How Writers Learn to Write

On to the next dream: escaping to Cape May

Some days Lisa Krenz doesn’t feel much like a real writer.

“The writer inside is just wandering the Netherlands of my head,” she says, “banging on my brain and yelling ‘let me out! How come you’re ignoring me? Don’t you love me anymore?’

Urging her to dump “all those other people and obligations,” the wandering muse threatens, “‘Fine, ignore me, but when you sit down to write, I’ll ignore you.’”

But Lisa can’t ignore those ‘other people,’ prime among them husband Stephen, daughter Anna, and son Joel, or her job teaching future regular and special ed teachers at Kasksakia College in southern Illinois, or her responsibilities as a pastor’s wife.

Still, she has made time to write one novel, 80 Days in Cape May, which she’s shopping to agents, and to start on another.

Getting feedback via email from a writer friend helps keep her going, she says. “Having someone who actually believes me to be a writer builds me up more than you can imagine,” she says.

But the characters in her stories provide even stronger motivation. “I love Agnes,” protagonist of the first novel, she says. “She and all the other characters were living inside me and swirling around in my head. I had no choice but to write. Her story had been living in me for years, probably longer than I even realized. I wouldn’t be finished until I wrote it.”

She based that first novel on the untold story of the meeting and romance of her paternal grandmother and grandfather.

Moving from the relatively large city of Jefferson City to tiny Hoffman (pop. 500) made writing even more difficult. “My life at that time was very much about everyone else,” she says. “My children were three and five. My identity was completely wrapped up in my husband and children.”

For years she’d told herself “I’ll write that book about Agnes someday.” When her youngest child, Anna, started preschool, she found herself with a couple of hours to herself “most weeks,” and that’s when the research started. She even took a trip with her father to Cape May and Congress Hall, where the real-life courtship took place.

She still hadn’t told more than a couple of people about the planned novel. It was another year before she got a real start and took an online fiction writing class from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Continuing Education.

By then it was a third motivation that sustained her, not feedback, not just the characters themselves.

“I wrote for me,” she explains. “It was my secret escape to a place I’d rather be on some days than here. Cape May in 1931 was a place to go when the skies were gray and my ordinary life was overwhelming me. It was mine, being a writer was a part of me that was separate from husband, kids, and classroom.

I was pursuing my dream, not in a big TV-triumphant sort of way, just doing it, one word at a time, alone in my office, sometimes with the kids in and out trying to talk to me, sometimes while supper cooked in the oven, sometimes under an umbrella at the pool with my laptop while the kids swam, or in the car while they were at soccer practice, sometimes late at night after they went to bed, usually when they were at school and I had an hour or so before I had to get to the college. But I kept writing because it was mine, I had no choice.

“If I hadn’t written that novel,” she says, “I’d have been depressed and frustrated and angry that I couldn’t pursue my dream.”

She didn’t feel as if she had a whole lot of choice about starting the second novel, either.
Cape May
(continued)
“This character came to me, and I feel
responsible for telling her story,” she says. “She’d
been sort of knocking at the door while I was
writing the first novel, but I kept telling her to
wait until I was done with writing Agnes's story.”
The setting comes from a decade of childhood
summers on the farm, and a big part of the story
has to do with quilts, something she feels
passionately about.
“Again, I’m growing to love these new
characters, who have replaced Agnes and her
friends as they now wander around in my head.”
She says it takes a long time for her to ferment
a story. “Writing it down is much more socially
acceptable” than chatting about your ‘imaginary
friends’ with others, she says, “and then I have it
in a more permanent form and someday maybe
someone might actually read it--big maybe.”
Lisa has always loved to read. “I love to go
somewhere and meet people in a book I can’t in
my real life,” she says, and now she’s seizing on
the dream of giving that joy to others.
“When I was young I dreamed of being a
teacher, a wife, a mother, and I am all those
things,” she says. “Now it’s on to the next dream.”

"I've never thought about
myself in terms of a career.
... I don't have a career,
I have a typewriter."
Don DeLillo

Marginal Madness
Sent along by Perry Stone
The economy is so bad, that I got a pre-
denied credit card in the mail.
The economy is so bad, that when I
ordered a burger at McDonald's and the
kid behind the counter asked, "Can you
afford fries with that?"
The economy is so bad, that CEO's are
now playing miniature golf.
The economy is so bad, if the bank returns
your check marked "Insufficient Funds,"
you call them and ask if they meant you or
them.
The economy is so bad, Hot Wheels and
Matchbox stocks are trading higher than
GM.
The economy is so bad, parents in Beverly
Hills have fired their nannies and learned
their children's names.
The economy is so bad, a truckload of
Americans were caught sneaking into
Mexico.
The economy is so bad, Dick Cheney took
his stockbroker hunting.
The economy is so bad, people in Africa are
donating money to Americans.
The economy is so bad, Motel Six won't
leave the light on anymore.
AND FINALLY:
The economy is so bad, Exxon-Mobil laid
off 25 Congressmen
The Accessibility of Shakespeare

By Carrie. T. Gruman-Trinkner

His name is feared, spoken with awe, avoided with trembling. He is...Shakespeare.

The Bard of Avon, the Poet, the Playwright of the Ages. William Shakespeare, the son of a glover, who traveled England, settled in London, opened a theatre, possibly arranged a murder, became a player for royalty, and gave the English language many of its most common phraseology.

And yet, we feared him in our high school days. Of course, we knew he was going to be the making or breaking of our English Literature grades. We struggled to wrap our teenage minds around his words, his lilting iambic pentameter. We knew he had written some of the most famous lines ever:

“To be or not to be...” Hamlet’s famous suicide question.

“Get thee to a nunnery...” meaning Ophelia should go to a whorehouse.

“Double Double Toil and Trouble” from the creepy witches

“Romeo, Romeo, Wherefore art thou Romeo?”
Not where are you, but why?

But did you know that some of the phrases you may utter in everyday speech belonged first to the quill of the Bard of Avon? A brief listing:

“Love is blind” --*The Merchant of Venice*

“In a pickle” --*The Tempest*

“It was Greek to me” --*Julius Caesar*

“All that glitters is not gold” --*The Merchant of Venice*

“Break the ice” --*The Taming of the Shrew*

“Set my teeth on edge” --*Henry IV*

“Laughing Stock” --*The Merry Wives of Windsor*

“Heart of Gold” --*Henry V*

“Jealousy is the green-eyed monster” --*Othello*

“Refuse to budge an inch” --*Measure for Measure*

And my personal favorite: “Knock, Knock! Who’s There?” from *Macbeth*

It is believed that Shakespeare coined over 1700 words, most of them still in use. In fact, you use many of them:

Assassination (*Macbeth*--derived from Hashish Eater)

Bedroom (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*)

Critical (*Othello*, and *Midsummer*)

Eyeball (*The Tempest*)

Fanged (*Hamlet*)

Half-blooded (*King Lear*)

Inaudible (*All’s Well That Ends Well*)

Malignancy (*Twelfth Night*)

Perusal (several sonnets)

Puking (*As You Like It*)

Quarrelsome (*As You Like It* and *The Taming of the Shrew*)

Sanctimonious (*Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest*)

Savagery (*King John*)

Scuffle (*Antony and Cleopatra*)

Silliness (*Othello*)

Stealthy (*Macbeth*)

Varied (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*)

Watchdog (*Macbeth*)

And hundreds of others including “lonely,” “to torture,” “savage,” “useful,” “zany,” “remorseless,” and “radiance.”

Is this an unapproachable language? Is this man who used the most basic of intrigues as his plots inaccessible?

Consider his audience. At the Rose and the Globe in Bankside, London, the actors and audiences were forced out of the city limits because the art of theatre was as unseemly as the bear-baiting that went on next door. The groundlings paid their penny to stand in the yard, talking and eating as the play progressed. Men and women relieved themselves in the sawdust where they stood. They were as likely to throw the vegetables as they were to consume them.

Consider the content. The jokes tended on the bawdy side. They seem lofty and beauteous to us now, wrapped in the language and rhythm of the times. But back then they were as dirty as some of the emails circulating through cyberspace.

Murders happened to further political gain. Kings were crowned, wives were stolen, families were torn apart, people went mad. Sounds like the plots of today’s thrillers and horror films.

Shakespeare’s plots, cut to the bone, have been recycled for centuries on the stage, on television and in film.

Pick up a “No Fear Shakespeare” edition of any play and read through the plot. Read a summary on Pink Monkey or Spark Notes. The stories are in turn intriguing and hilarious.

Next time, we’ll dissect one of the most famous of the Bard’s works: *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.*
Distance learning for writers: from Rilke to your rec room

Writing is, by nature, a solitary activity. Yet to become better writers, most of us want more than just endless hours of solitary practice. We also want some form of communion with other writers: classes, workshops, conferences, writers’ groups, mentoring, etc.

Writers have long mentored other writers, and read and responded to each other’s work, through the medium we now call snail mail. Some of the best of this epistolatory mentoring has been published in book form (for example, Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet*, first published in 1929).

In the 1960s the Famous Writers School honed this to a near-science, teaching creative writing and business writing by correspondence. Students were given assignments by mail; they mailed their completed assignments to instructors; and the instructors wrote back with comments. Today the Famous Writers School still survives in a much humbler form.

Over the past decade or so, the correspondence class morphed—though not that much—into the online writing classes offered by Gotham Writers’ Workshop and many colleges and universities. This model simply replaces snail mail with email, though it also typically enables students to post public comments on a class bulletin board and to communicate on a live chat screen during scheduled times.

Now there’s a new form of distance learning.

It’s offered by *Extra Innings* (and *Creativity Connection*) aficionado Scott Edelstein, who taught for many years at the University of Wisconsin’s Writers’ Institute. Scott is widely published writer and ghostwriter, a literary agent, a writing consultant, a former columnist for *Writer’s Digest*, and the author of many books on writing, including *The Complete Writer’s Kit and 100 Things Every Writer Needs to Know*.

Through his website, helpingwriters.com, Scott now offers live writing classes and workshops online. Simply type in an access code and you’ll enter a real-time virtual classroom. The left side of your screen will have a live video feed of Scott; the right side will have a chat room for asking real-time questions.

This arrangement provides much of the same face-to-face contact, and some of the same real-time interaction normally found in in-person classes. (You can also ask questions after any session by calling a Q&A phone line or via email.)

If you prefer, you can attend these offerings by phone. Dial a toll-free number and you’ll get a live audio feed of Scott’s classes or workshops. This enables you to take part in a session even when you don’t have computer access—while you’re traveling, walking, lying in bed, etc. Either way, you can participate in Scott’s live classes and workshops without leaving your living room, or your hammock on a Florida beach—and while wearing your pajamas, or your swimsuit, or (if you’re at home) nothing at all.

“The whole idea,” says Scott, “is to bring writers information, guidance, and inspiration no matter where they are. It doesn’t matter if it’s 30 below outside, or if you’re sitting in an airport lounge, waiting for your connecting flight. As long as you have a computer or phone, the instruction comes directly to you.”

Scott’s classes and workshops include *100 Things Every Writer Needs to Know, Selling and Publishing Your Book, Money Matters for Writers, The Truth About Literary Agents, Little-Known Sources of Writing Income, Taxes for Writers*, and *30 Steps to Becoming a Writer*.

For more details on any of these offerings, go to Scott’s website, helpingwriters.com, which also has lots of free articles, interviews, and other good things for writers. (You can even throw a pie in an editor’s face—virtually, of course.)

Scott invites all *Extra Innings* readers to visit and commune with him in cyberspace.

A clear example of societal prejudice

gaucherie \(\text{\textgoh-shuh-REE}\), noun:

1. A socially awkward or tactless act. 2. Lack of tact; boorishness; awkwardness.

from the French, from gauche, “left-handed; awkward.” See also “sinister,” “left-handed compliment”
An Old Farmer's Advice:
* Your fences need to be horse-high, pig-tight and bull-strong.*
* Keep skunks and bankers at a distance.*
* Life is simpler when you plow around the stump.*
* A bumble bee is considerably faster than a John Deere tractor.*
* Words that soak into your ears are whispered...not yelled.*
* Meanness don't jes' happen overnight.*
* Forgive your enemies. It messes up their heads.*
* Do not corner something that you know is meaner than you.*
* It don't take a very big person to carry a grudge.*
* You cannot unsay a cruel word.*
* Every path has a few puddles.*
* When you wallow with pigs, expect to get dirty.*
* The best sermons are lived, not preached.*
(Can I hear an Amen, clh)
* Most of the stuff people worry about ain't never gonna happen anyway.*
* Don't judge folks by their relatives.*
* Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.*
* Live a good, honorable life. Then when you get older and think back, you'll enjoy it a second time.*
* Don't interfere with somethin' that ain't bothering you none.*
* Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a Rain dance.*
* If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop diggin'*. 

* Sometimes you get, and sometimes you get got.*
* The biggest troublemaker you'll probably ever have to deal with, watches you from the mirror every mornin'.*
* Always drink upstream from the herd.*
* Good judgment comes from experience, and a lotta that comes from bad judgment.*
* Lettin' the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier than puttin' it back in.*
* If you get to thinkin' you're a person of some influence, try orderin' somebody else's dog around.*
* Live simply. Love generously. Care deeply.*
* Don't pick a fight with an old man. If he is too old to fight, he'll just kill you.*
UW-Madison offers all kinds of help for writers—including free advice.

The folks on the writing team there are always happy to look at a one-page query letter for you or to answer your questions about writing and marketing your writing. Email them (names and address below) anytime. They also offer:

* Free updates. For those who want the early-bird announcements about their events, especially for the limited-enrollment items such as agent appointments at events, they recommend that you subscribe at their website to the FREE “Writing News.” That’s an email notice that goes out about three times a year. They don’t bug you—or share the list with anybody. But by signing up, you get “first dibs” on everything.

* Intermediate writing workshops, Mondays or Wednesdays (can join anytime if slots are open). “It’s intellectually, creatively, socially, emotionally, spiritually fun to be in Laurel Yourke’s writing workshop, according to Bob Humke, author of “Mad about Play” and participant for over 10 years. Enrollment limited. Contact Laurel directly at lyourke@dcs.wisc.edu.

* So You Want to Start That Novel, with Angela Rydell, Jan. 30, 12:30-4:00 p.m., Lowell Center, 610 Langdon St. With on-the-spot exercises, take your ideas for characters and a story and make them finally happen. $55.

* Writing a Successful Screenplay, March 6, with Christine DeSmet, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., at Pyle Center, 702 Langdon St. New screenwriters and novelists wishing to adapt a book get a quick overview of how to do it right and get attention from producers. $125 includes critique of 10 pages, novel or screenplay. cdesmet@dcs.wisc.edu.

* From Notebook to New Work: A Journaling Workshop, with Angela Rydell. Wednesdays, March 24 through April 7, 6:45-8:30 p.m., Lowell Center, 610 Langdon St. Recharge your writing, whether it be poetry, memoir, or other avenues. Exercises to keep the pen moving. $90. ajrydell@factsaff.wisc.edu.

* Take Your Scenes to the Next Level, with Laurel Yourke, April 10, 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m., Pyle Center, 702 Langdon St. Fiction and creative nonfiction thrive on good scene work. Zoom in on the secrets to good scenes. $55.


* Write-by-the-Lake Writer’s Workshop and Retreat, June 14-18, 2010, at Pyle Center, 702 Langdon St. Sections on all forms of writing: poetry, scripts, fiction, nonfiction; in-depth critiques all week long; advanced and beginner sections; optional 1-3 grad credits in English). New: full manuscript reading and critique of 100 pages, limited to 6 writers, with Gale Renee Walden. Christine DeSmet, coordinator, cdesmet@dcs.wisc.edu. $335.

* UW-Madison School of the Arts, in Rhinelander, Wis., July 26-30, 2010, offers writing workshops and other fun learning experiences in photography, dance, music, theater, computers, painting, and more. An education vacation in the North Woods.

* Online workshops. Enroll anytime, and there are no deadlines or hours you must log on. Online courses are done via email, one-on-one with the instructor, at your pace. Topics include fiction and nonfiction writing, poetry, dialogue/scene mastery, and screenwriting. See http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/online for details. They get results. Writers get published, option screenplays, and more. Success stories are announced at the website.

* Critique and coaching services. They critique and coach writers of novels (including Young Adult), screenplays, poetry, nonfiction essays, feature articles, and short stories. No children’s literature or picture books right now. Website carries news of the recent successes of writers using this service.

If you have a project, please email first with information about it and your needs. They recommend that you start out by sending only the first chapter or two (about 20 pages) of novels. Fees: Novels, short stories, articles—$4/double-spaced page (300 words in Times New Roman); screenplays—$3/page; poems—$10/poem. Email us to get on our schedule: Christine DeSmet, cdesmet@dcs.wisc.edu.

Visit the website at http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing

Or contact Christine DeSmet, University of Wisconsin-Madison, cdesmet@dcs.wisc.edu; 608-262-3447.
E.I. Feature Profile

And speaking of Chris...

Christine DeSmet’s latest collection of humorous romantic mystery stories set in Moonstone, Wisconsin, is a finalist in the anthology category of the national contest from the Electronically Published Internet Connection (EPIC).

Christine’s book is Men of Moonstone, a continuation of the stories in her first collection, Mischief in Moonstone, also a finalist in the same contest. Her books are also out in trade paperback from Whiskey Creek Press. The stories can stand alone but are related by the neighbors in Moonstone, on the shores of Lake Superior.

Christine also earned an Honorable Mention for a screenplay in the recent Wisconsin Screenwriters Forum contest. One of her online students in screenwriting, JoAnn Mills, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, is among the five finalists.

Christine has won the Slamdance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, and ranked in the top ten percent two years ago at the Austin Film Festival. Her first stage play made it to the top ten of the Wisconsin Wrights Contest in 2007. She and her writing partner also won a trip to the Warner Bros. Sitcom Writing Workshop based on an original TV pilot they wrote.

Her novels have won the Golden Heart award and the Golden Pen award from Romance Writers of America, and was a finalist another time.

What became of all the contest finals and wins? More work! She optioned a screenplay to New Line, sold a novel and more short stories, and the stage play is under consideration at a California theater company. She has an editor and a producer interested in two other projects (novel and script), which require “page one” rewrites for them.

Contests catapulted her career into teaching and coaching, too, which she loves. She honed her craft and racked up a lot of writing and editing experience that she passes along to her students in her online screenwriting class and to novelists she critiques or who attend “Write Your First Novel Fast and Sure,” a section open to anybody at the June “Write-by-the-Lake Workshop & Retreat” in Madison. The next edition is June 14-18, 2010. Space is limited.

Novelists such as Kathy Steffen and Lori Devoti have been in her classes. They went on to publish and are now back as instructors, too, at the Write-by-the-Lake Retreat. This is called “pay it forward.” Christine’s hoping some of Extra Inning’s readers will be next up at the retreat, then go home to work on getting published and then returning to teach other writers.

Christine is introducing a version of her retreat class online for new novelists who want to write “fast and sure.” It’s also designed for those who’ve suffered too many rejections and could use a coach to get back on track. She hopes to have it ready by February 1. If you’re on the UW-Madison writing area email list, you’ll get a notice of the new class, or you can get on the list by emailing cdesmet@des.wisc.edu.

Coach’s Bullpen Briefs

More good news from members of the family

Amy Free has become editor of Wisconsin House Rabbit Newsletter. (OF COURSE there’s a newsletter about house rabbits-- and with Amy at the wheel, it’ll be worth reading even if you don’t have a rabbit.)

She also reports that her bunny, Nestle, will -- I’ll let her put it delicately -- “will be a bachelor for the foreseeable future,” two more ‘dates’ having failed to click. Do we need eHarmony for rabbits?


The only wonder to me is that they paid him so fast! I’ve never doubted Eric’s writing.

PAGE 5 is back! Chris Halla’s wonderful poetry pub returns after a brief respite. (The previous issue, #12, appeared in the summer of 1998. “To say that PAGE 5 was published on an irregular basis would be an understatement,” Chris admits. He’ll publish more, he promises, “when the work is right.”

It’s certainly right in #13-- Gary Busha’s “The Ol’ Man,” several poems and sketches about fishing with his father as a kid. It’s beautiful stuff.

Chris prints on a single sheet of thick paper, folded twice, making it the only poetry chapbook you can open in the wind without a problem.

For writers who wish to contribute, Chris says there are no restrictions “other than that I have to like the work, and it has to fit the format.” If you want to get on the mailing list, just let him know: R. Chris Halla, PAGE 5, 1724 N. Whitney Dr. Appleton, WI 54914.
First Person Singular
A Christmas party memory
by Andrea Lozinsky Schoenthal
I was thirteen, in eighth grade at school 65 in the Riverside section of Buffalo. The day before Christmas vacation, the science teacher had promised we could have a party during our class time that afternoon.

Although my memories of the details are somewhat vague, I do remember getting dressed up that morning. I wore nylon stockings, black, low-heeled pumps, and a skirt and blouse usually reserved for Sunday best wear. I guess I may have been a bit overdressed. I didn’t care; I felt pretty.

As soon as the students entered the science classroom, we shoved our desks, with their attached chairs, out of their neat rows to form a circle around the center of the room -- to make space for dancing. The teacher provided the music. I do recall that he had declared he would never have any rock and roll music in his classroom. Other than that, I don’t know what songs the boys and girls were dancing to.

I sat at my desk and watched. Then I picked up my pen and a notebook and began to write. Using a bit of poetic license I described the scene of handsome boys wearing slacks and dress shirts and lovely girls in fancy skirts and blouses or sweaters slow dancing to the music.

“I am enjoying this so much,” I wrote, “I don’t even mind being a wallflower.”

The teacher noticed that I had been writing. So I let him take the notebook. As he read my short piece out loud to the class, my face reddened.

A short while later, one of the boys actually came over and asked me to dance! His name was Keith, he was tall and blond, and he lived down the street from me. Even had a crush on him, although I’m quite certain he didn’t know about that.

Keith led me to the center of the room. In spite of the fact I’d received some dance lessons in gym class, I wasn’t very sure of myself on the dance floor. Keith guided me as we danced a fox trot. Halfway through the dance, another boy stepped up. Thomas asked if he could cut in! Keith turned me over to Thomas and the dance continued.

For the first time in my life, I was dancing with a boy. And not just one boy, but two!

Later, as I looked back on that Christmas party, I wondered if the boys had been motivated to ask me to dance by my writing about being a wallflower. Did the two of them just happen to get the same idea? Or did they plan to have Thomas cut in to relieve Keith? Did the teacher have anything to do with this? I’ll never know for sure, of course. It doesn’t really matter. Keith and Thomas, whatever their motive, made a shy, bespectacled, slightly pump thirteen-year-old girl feel beautiful and desirable for the first time. That Christmas party turned out to be a wonderful rite of passage for me.

Highly Recommended
Coach finds new novel to treasure
It’s a universal story of love and the struggle to claim the authentic self. It’s a murder mystery: Who killed the old Navajo man and dumped his body in the desert, after first leaving behind a symbol of the crime for a Navajo attorney to try to decipher? It’s a thriller: Will a demented mama’s boy succeed in killing a presidential frontrunner, his family, and the small troop accompanying them on a publicity trip through the Grand Canyon?

Lilli Chischilly is one of his potential targets. She lives in two worlds, the Dine’e (Navajo) and the Bilagaana (White), where she has earned a law degree. When she’s commandeered to accompany the candidate on a raft on the Colorado River, author Jennifer Kitchell submerges us in Navajo culture, water rights, the history etched on the majestic walls of the canyon itself, and the human drama of identity and love.

Her debut novel, Girl with Skirt of Stars (Pronghorn Press, just published), offers all this -- human drama, mystery, thriller, and adventure -- and one thing more: a marvelous read.

Kitchell has a Ph.D. in geology and has taught paleontology at the UW-Madison and the University of Michigan. She grew up near the Canadian border but came “home” with her mother every summer to the desert Southwest, where her fascination and empathy with the Navajo culture bloomed.

Coach’s note: In the January issue, we’ll have an interview with Jennifer Kitchell. Don’t miss it.
The Old MacDonald Poll for December:
Extra Innings Educational Inventory
Obfuscation

Where do you write?
Do you do it in the bed?
Do you do it in your head?
Do you write while on the bus, trying not to make a fuss?
Do you scrawl in a coffee shop, while you swig your soda pop?
Do you have a special place, or can you write just any place?
Do you compose upon the throne?
Do you do it while quite stoned?
Well, probably not that last one, we being four decades removed from the 60s. But we all have our favorite places to write. What’s yours? Tell me, and I’ll tell everybody next issue. Email your in-site-ful revelations to mcook@dcs.wisc.edu

The Last Word
A most felicitous phrase
I always love reading Eric Frydenlund’s monthly column in the Wisconsin State Journal. He always has a great point to make, and along the way to making it, he’ll turn a phrase or three that delight in its simplicity and aptness.
In a recent column he describes finding if not heaven on earth at least the entrance to it while walking on a ridge overlooking the Mississippi River. It’s not quite the heaven in the movie “Field of Dreams,” he admits, with its “idyllic porch-jawed farm house straddling the perfectly manicured infield.”
You don’t have to have grown up on a farm in Iowa or even to have ever seen an Iowa farmhouse to get a picture from “porch-jawed.”