebrate writers, their enablers, and scrub players

Madison, Wisconsin April, 2011


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Back issues available at: www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing/extrainnings
April 12 is National D.E.A.R. day. No, it’s not like Valentine’s Day, when we proclaim our love to family and friends. D.E.A.R. is a day to celebrate reading. Drop. Everything. And. Read.

The date honors the birthday of Beverly Cleary, the beloved writer of children’s books. Her fictional character, Ramona Quimby, is the program’s official spokesperson, responsible for spreading the word about D.E.A.R., a program practiced by parents at home as well as in schools, libraries, and bookstores.

Beverly Cleary was born on a farm in Oregon, near a town so small it had no library. Her mother arranged with the State Library to have books sent to Yamhill, and she acted as librarian in a room over a bank. There, Beverly learned to love books.

When the family moved to Portland, where Beverly attended grammar school, she found herself in the low reading circle. By third grade she had conquered reading.

Her school librarian suggested that when she grew up, she write stories for children. And did she ever, creating Ramona Quimby, Henry Huggins, Ellen Tebbits, and other endearing characters.

After receiving letters from children telling her about a great reading program in school (D.E.A.R.) Cleary incorporated the program into one of her books about Ramona Quimby.

Cleary has won a host of awards, including being named a Living Legend by the Library of Congress. The Beverly Cleary Sculpture Garden in Portland features bronze statues of Ramona, Henry, and Ribsy.

This is basically how D.E.A.R works in schools. When the children are engaged in some other activity, the teacher says, "Drop everything and read." The students quickly choose a book and a quiet place to read. When the teacher calls, "Time's up," students return to their desks and write in their logs, something about what they have read. A discussion follows, where the teacher asks questions about what they've read, to build on comprehension.

Here are a few ideas for celebrating on April 12th:
* Take your children to a bookstore and let them purchase a book, or to a library to check out a book.
* Buy yourself a book, too, or check one out of the library. At home, at a convenient time, Drop Everything And Read.
* Later, have a family discussion about the books read.
* Offer to read a story to your child’s class.
* Sort through books at home—children's and adult's—and donate some to a homeless shelter.
* Visit a nursing home and read to a single resident or a group (ask permission, of course).
* Write a short story from your life and read it to your children.
* Have children write and read a short story.
  You get the idea. Right now I'm going to . . . .

Our cameras catch Madonna’s grandkids, Sarah, William, and Grace D.E.A.Ring in the family reading room.
I’m not a fan of blogging. I’d rather not do it. Sometimes I wish we could go back to typewriters and not bother with all this social-networking-media-internet-overwhelmingly-connected-to-the-world way of life. But since I hear that writers have never had it so good with all these new online opportunities, it’s time to figure out how to make it work.

But how does blogging help when you’re not published? If you’re working hard at your writing and still not getting published, you must be doing something wrong, right? I have a master’s in history but can’t sell a historical article—I’m told my writing is too unorganized.

If you’re like me, you find yourself re-writing a certain piece over and over and over again. It’s a great idea, but the execution must be lousy because no one will even publish it in one of those history journals that don’t pay.

Every once in a while I’ve written a piece that didn’t need any editing. That’s what inspiration is. It flows out of you so well and so quickly, using such a perfectly formed thought, that it comes out with a life of its own.

If only all writing could be that way!

We’d like to write every day with that distinctive voice—where people really “get us” right away. Most of the time that doesn’t happen, because writers, fueled with the desire to write, can’t sit around and wait for inspiration. We can only keep writing and hope the muse stops by on occasion.

So I think blogging can help unpublished writers hone writing skills, because it forces you to actually put something new you create in a single day (or week) out into the public eye.

At a minimum you need to create a new blog once a week. You have to commit to it once you start, and that means not starting until you’re ready. Then use it as a way—even when you’re not inspired—to learn to write well quickly.

I plan to sit down every Wednesday, hopefully with a well-thought-out idea, and write a page-long blog that I can put out somewhere and that people will actually get. It will be clear, concise, a single thought, and hopefully, either entertaining or informative. Or both, if I’m really inspired.

Are we blogging just to self-promote? Maybe. What writer doesn’t want to get read? Today’s publishers want to know if you have people who enjoy your writing—well, how can readers enjoy you if you’re not published yet?

Think of blogging, then, as self-publishing without expense or stigma.

Blogging is not a dry and drab piece of work meant just to promote you, however. It’s also meant to improve you.

It’s a creative hammer to pound your way out of a restrictive box. It’s that chance to think about readers as you craft a short piece. I’m going to try to make mine substantial, substantive—that someone will read and recommend to others. And only a page worth, because most people don’t spend a lot of time anywhere anymore. Maybe you can make blogging your journal.

Blogging can help establish my credentials, my expertise on a topic, and help me build that platform—which is really just making myself known to a lot of people who like how I write, and maybe even learn to turn to me for advice or answers. Publishers want us to have a platform, so they know you have interested readers who will buy what they publish.

Blogging can also help if you’re published and you want to increase sales. People will find you more often; they will find what you’ve written, how you write, and your audience will increase. That of course means your blogging will be related to what you’ve published.

I had the idea of selecting quotes from my two books and putting them up at Facebook once a week. I had the idea of talking about the research in both of my historical novels and how that translated into fiction. Blogging is a way for me to act on those ideas.
So Wednesday is blogging day for me. I’ll post it at “Blog-itis” at my website. I’ll put the same article at Authors Den, and Gather, and maybe even at Facebook. Why not? A visitor to one spot likely won’t go to another. And I’ll update Linked-In that day as well. Even though that might be my least inspired day of the week, I’m going to find something to say.

All week long, in the back of my head, I’ll have some thoughts stewing about something—something related to what I’m working on, observances of the world or the human condition in general, or even some writing tips. You don’t want to blog about your boring breakfast. Although there would be ways to make breakfast interesting and entertaining, as well.

Blogging can get you out of a rut you might have found yourself in, or allow you to post a controversial thought (those make popular blogs) or maybe even give a home to an inspirational essay that doesn’t seem to fit anywhere else in your writing world. Writing in its many forms is always good exercise. So I’m going to give it a try. A year from now, I’ll let you know if it works. But don’t wait for me—you might be even better at it!

BLOGGING SITES FROM “Green Bay Reading Writers Guild” MARKETING BOOK –
www.blogger.com
www.livejournal.com
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www.bloglines.com
www.blogexplosion.com

Andrea’s Story Jar
By Andrea Lozinsky Schoenthal

The Annual Alleghany Artisans Tour invites members of the public to visit artisans’ studios, watch them at work, enjoy light refreshments and shop. The tour takes place in October to showcase the fall foliage of Alleghany County in southwest New York State. Since my birthday is in October, my daughter and son-in-law decided to combine the two events. And so we headed off from my Wellsville, N.Y. home.

The first artisan we visited also lives in Wellsville. In addition to being a potter, she is a writer. I’ve read her articles in the local weekly newspaper. She has combined both her talents in the creation of her “story jars.”

Story jars are six to eight inch tall, vase-like ceramic pots. They can be the color of oatmeal, or pink or green. Many are personalized with blue stamped lettering and can be inscribed with such words as “memories” or “our stories” or with someone’s name.

She said the idea of the story jar came to her as a method to collect reminders of important events, and a receptacle for story possibilities. Instead of using baby books or journals, she made a story jar for her family.

She placed cards in the story jar. Members of her family used the cards to write brief notes about special events they wanted to remember. From time to time she would pluck a card from the story jar and use it to tell a story to her two children. Now that her children were grown, she was using the cards as material for stories for the newspaper.

During our tour of her studio, I noticed “Andrea’s Story Jar.” What a coincidence, I thought. Although my name is not as common as some, I knew of other women named Andrea in our community. Thinking I would buy this story jar I looked for a price. But it was marked N.F.S.

“It is sold,” my daughter said.

“I guess so.”

“It’s sold, Mom,” she said. “And it is yours.”

It took me a few minutes to realize that “Andrea’s Story Jar” was indeed mine. My daughter had researched the artisans tour online. She then preordered the “story jar” so she and my son-in-law could surprise me with it for my birthday during the artisans tour.
Payers, Preyers and Pretenders

Hunting the elusive wild agent

by Rex A. Owens

The quest begins.
Over the next few months this column will explore the dreaded process of searching for representation from a literary agent or publisher for fiction and freelancing non-fiction work. Both are similar to ice fishing on Lake Mendota. You have very little information, you can’t see what you’re doing, it’s cold, and you drop your line into the abyss hoping for a snag.

I’ve been fishing for literary representation or a publisher for a year-- not a long time by newcomer standards. The steps in the newcomer’s quest include:

* drafting your query letter,
* researching agents and publishers,
* sending out query letters,
* writing a synopsis of your manuscript and samples of your manuscript,
* and the Holy Grail – having the complete manuscript requested.

To begin the quest for literary recognition and a modest paycheck requires preparation, and the first thing to prepare is a query letter. There are hundreds of sources on how to write a query letter—just Google “query letter.” Many literary agencies offer specific advice on what they expect the query letter to contain, which can be found on their websites.

The purpose of a query letter is not to have an agent offer to represent you or a publisher offer you a contract. The real purpose of the query letter is to have them ask to read your work. By sending e-mail query letters I’ve had responses from 10 agents and 10 publishers requesting either a portion of or my entire manuscript.

Unlike a job resume, which outlines your career objectives, experience and what you offer an employer, a query letter asks a question: Would you read my work? There are several technical musts for the letter.

* You must use a standard letter format and keep it to one page.
* You must personalize the letter. Don’t send a form letter; it’s obvious.

Many sources advise a three paragraph query letter. Rather than the number of paragraphs, the information you provide is the key. You want them to ask to see your work, so think in terms of what they need to know to respond to you. My query letter has six paragraphs in a single page, each paragraph short and devoted to one point.

First let them know what you want: “I am seeking representation” or “I am seeking a publisher.”

Then tell them the name of your book, genre, number of words and your log line.

Next, write a one paragraph synopsis of your manuscript. Think of browsing a bookstore. You take a paperback off the shelf, turn it over and read the description of the book. This is how your second paragraph should read.

In the next paragraph, you need to demonstrate that you are aware that book publishing is a business. Who will buy and read your book? What ideas do you have to market your own book?

By marketing I don’t mean the armchair stuff like posting on Facebook, LinkedIn, authorsden, authoradvance or your own website. You need to include book signings and readings, book reviews, radio shows, book fairs, anything you’re ready and willing to do.

Next, you need to provide some credentials for yourself as a writer. For beginners this is difficult. You can include writer’s conferences you’ve attended, formal writing classes you’ve taken, participation in a critique group, any awards you’ve won or grants received. In my case I provide clips from my freelance writing. The key is to demonstrate that you are dedicated to writing.

Continued next page
Finally, you must ask if they would review a portion of your manuscript. It’s also helpful to indicate that you are open to changes or re-writing in order to make your manuscript publication ready. Any notion that your manuscript, in its current form, is ready for the publisher is arrogant and not well informed.

Your query letter is YOUR query letter – not mine or not one you see in a book or online. Know what you want to accomplish with your query letter, write a draft, and then read it and ask yourself if the letter does what you want.

It only takes agent or editor to say: “I believe in your book. It has great potential. I would like to work with you to bring that potential to full fruition.”

Working on a query for your novel right now? Email the Coach, providing that one paragraph summary of your novel. The first three who do so will receive a copy of Coach’s book: Give ‘Em What They Want: The Right Way to Pitch Your Novel to Editors and Agents, written with Blythe Camenson.

Next month read all about Rex’s novel, Murphy’s Troubles, to be published by Mischievous Muse Press.

“If you are destined to become a writer, you can't help it. If you can help it, you aren't destined to become a writer. The frustrations and disappointments, not even to mention the unspeakable loneliness, are too unbearable for anyone who doesn't have a deep sense of being unable to avoid writing.”

Donald Harington

HOW TO STAY YOUNG

1. **Throw out nonessential numbers.** This includes age, weight and height. Let the doctors worry about them. That is why you pay them.

2. **Keep only cheerful friends.** The grouches pull you down.

3. **Keep learning.** Learn more about the computer, crafts, gardening, whatever. Never let the brain idle. An idle mind is the devil's workshop.

4. **Enjoy the simple things.**

5. **Laugh** often, long and loud. Laugh until you gasp for breath.

6. **The tears happen.** Endure, grieve, and move on. The only person with us our entire lives is ourselves. Be ALIVE while you are alive.

7. **Surround yourself with what you love**, whether it's family, pets, keepsakes, music, plants, hobbies, whatever. Your home is your refuge.

8. **Cherish your health:** If it is good, preserve it. If it is unstable, improve it. If it is beyond what you can improve, get help.

9. **Don't take guilt trips.** Take a trip to the mall, even to the next county; to a foreign country but NOT to where the guilt is.

10. **Tell the people you love that you love them**, at every opportunity.

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER:

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.

From the Internet, without attribution, passed along to us by dear friend Yasmin Horton.
Essays from Images

Beware short, stocky Greek teachers bearing quotes

by Den Adler

I feared Father York most of my senior year of 1960-61. I had him for Ancient Greek at St. Francis Minor Seminary in Milwaukee, and his short, stocky build, glaring eyes, and gravelly voice drew my attention to whatever he said.

Whenever classmates told him they missed class because they were sick, Fr. York growled, “We don’t get sick in this class. We become less well!” For us, the wellness era came decades early. After I missed a class due to the flu, he asked where I’d been. “I was less well, Father,” I said. He stared at me over his glasses. “Adler, you learn FAST.”

One day he printed a sentence—in Greek—on the board. The phrase made sense to me, so I copied it in red ink on the back of a bookmark I kept in my text. It would come in handy many years later.

One boy asked him how the ancient Greeks actually pronounced their words. Fr. York said no one knows because the last audio tapes were destroyed in a fire several centuries ago.

If you said, “Father, I think it means …,” he would say, “Do not think! Learn and know!”

We used Crosby and Schaefer’s Introduction to Greek. It included a photo of the Venus de Milo, which created a lot of curiosity among us guys studying for a celibate priesthood; we wondered what Fr. York would say when we got to that chapter. The day came, he stepped inside our classroom, closed the door, and growled, “Finally. We get to the best page in the book.”

One day he asked, “What stretches farther, human skin or rubber?” No one knew, of course, so he told us the answer: “Well, the Bible says Moses tied his ass to a tree and walked three miles!”

In the middle of our spring term, my sister in eighth grade suffered a burst aneurism and was near death. I was called home for her surgery. She survived, and when I returned to school I had missed a Greek exam, one that Fr. York had warned us carried a lot of weight for our final grade. Of course, while I was home I hadn’t studied at all.

After Greek class, I waited for my classmates to leave, then I approached him, apprehensive and unprepared for the exam. “Father, I missed that test. When should I take it?” Fr. York looked up for a second, then said in the softest voice I ever heard him use, “Tell me when you’re ready.”

Eventually I left the seminary, got married, and had a son. I didn’t see Fr. York again, but I never threw out that Greek book, though for years I couldn’t find it. When I did, my son was already 11. He came home from school that day, stormed up the stairs and slammed the door to his room.

“Eric,” I called. “What’s the problem?”

He stomped into the room where I was sitting with the Greek book and launched into complaints of homework and teachers and school in general. “You know,” I said, “I just found my old Greek book with this bookmark I wrote on. I think it has the perfect advice for this situation.”

“Yeah? What’s it say?”

I recited it in Greek: “Day taww-ta pahs-kane hee-nah ekko-men SO-fee-ahn.”

“Okay, so what’s it mean in English?”

“It means,” I said, “that it’s necessary for us to suffer these things so we may have wisdom.”

He stared for a second, then cracked a little grin. “Dad, how do you say ‘Go to hell’ in Greek?”

Father York would have loved that story, but he died before I could tell him. I still have the Greek book he taught me from, though—as well as that bookmark I wrote his wisdom phrase on 50 years ago.
This looks like another year of sequels, reboots and superhero films. I hope they'll be some original films like last year's *Inception*, but that seems to be a rare thing in Hollywood these days. However, there are a few films that I am looking forward to this year.

**Paul**
Simon Pegg and Nick Frost are two of the funniest people out there today. The real life best friends are finally in a film together again. *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz* are two of my all time favorite comedies, and *Paul* looks just as fun. With two great leads, a good cast and Seth Rogen as the voice of *Paul*, this looks to be my most anticipated film of the year.

**The Hangover II**
The first film has been called a modern comedy classic, and I agree. Now comedy sequels don't usually work, but I think this could. The main characters and the director are back from the first film, so that's a good sign.

**Kung Fu Panda 2**
Unlike comedies, animated sequels work better. I thought the first film was the best Dreamworks Animation film to date, so I'm looking forward to the second installment. Jack Black is always a plus, and the trailer looks great.

**Super 8**
The latest film from JJ Abrams hasn't had any plot details revealed yet. It does look very interesting from the footage we've been shown. It sort of has a Spielberg feel to it. I think it will be great.

**Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows 2**
The final installment of Potter is most likely the biggest film of the year for a lot of people. I'm sure this will be one epic finale. The main three characters have really grown into good actors, and I hope the best for them in the future.

**Captain America: The First Avenger**
I'm a sucker for comic book films. This is the definitely the biggest one this year. It's the last film leading up to next summer's *The Avengers*, which will surely be one of the biggest superhero films ever. It's going to be great to finally see Cap on the big screen.

**Cowboys and Aliens**
Daniel Craig and Harrison Ford starring in a sci fi Western. I can't wait for this.

**The Muppets**
It's the Muppets. Need I say more?

**Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows**
Robert Downey Jr. is back as the master detective. I highly enjoyed the original and I am really looking forward to the sequel.

**The Adventures of Tintin: Secrets of the Unicorn**
Steven Spielberg's latest film sounds like a great one. A motion-capture animated film with a great cast will be a great film to end the year with.
By Perry Paw Joe Stone

It came in one of those silent reflections that echo through a person’s mind: “These people are in serious need of a professional writer.”

‘These people’ referred to a Nephrology clinic. And for those who aren’t up on the medical profession’s terminology, by adding ology to a Greek word, in this case, nephro (meaning kidney) billing potential increases four to 10 times. Therefore it would seem realistic such a clinic could/would recruit ‘a professional’ to scribe pertinent information in an assuasive manner.

Not so in the case of this MEDICATION GUIDE.

The extern-- I had never heard of a nurse being called that before-- had taken my vitals. The Nephro Nurse Practitioner had finished discussing blood analyses and left after informing me they, the medical team, were prescribing a medication to rejuvenate my red blood cells. Then in comes the girl who is in charge of scheduling and management of my new prescription medication.

“Hi,” she said. “My name is Kelly. And before we start, I want you to know--we wouldn’t give you anything that WE thought might kill you.”

With that said she handed me what appeared to be several typed pages of material titled--THE MEDICATION GUIDE.

“I would think not,” I replied, shorting, while reading the first bold lettered sentence: Using PROCRIT can lead to death or other serious side effects.

WHOA! Before I got to serious side effects death had jumped out at me. Generally, people consider dead at the top of their serious side effects list. Glasses slipped down the bridge of my nose. Forehead wrinkled. Eyes squinted. And two questions come to mind. First: Does anybody have a blue pen? Second: Is a morbid hook line in the best interest of stressed patients, of which 90% are already suffering from anxiety and hypertension?

An encouraging hook could instill optimism and still arouse interest, something like: “The use of this drug has extended lives under the proper circumstances,”or to use levity, “Procrit is prescribed with the patient’s best interest, and if it don’t kill you (excluding serious side effects) it could cure you.”

No positive results are listed or confessed to in the guide. Reading on, I discovered that the medication could not improve symptoms of anemia in cancer patients and should be stopped after chemotherapy. That didn’t apply, so my inner-editor fast forwarded, homing in on chronic kidney patients--that’s me!

Finally, good news; Procrit raises red blood cell count and stimulates bone marrow, raising your hemoglobin level. But alas, DEATH is the target’s bull’s-eye once again. “If it stimulates red blood cells too fast or raises hemoglobin too high, serious health complications will result in (and or) death.”

Page two lists less serious (the usual) side effects, after which, it is strongly suggested you call your caregiver if you suffer from any of the aforementioned side effects.

I guess patients should rely on someone else to call in the case of death. If I had had a blue pen; I’d scribble a note in the margin: ‘dead people don’t call’.

The third page is all about “How should I take PROCRIT?” This fairly covers the question in 200 words before bleeding into another rendition of serious side effects--more serious than the usual, yet less serious than death. These range from blood clotting to vessel blockage resulting in leg cramps to heart attack and including stroke while implying none of these needs actually induce death.

This apparently leads them to conclude: “PROCRIT may not be right for you.”

More side effects on next page
Word count could be shortened significantly by just noting the drug should not be taken unless prescribed by a mentally sound doctor who really likes you and has your best interest at heart.

This brings us to the last page, where the syntax covers proper storage of the product, warning us to keep it away from children. Editor mentally blue penned OK in the corner. A more informative website was listed, which was also alright. The one active ingredient was listed along with the inactive ingredients. This was as is required by law, so the imaginary blue pen scribbled Good. After that, a stand alone sentence stated that the patient was reading a revised copy of the 2008 GUIDE.

How much worse could the first draft have been?

Just before the manufacturer and distributor’s names and addresses at the bottom of the page, there is one refreshing sentence for patients to cling to. It is nothing less than a statement of approval by the Food and Drug Administration, except, FDA doesn’t specifically indorse the product. They approved the medication guide. “THIS MEDICATION GUIDE HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE US FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION.”

“Nephrologists, Government Bureaucrats and Manufacturers Conspire to Cover Their Proktos!?? (Proktos being another Greek word borrowed by the medical profession, as in the term Proctology.)

For those interested, writers may want to check with hospitals and send your résumés to all the different types of ology clinics.

Bless you and yours

Paw Joe

CAPTION CONTEST
KOOKS CONVERGE

Bonny Conway’s limerick takes top prize
Doctors can’t figure me out
No arthritis, deafness or gout
I’m one hundred years
I’ve lost all my peers
My genes are loaded with clout

Jodi Diderrich’s twist takes second:
Hey Britney! Grandma better not see you lighting up on her birthday cake.

Perry Stone’s practical approach captures third:
A Camel got her here.

Honorable mention goes to James Kimnach for:
"My secret to a long life--smoke 'em if you've got em"

Pico Iyer said:

"The less conscious one is of being 'a writer,' the better the writing. And though reading is the best school of writing, school is the worst place for reading. Writing should ... be as spontaneous and urgent as a letter to a lover, or a message to a friend who has just lost a parent ... and writing is, in the end, that oddest of anomalies: an intimate letter to a stranger."
Once upon a time the bookshelves in our house were neat and tidy. As the years have passed books get piled everywhere. Each of us keeps a little pile next to our beds for nighttime reading and, of course, there’s a few on the coffee table and on our desks. Cookbooks have their own special department in the kitchen.

They’ve invented a device that will store all your books electronically, 3,500 of them, in a contraption the size of a notepad. No more crammed bookshelves, no more lugging vacation bags weighing more than one of my children because of all the books I’ve packed inside.

Like any good housewife, I should be happy for a solution to my book mess, right? Wrong. It just seems so wrong.

I like the way the book feels in my hand, the weight of it, the colors on the cover, the smooth curve of the page, the smell of a new book. I take great pleasure in handing off a good book to a friend or imagining who read the used book before it came into my possession.

I’ve been reading to my children since they were born. On my parental list of most important things to teach my children, instilling in them a love of books and learning falls just below teaching them about Jesus, the importance of being kind to others, and working hard. Thanks to good teachers and some miracle of brain wiring, so far my strategy seems to be working.

There was nothing better than cuddling on the couch with my children and a pile of picture books. These experiences have nothing to do with some electronic device the size of a notepad. I’ll just buy more bookshelves, thank you very much.

My family has heard this rant plenty of times since the beginning of the e-book movement, usually punctuated by this closing comment, “I’ll be the last one to buy one of those things.” So you can imagine my surprise when my husband suggested that we get a Kindle for my son’s recent 14th birthday.

For him books are fuel for the mind, just as food is fuel for the body, necessary to keep us going. For me food is so much more than fuel, a way to show my family that I love them, and a meal is a place to share your day, your dreams, make connections. For me, books are as much about fueling the heart as they are about fueling the mind.

Secretly, I’ve always hoped my children would take after me in this department. They got their athletic ability from him; they can get this one thing from me.

In today’s techno-centric world much of my parenting job has to do with monitoring and limiting screen time. Read a book if you’re bored, go outside and play, make something, play a game; there are so many choices that don’t include sitting in front of a screen like a zombie.

I needed some convincing about that Kindle, and my husband made a good case. Smart man that he is, he emphasized our son’s love of reading, the lower cost of e-books, and the portability factor. I surrendered with a heavy sigh and ordered the cheapest model available.

The birthday celebration finally arrived. The big gift elicited the desired great delight. He was surprised and loved it, what more could a parent hope for? That night we let him pick out a cover to protect it. Now he walks around like some pint sized business man on his way to a meeting, his mini-portfolio in hand. I often find him on the couch reading, not that this is new, but now he’s reading his Kindle. He takes it everywhere, except to school and the gym. Last week I discovered some free game downloads. One is a word game that’s a bit like Scrabble called Extra Words. This has our whole family playing with words in a way that would thrill (and challenge) any mother.

Perhaps the Kindle isn’t the end of literary culture as we know it. I still don’t want a Kindle of my own and won’t be getting rid of our bookshelves any time soon, but, I’m willing to concede that my husband got it right about this gift.

Conclusion next page
At breakfast the other morning my children were talking about the new addition to the family. My son had finished the sports page and was reading his Kindle. My eleven year old daughter screwed up her face with a hint of jealously and disdain. “I just don’t like that Kindle,” she said. “I like to touch the paper and feel the book while I’m reading.” (Hmmm, wherever could she have gotten that idea?). My son looked up from his little screen, “I don’t care about paper,” he said. “I just care about the words.”

God bless him. Maybe I have done something right in the parenting department after all.

Coach’s L.O.G.*

Mixed up adolescent, reluctant detective, and man with perfect memory offer great stories

*Largely-overlooked Gems

Searching for Eldorado: A 1959 Fictional Memoir

E. P. Ned Burke

E. P. Burke Publishing Company

Seventeen-year-old Jerry Killian is messed up enough-- blaming himself for killing his senile grandmother certainly doesn’t help-- but things go from mixed-up to life-threatening when Jerry loses his teen-angel and the ability to speak clearly.

Burke publishes two of my favorite zines, The Perspiring Writer and Yesterday’s Magazette, and a prolific novelist. He lives in Florida with his wife, Carrilee. Check him out at www.authornedburke.com.

Lawnmower Blues

Rex Anderson

Five Star, Waterville, Maine, 2005

Tony Aapt doesn’t really want to be a P.I. He inherited the vocation-- along with a lot of I.O.U.’s and some great stories-- from his grandfather. He’s scratching out a living performing “domestic reconnaissance” (catching cheating spouses in the act) when a too-good-to-be-true case drops into his lap. Maggie Hawk wants to pay him-- a lot-- to find out who killed her husband.

Trouble is, her husband died 33 years before of what everybody figured was a suicide.

After plenty of compelling twists and turns and a gallery of strange folk, Anderson delivers a surprising and satisfying conclusion.

Anderson grew up on a farm near Ponca City, Oklahoma and now lives in Houston, the setting for his mysteries.

R-ZERO

David Mathias

AuthorHouse, 2010

Will Martin has hyperthymesia-- the ability to remember virtually everything that has ever happened to him-- and eidetic or photographic memory. You’d think gifts like these would make him happy and rich, but instead he winds up living on the streets of Madison.

The very thing he most seeks to avoid-- becoming the subject of probing and testing-- is exactly what befalls him, as he falls victim to a drug that can selectively erase memories.

There’s enough intrigue, action, and romance to keep the pages turning from there, as Martin proves to have another great gift, the art of the great escape.

Author Mathias is also a musician, artist, engineer, inventor, and -- the day job-- sign painter. From his home in Lake Mills, Wisconsin, he publishes FOAM, a satirical newspaper. Check him out at www.davidmathias.org.
These are the books that really matter to us

Last month I asked you to send in your list of 12 essential books, the ones you really would never want to live without. You responded with a world’s worth of good reading.

Rex Owens

Huckleberry Finn - Mark Twain
Recapitulation - Wallace Stegner
Plain Song - Kent Haruf
The Martian Chronicles - Ray Bradbury
Siddhartha - Hermann Hesse
Sea Glass - Anita Shreve
Of Mice & Men - John Steinbeck
Angela's Ashes - Frank McCourt
Empire Falls - Richard Russo
House of Splendid Isolation - Edna O'Brien
The Things They Carried - Tim O'Brien
A Tale of Two Cities - Charles Dickens
(And I thought I was the only one unimpressed by The Great Gatsby...!)

Carol Hornung

1) Harper Lee - To Kill a Mockingbird
2) Rudyard Kipling - The Jungle Books
3) Complete works of William Shakespeare
4) Jack London - Call of the Wild
5) Mark Twain - The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
6) JK Rowling - The Harry Potter series (ok, if I had to pick just one, Prisoner of Azkaban)
7) Dennis Lehane - A Drink Before the War
9) Stephen King - Misery
10) Alexandre Dumas - The Three Musketeers
11) Laura Ingles Wilder - Little House series (ok, By the Banks of Plum Creek)
12) Harlan Ellison - A Boy and His Dog
I did these off the top of my head, before looking at your list, but I am pleased to see we share a few!

Sharon Young

THE BIBLE
LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE SERIES - by Laura Ingalls Wilder
NANCY DREW MYSTERY SERIES - by Carolyn Keene

IF YOU WANT TO WRITE--A BOOK ABOUT ART, INDEPENDENCE AND SPIRIT - by Brenda Ueland
CUTTING FOR STONE - by Abraham Verghese
THE BOOK THIEF - by Markus Zusak
DRIFTLESS - by David Rhodes
SARAH'S KEY - by Tatiana De Rosnay
THE KITE RUNNER - by Khaled Hosseini
THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE - by C. S. Lewis
MY READING LIFE - by Pat Conroy
BEACH MUSIC - by Pat Conroy

Randi Lynn Mrvos

The Sound and the Fury William Faulkner
A Tale of Two Cities Charles Dickens
Les Misérables Victor Hugo
East of Eden John Steinbeck
The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao Junot Diaz
Middlesex Jeffrey Eugenides
The Shipping News Annie Proulx
Life of Pi Yann Martel
One Hundred Years of Solitude Gabriel Garcia Marquez
The Hours Michael Cunningham
Out of the Dust Karen Hesse
Because of Winn Dixie Kate Dicamillo

Peter Gilmour

One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
The Alexandria Quartet by Lawrence Durrell [Justine, Balthazar, Mountolive, Clea] (OK, its four novels in one volume, but Coach will cut me some slack here, I am sure)
Moby Dick by Herman Melville
The World According to Garp by John Irving
Let Us Now Praise Famous Men by James Agee
Look Homeward Angel by Thomas Wolfe
Beloved by Toni Morrison
The Death Ship by B. Traven
Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman
The Mahabharata (Indian epic which contains the Bhagavad Gita)
The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson
The Complete Works of William Shakespeare
Listening to *The Shadow* can be dangerous!
The article you wrote about the radio was great. I remember *The Shadow* and the Creaking Door, (still hear that creaking!!) Once we had a babysitter so my mom and dad could go to the show-- they loved the movies-- and our babysitter said we could listen to *The Shadow* if we stayed in bed with the door closed! Come to find out she had her boyfriend in and he stole our collection of silver dollars! The babysitter took my mom's new pink cardigan set. We had little enough, but my mom decided they must be worse off than us and did nothing.

Loved about Henry Fonda! Here is something funny! My mother named us five girls after movie stars! We were doubly named, first name and middle name, each a different movie star. Sister number one was Fonda (Henry Fonda) June (June Allyson) and down the line it went!

Then your talk of a100 books triggered a poem in me! So each thing I read this time meshed with my life.

I thought of a new word for Ed Resner, how when bored he keeps opening and looking in the fridge! How about “**Regorge-arator**”!

Marsh, I just wonder if you might like this poem, so I may as well send it!! Your talk of 100 classics inspired it!

**Bonny Conway**

**THE MEMORY OF BOOKS**

Call me strange. I was raised by the books.
Cut my teeth on Aesop's Fables.
My favorite brothers were the Grimms.

I wanted to marry the Owl,
sail away in his pea-green boat
eat quince with a runcible spoon.

Craved rampion the old witch grew,
ordered seeds from a catalog.
Severed ties with Jack's Beanstalk Giant.

Studded muscat raisins with cloves
to make turtles for a sugar cake
for the Girl of the Limberlost.

I followed Teale through the seasons,
learned the USA is a Pulitzer Prize.
Lost my childhood in The Yearling.

Captain Queeg screams from the pages
about those missing strawberries.
Stephen Kings are in the garage sale.

Lady Chatterley's Lover is
no longer under the mattress
and all my fences are whitewashed.

I become a time traveller
visit my past in a few hours
while dusting books on the book shelves.

My heart is filled with coal dust as
I go down the mines with Pit Pony
and my soul is sanctioned off to
the Bible I shalt not kindle.

*Bonny's full name is Bonita (Bonita Granville) Faye (Alice Faye) Conway. She has a sister named Mickey (Mickey Rooney) Yvone (Yvonne DeCarlo). “She spells hers Miki now, instead of like the mouse,” Bonny reports.*

Hey, Coach,
Hope you're wintering well. Just read and enjoyed EI 17. For a new word, how about "**refrigerrestless**"?
Take care,

**Larry Tobin**

Marsh: I have a word describing that restless feeling a person gets which causes one to repeatedly look in the refrigerator when bored.
It’s called “**refrigaborealis.**”
Blessings, **Sylvia Bright-Green**

Obviously, it's **Fridgitosis**, also spelled **Frigitosis**.
Best regards,

**Richard Davidson**


**Rex A. Owens**
Coach’s journal jottings

My Mom’s stubbies

By Marshall J. Cook, editor-in-coach

Pop had the finest handwriting I ever saw, at least for a man, but he wasn’t much for words.

He kept a log, in which he recorded every fish he ever caught (along with baits and the weather). And when I went off to college, he wrote me a letter every Sunday. His words, written in green ink from his old fountain pen, were mostly the same from week to week, but it was somehow assuring to read them each week.

He also got a letter to the editor published in Sports Illustrated, a feat never duplicated by his son the alleged writer, an appreciation of Spike Webb, his boxing coach at the Naval Academy.

He wrote me his Sunday letters almost to the day he died, and oh, how I miss them now.

From my daddy I got my love of sports and the outdoors. (Unfortunately, I didn’t get his athletic build, skill, and guts, but I did get his workout ethic.) But I got my love of words from Mom.

Every morning she’d wrestle words into the empty spaces of the Los Angeles Times crossword puzzle, and she was my dictionary when I was doing my homework.

“Mom! How do you spell ‘embarrassment’?” I’d call out from my room down the hall.

“Correctly,” she’d call back from her perch on the stool in the kitchen. She used a section of drain board for her “desk,” and it was always awash with magazines, recipes torn out of magazines, notes on scraps of paper, her battered old dictionary, which she about used to death, and rough drafts of letters to my older brother and, later, the narrative to accompany one of her endless slide shows.

“Mom!”

She always relented, and I never checked her against the dictionary. She was always right.

“Mom! What does ‘dichotomy’ mean?”

“Look it up.”

“Please, Mom. This is due tomorrow.”

And she’d tell me, unlocking the wonders of ‘dichotomy’ and ‘euphemism,’ ‘egregious’ and ‘demagogue,’ ‘emancipate’ and ‘impediment.’

When I asked what ‘obdurate’ meant, she said, “Look in a mirror.”

I got from her the love of words she had no doubt inherited from her father, the writer William Gilmore Beymer, and something even more subtle and precious to me as a writer, the notion that you wrote a rough draft first, so that you could, as Hemingway said, “get the words right.”

She wrote her drafts in her pinched script, the letters slanting left. She was ambidextrous, something else I inherited from her, and she always wrote lefty, perhaps in defiance of the world’s stricture against such maladroit (yet another word I learned from her, no doubt) behavior.

She wrote her drafts in pencil-- little stubs of pencils, really, with those fat erasers stuck on the end, the ones that look like a bishop’s beanie (‘miter’-- I looked it up) only made out of rubber.

She’d litter the drainboard with those stubbies, which were never longer than two inches and sometimes so short I wasn’t sure how she could get her hand-- which was already curling into a claw from her arthritis-- around them. (“Arthur,” we called it, another genetic gift from her to me).

Now here’s the mystery.

I never saw a new pencil! I never saw a medium length one! All she ever seemed to use were the stubbies with the bishops’ miters on the end!

It was as if Tilberry’s Five and Dime down at the Corners sold stubbies by the case (we’d call them “pre-owned” now, right?), and she went to the stubby store to pick up a new batch when her supply ran low.

I understand the love of words and the addiction to crosswords. I totally get that, got it from her. But where did all those stubbies come from, and how come she never had a new pencil?

Maybe when we meet up in heaven, I’ll be able to ask her.

I rather suspect, though, that should that happy day come, the answer, like all the other answers I sometimes feel such a strong need to find, won’t really matter anymore.