“You know, Stanley, I’ve finally figgered it out.”
“Well, that’s a start, I guess. Now, if I can just figure out what you figgered out.”
“Hair.”
“Hair?”
“Yup, hair.”
“Hare, as it rabbits, Norman, or hair, as in what used to be on the top of your head?”
“Head hair. It’s the key to life. Think on it, Stanley. Babes start out ‘thout much an they cain’t think overly well yet. They git older an they git more hair. They git smarter until they’re all growed up. That’s cause all that hair grows out and unclogs their brains, ya see.
“But when they gits to be our age people think we lose our hair. They think it all falls out. Well, I’ve decided that just ain’t so. It just grows back in! It stuffs up our brains an we don’t think as good as we used to. Folks our age git forgetful. Hair starts comin’ out our ears an we don’t hear too well no more. An it even starts growin’ out our nose. Makes you sneeze for no reason. Makes you snore a lot, too.”
“How long did it take you to figure all this out, Norman?”
“Oh, I been thinkin’ on it a spell.”
“Well, I think you ought to stop thinking so much. Now, will you just throw a couple of cards in the crib before my next Social Security check comes in the mail?”
“What’s the big hurry? You seein’ your proctologist again? Six.”
“Nine for fifteen-two. That still doesn’t explain why hair affects men and not women.”
“Sure does so. Women is smarter’n men. Women’s hair just doesn’t get in the way of brains when they get older like men’s does. Nine for twenty-five.”
“Six for thirty-one. One thing for sure, women will definitely like that idea. You’ve sure got some hair-brained ideas. But Esther can’t be that much smarter than you. Otherwise she wouldn’t have put up with you for 53 years.”
“How come you have to be so contrary all the time, you grouchy ol’ geezer? Fact is, Esther is brilliant. An’ she knows a real bargain when she sees one.”
“You’re right, there. She definitely got you at a bargain basement sale. A pair for two gives me just enough pegs to win…again!”
“Yeah, yeah, I know. Stop gloatin’ an’ deal a new round.”
“Maybe your card playing would do better if you’d quit thinking about hair so much, Norman. Personally, I suspect all that butch wax you’ve pasted on your crew cut over the years has more likely jellied your thought processes.”
So how do you explain women? They don’t generally go bald like men do?”
“I done thought about that one, too. You see, women’r a different branch of the species. Ain’t the same breed. Like the difference between chimpanzees and orangutans. Nine.”
“Six for fifteen-two. That still doesn’t explain why hair affects men and not women.”
“Sure does so. Women is smarter’n men. Women’s hair just doesn’t get in the way of brains when they get older like men’s does. Nine for twenty-five.”
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“Yeah, yeah, I know. Stop gloatin’ an’ deal a new round.”
“Maybe your card playing would do better if you’d quit thinking about hair so much, Norman. Personally, I suspect all that butch wax you’ve pasted on your crew cut over the years has more likely jellied your thought processes.”
Larry Tobin has been a weekly newspaper publisher for more than 30 years, winning an occasional state or national award for his editorials and feature stories. He is also author of the novel Pressing Matters (Fathers Press), with dreams of many more novels on his bucket list.
Advice for Writers

Patience pays-- but it’s hell

By Monette Bebow-Reinhard
Say you’ve got an article or novel being read by someone in the magazine or publishing world and it’s been months and you don’t know if they still have it or sent it back or burned it or are laughing themselves silly about it over martinis at one of those sushi bars-- so you decide to send one of those polite little letters to ask about its status because you’ve been told it’s an okay thing to do – I’ve just got one word of advice.

Don’t.

If you have given them the amount of time they said they needed and they haven’t gotten back to you, consider it a rejection and move on.

If you write that nice little “can you tell me the status of my submission I’m just curious because maybe it got lost in the mail” letter, you will within two weeks get a rejection. Happened to me every time. You’d think I’d learn my lesson. Uh-uh. Impatience is a writer’s worst enemy. Don’t give a publisher a reason to think you’ll be ‘difficult to work with.’

Do you know how many that editor has to read in a week? Me either. But I do know that there are writers out there who have learned their lesson long before me. And that editor would rather work with them.

Because they have patience.
I still remember vividly the first time I blew it. Finally, after years of trying, I got a major publisher to read my novel. They liked the query, liked the novel, sent it back and asked me to flesh out the characters. I added another 100 pages. I loved it! We were on our way!

Here’s impatience:
October 31st – sent the rewrite out.
November 28th – “hope this isn’t a mistake. Am sending out a follow-up to Lewellyn.” (See, already I had a clue, but couldn’t stop myself.)
December 7th – got the novel back. Form letter rejection.
Form letter rejection? After all that?

Sending a novel out to be read is like making out in the back of a VW Beetle. It’s cramped, can’t-we-hurry-up-and-get-this-over-with-in-a-good-way kind of feeling. If we could only just think and act like second-time novelists the first time, we’d be first time novelists by now.

Maybe.
Once I showed extreme patience and waited a year before sending a followup. They responded that they had no idea what happened to that novel, but if I wanted to, I could send it again. I did. They rejected it after a month. Oh yes, that was a lot better. Like inflating an old tired balloon and then running it over with a truck.

So I decided to think professional.
I got an agent and thought it would be a lot easier to wait. And it was in a way, because I wasn’t allowed to make the decision of whether or not to do a follow-up letter. And publishers reject more quickly to agents than to writers. But once she got all the rejections she could tolerate on one novel, I decided to query e-publishers, figuring they had a quicker turnaround time. Problem is, I wanted to send a follow-up quicker!

Ah, patience is hell.
I decided that, if they like it, they’ll let me know. And it worked! I’m now a published ebook author. Editors who like my work do let me know promptly. It’s only those who don’t – who don’t.

So publishers and editors, beware. I will give you six months – no, wait, four– no, three – oh, okay, six – before I feel free to send that novel or article to someone else. If you’d been interested, you’d have said something by now. Anything.

You wanna be a writer? Be a patient writer. Success is worth waiting for.

Writer Online published this article in 1997. See more on this queen of impatience, denial and rejection at www.bebow-reinhard.com. She’s published two great Bonanza novels (yes, based on the characters in the TV series--with the producer’s permission and cooperation.)
God didn’t give me perseverance for nothing: Carma Smidt

What did you write today? A page or two? Go back to what you wrote. Read it aloud, noting every key stroke you made.

This might give you an inkling of how Carma Smidt writes, using voice-activated software called DragonDictate. Due to Muscular Dystrophy, Carma’s limbs and head do not move at her will; someone must position them. If her arm falls to her side, someone must reposition it.

But she does not let her disability define her or stop her from attaining her goals. At age 30, she has a masters in creative writing and is a staff writer for the local paper in my hometown in Iowa, the Osceola County Gazette-Tribune.

Despite the hardships, she says, “God has blessed and continues to bless my life with countless opportunities. He has allowed me to achieve my college and graduate education; He has shown me His beautiful handiwork at the banks of the Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, and the Gulf of Mexico, not to mention Niagara Falls and tops of some mountains; He has provided me with a job that utilizes my education and talents; He has introduced me to a variety of people and cultures. My simple plea has exploded beyond my imagination!”

If the word perseverance comes to mind, read what Carma says about that on one of her blog entries:

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, perseverance is “the fact, process, condition, or quality of persevering.” …[P]ersevering is defined as a “constant persistence in a course of action, purpose, or state; steadfast pursuit of an aim; tenacious assiduity or endeavor.” …

[A]ll these definitions can be simply summarized in the concept of “keep moving on no matter what.” …

[P]erseverance gets results. Perseverance has always been an important ingredient in my life. At times, I like to imagine God writing down my recipe while He was creating me; 2 drops of patience; 1 drop of knowledge; 1 drop of kindness; ½ drop of cheerfulness; 1 drop of love; and ½ jar of perseverance. Add the breath of life. I realize my imagination is not an accurate portrayal of my creation, but I do believe God has blessed me with extra ounces of perseverance, especially since He is the author of my life and knew what my days would entail before even one hour had been recorded.

He knew perseverance would be needed in the countless long hospitalizations; He knew perseverance would be required to achieve education; He knew perseverance would be in high demand by my physical limitations. But He also knew that He was going to use my perseverance for a greater plan.

Although perseverance has played a significant role in my life, perseverance doesn’t constitute the successes of my life—not my education, not my career, and not even my disposition. No, my success is found solely in God’s gifts to me. I believe He gave me extra perseverance in order to use my limitations for His glory.

Oh, there are days when my limitations scream “don’t even try… you can’t do it.” But then my heart yells “how can you ignore your makeup… surely God didn’t give you extra perseverance for storage… use it for Him.” So… I keep moving… and will continue to do so with God’s help.

… [W]ithout God, my perseverance may have provided me with a few successes, but, with God, my perseverance is unconquerable… and has given me a lifetime of blessings.

I couldn’t have asked for a better recipe!

As writers, we couldn’t ask for better inspiration. Read more from Carma at http://carmascorner.blogspot.com.
AN ODE TO ENGLISH PLURALS AND ELSE.

We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes,
But the plural of ox becomes oxen, not oxes.
One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese,
Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.
You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice,
Yet the plural of house is houses, not hice.
If the plural of man is always called men,
Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?
If I speak of my foot and show you my feet,
And I give you a boot, would a pair be called beat?
If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,
Why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?

Then one may be that, and three would be those,
Yet hat in the plural would never be hose,
And the plural of cat is cats, not cose.
We speak of a brother and also of brethren,
But though we say mother, we never say methren.
Then the masculine pronouns are he, his and him,
But imagine the feminine: she, shis and shim!

Let's face it - English is a crazy language.
There is no egg in eggplant nor ham in hamburger;
Neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
English muffins weren't invented in England.
We take English for granted, but if we explore its paradoxes,
We find that quicksand can work slowly, boxing rings are square,
And a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing,
Grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham?
Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend.
If you have a bunch of odds and ends and
Get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught?
If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?
Sometimes I think all the folks who grew up speaking English
Should be committed to an asylum for the verbally insane.

In what other language do people recite at a play and play at a recital?
We ship by truck but send cargo by ship.
We have noses that run and feet that smell.
We park in a driveway and drive in a parkway.
And how can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same,
While a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language
In which your house can burn up as it burns down,
In which you fill in a form by filling it out, and
In which an alarm goes off by going on.

And in closing, if Father is Pop, how come Mother's not Mop?

from the internet, complements of Steve Born
The Writing Life
Randi Mrvos

Landing a prized assignment with *Appleseeds Magazine*

Besides creating picture books and working as an editor, I write articles for children. Last year, when the award-winning social studies magazine *Appleseeds* posted that one of their upcoming themes was “horses,” I knew I had to submit. I envisioned writing an article about Visionaire, the candy-loving Derby racehorse that one of my friends co-owned. Living in Kentucky and having witnessed the 100th running of the Kentucky Derby, I felt that the editor would welcome my query. But before I could think about the query and the article, I had to meet Visionaire.

Visionaire was retired and living at Crestwood Farm in Lexington. One frosty November morning, manager Pope McClain, Jr. invited me to meet this chestnut beauty. After interviewing Pope and taking photos of Visionaire (as well as rubbing V’s velvety-soft nose and watching him play in the pasture) I returned home to outline the article. I drew up questionnaires for Visionaire’s co-owners and for the trainer (none other than Michael Matz, trainer of the 2006 Derby winner Barbaro). Several weeks later, I worked up a rough article.

I polished a query and sent it months in advance of the deadline (August, 2010). By the end of August, I was heart-broken. I never heard from the editor. Having faith in the piece, I decided to place it elsewhere.

Toward the end of September, I received an intriguing email. The subject line read: *Appleseeds Assignment*. When I opened the email I discovered that the editor liked my proposal and wanted to publish it. So awesome!

I had three weeks to send in the completed article. I had to trim the word count and do more research. Then I had my loving editor (my husband) peruse it. He pointed out that the article lacked excitement because it was written in third person. So I re-wrote the piece in first person, reflecting my thrilling encounter with Visionaire. Then I sent it off to the editor with photos and photocopies of all of my resources.

Several months later, I received the contract and word that “The Road to the Derby” would be a three-page spread in the *Appleseeds* spring, 2011 issue—just in time for Derby Day.

They presented my article beautifully.

So what did I learn from this experience?

* Have a vision.
* Follow through.
* Let nothing get in your way.
* Tell the story like nobody else can.

The Word Whisperer
Jan Kent

Word origins: bet you can’t read just one

Etymology – what a word. Kind of rolls off the tongue, doesn't it? (No – not entomology. That's the insect ology.) It’s the study of the origin and use of words, and once you get started on it, it's like potato chips all the way.

How can you stop when you come across a word like *farded*, which means painted, embellished, tricked up with false beauty. Just the phrase "tricked up with false beauty" gives me pause.

*Prunk* means proud, vain, saucy.

*Liplabour* means action of the lips without concurrence of the mind. Ooooh.

*Gubbertushed* means having projecting teeth. Crunch, crunch.

Originally published in Jane's Stories Press Foundation e-letter, reprinted with kind permission of the author, who is:

Jan Kent, who lives part of the year in the Chicago area, and summers in a log cabin in northeastern Minnesota. For many years she wrote a seasonal column for the local Minnesota county paper. She was a founding member of Jane’s Stories Press, has published 2 chapbooks, and her work has appeared in various publications, including Creativity Connection. She is also a fiber artist, which means she gets to play with fabric and beads and wool and all sorts of other cool stuff.
Harry Potter and the Deadly Hallows, part 2
Grade: A-
It's been almost 10 years since the first Harry Potter film came out and now the series comes to a close. And what a fantastic and satisfying conclusion it is. It just about ranks up there with cinematic finales like The Return of the King and Toy Story 3.

The film is definitely the most intense of the series. There's a lot at stake. The wizards of Hogwarts are making a final stand together knowing that they may be killed. There are many losses, some more tragic than others, but there's also much triumph and courage. The battle of Hogwarts is a real spectacle.

The action isn't overdone. It never really has been in these films, which is good to see in a blockbuster. It still sticks to the story and doesn't let the action overwhelm it.

The visual effects seem to have improved over each film. And the cinematography is excellent with the dark and gloomy tones.

Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint and Emma Watson are at their finest in this. They handle the emotional scenes beautifully. It's been a pleasure to see these three grow into such fine actors, and I sure hope they all have great careers ahead of them.

The scene where Harry goes into the Forbidden Forest to confront Voldemort is probably Radcliffe's finest moment in the series. Grint and Watson share their first kiss, and their reactions after are priceless.

Many of the characters have their own shining moments. Maggie Smith has some great scenes including one where she brings the school's army of stone knights to life. Matthew Lewis as Neville Longbottom also gets more time to shine. He has a very heroic part in the battle, and it's good to see this character finally grow out of his clumsy stage and become a hero. Michael Gambon makes a nice appearance as Dumbledore as well.

There are two performances that shine the most though.

First, Ralph Fiennes is more menacing than ever as Voldemort. Pieces of his soul are being destroyed, and he will kill anyone he can. Usually Fiennes hasn't gotten a ton of screen time, but this is his film to dominate.

He has achieved the status as one of the great cinematic villains. The scene where he and his army step up to the ruins of Hogwarts, telling the students to join him or they will die, is one of his best.

Then there's Alan Rickman as my favorite character, Severus Snape. He's been fantastic in every film, but here we finally see the man he truly is, and Rickman plays it excellently. It gives him a great send off.

So here we are, 10 years and eight films later, and the grand Harry Potter series comes to a close. Is it the epic finale we've all been waiting for? It sure was for me.

They've done a great job at telling a good story. I'm sure some who have read the books will find something to nitpick, but looking at these just as films, they've made something legendary, and I feel proud to have grown up with them and to be part of this wonderful experience. This series will be remembered for a very long time, and it very much deserves that. I will truly miss it.

Jake and his faithful companion, Liz, were among the throngs of first-weekend viewers who established an all-time record gate for Harry, almost $169 million in America alone and just shy of half a billion dollars internationally.

In the Projection Book
Jake McLaughlin

The final Potter doesn't disappoint
Payers, Preyers & Pretenders
Rex A. Owens

The 500 pound gorilla in the room: your novel’s synopsis

‘Synopsis’ is a Greek word that loosely translates as a comprehensive view. In modern usage synopsis means a condensed statement or outline. For purposes of pitching to an unknown agent or publisher, I believe using the original Greek meaning is a much more useful approach than thinking of your synopsis as a condensed version of your work.

It’s impossible for any writer to condense a 275+ novel into a page. Viewing the synopsis as a condensed statement is the mental roadblock that leads to struggling with the synopsis and to poorly written, lengthy statements doomed to fail to attract an agent or publisher to request either a portion or all of your manuscript.

Instead, think of your synopsis as the big picture view of your work. It’s the difference between experiencing a trip riding in your car or flying in an airplane at 30,000 feet. A synopsis should be the view from 30,000 feet.

There’s only one golden rule for the synopsis – ONE PAGE – SINGLE SPACED. Violating this rule will result in it not being read.

The first line gives the title of your book, its genre and your name. That’s it. The second line is your contact information – e-mail, phone number, web page and the like. Don’t bother with your physical address – no one uses it anymore to contact you.

Next is your log-line. A log line is that one or two sentence description of your work – similar to how movies are advertised. A log line for a novel must tell the reader what’s at risk for the protagonist.

My log line for my soon to be published novel is: “A victim of betrayal, Irish novelist Ian Murphy risks IRA assassination to forge peace in his homeland after 30 years of civil war called ‘the Troubles.’” I’ve written at least a hundred log lines for this novel, and this is the one that captured a publishers’ attention. In it sentence you learn the theme (betrayal), what’s at stake for the protagonist (his life), and his goal (to bring peace to his country).

The first paragraph describes what the protagonist wants and what he does to get what he wants. This paragraph also shows how betrayal is the central theme of the novel and how betrayal motivates characters to behave as they do.

The middle paragraphs describe the major conflict(s) the protagonist has in achieving what he wants. Remember, without conflict there is no story. The middle paragraphs describe the action in the novel and the protagonist’s motivations. These paragraphs also describe the protagonist’s dilemma, that to get what he wants; he must betray the IRA and his best friend and accept that his betrayal means risking assassination.

The final paragraph should describe the protagonist’s transformation and resolve the conflicts. My protagonist decides to risk his life to bring peace to Ireland. My synopsis closes with a description of the cliffhanger conclusion of the novel, which intentionally allows the reader to imagine the outcome for the protagonist.

The synopsis demonstrates your writing skill and the ability to give the big picture. It lets the agent/publisher determine if your idea/concept/story has legs – is commercially viable.

You need a well-written synopsis to launch you to the next step - a request to submit either a portion of or your full manuscript. If you have an opportunity to take a course on writing a synopsis – TAKE IT. It’s worthwhile because the course will provide critique and feedback. I give Christine DeSmet (University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Continuing Studies) full credit for piercing my thick skull to teach me the craft of writing a great synopsis.
Our 50th high school reunion was at the home of a classmate on Lake Nagawicka in Delafield, WI., but a few of us decided to spend a few hours visiting the school buildings of our past.

**The old St. Francis Minor Seminary is Thomas More High School now, and all but one building is gone.**

Bob Teske, Thomas More’s director of development, showed us the dramatic changes inside the building I lived in for my four years of high school and one of college. The old chapel in which we prayed and meditated and planned and hoped is subdivided into offices and a much smaller chapel, but the stained glass windows are still there.

At the major seminary on S. Lake Dr., where I attended second-year college, the original 1856 building, Henni Hall, still stands. We’d been told we couldn’t get in on a Saturday, but John found the front door unlocked, and the four of us explored the place from the first-floor chapel up the central staircase to the cupola atop the dome [See photo, upper right]. Later Tom e-mailed me, “I still laugh at the irony of you as a seminarian aching to get off the seminary grounds and several decades later sneaking back in.”

Inside the dome I overcame my fear of heights and climbed ever so slowly up and then, even more slowly, back down, the wooden stairs spiraling around a thick wooden pole to the cupola. The inside of the dome was refurbished and decorated in 1989 by the Conrad Schmitt Studios, but when I lived there in 1962-63 the interior wood was unpainted, and signs warned us of Danger and demanded we Keep Off.

We climbed it anyway, of course, and I carved my name in the cupola wall with those of other guys—and, amazingly to us celibates-in-the-making—girls. Thoughts of meeting one up there interrupted many of our morning meditations.

On my last night as a seminarian in May 1963, I decided to climb to the cupola one last time. No one would go with me, so I told them if I wasn’t back in an hour to come find me.

**The 100-year-old stairs cracked and groaned as I made my way up through the darkness, slowly, carefully, clutching the railing with my left hand and the center post with my right.**

When my eyes reached the floor of the cupola, I lost the little light there was from the dome windows below and the smaller ones above, and I climbed three steps into total darkness.

But it was worth it. From the top I gazed east at the black waters of Lake Michigan, and then north across the bay to Milwaukee, brightly lit as it curved along the shore to the northeast. Farther inland, the huge Allen-Bradley clock was too bright to stare at, so I let my eyes wander around the city, trying to find the flashing lights of emergency vehicles whose sirens I heard.

**I stayed for almost half an hour, then made my way down, stepping into the dark even more slowly than I had climbed. I’ve never regretted it.**

I photographed the old building’s beauty from the outside, recalling it was only a few years ago that I realized the windows on all four floors had different frames.

The old cemetery in the woods has been badly vandalized, but I found the graves of several professors who taught us in high school. They had died young, in their 40s and 50s, and we were now the age of the rector, Msgr. Riedel, when he died. We had thought of him as being very old.

Flush with the ground—impossible to vandalize that—I found the tombstone of Father Daniel York, about whom I wrote recently. It carried a simple inscription: “Professor of Greek.” He’d taught other things too, but I always thought Greek was his favorite, and I wondered if he had requested that epitaph.

Most of our classmates had no desire to visit our old school with us, but the few of us who did were awfully glad we did.
Diane and I are enjoying July 4th in historic Wellsboro when a man nearby says to his companion: “I pedaled papers as a kid.”

I turn to Diane and say, “You hear that? He pedaled papers as a kid. That’s what we called it: pedaling papers.”

She has that so-what look on her face.

“‘There we were pedaling away. We got up every morning, hopped on our bikes and pedaled. You don’t hear that one anymore.”

“He means peddling, Ron,” Diane says.

“He was a peddler.”

“Oh, yeah, sure, of course. You could say we pedaled as we peddled,” I say. “Get it. Pedaling peddlers. That was us.”

I am sure Diane wants to hear more. “The bikes we rode were heavy-duty. A guy’s bike. A Schwinn. In wind and rain and snow...”

“Snow?”

“Unless the snow was really deep. Then your dad would take you in the car. And, don’t forget that Wisconsin is mighty cold in winter. Well below zero some mornings. I swear it was 37 below that one morning.”

“Come on, 37 below?”

(Fact is the coldest temperature recorded in Madison was 37 below on January 30, 1951 some three years before I began peddling papers.)

“And you rode your bike?”

“Into the wind. I didn’t get these rosy cheeks for nothing.”

“You sure this isn’t another of your Wisconsin-winter stories? Bet your dad took you that morning.”

“Yes, he did.”

“Ok. I grant you it was cold, but tell me the real story about peddling papers. What about customers who wouldn’t pay their bill?”

“You bet. We had them. One guy wouldn’t pay so I called his boss. He still didn’t pay. We had to go down to Madison Newspapers off the Square and pay for the papers every Saturday morning.”

“Came up short that week, huh?” Diane says.

“Oh, no. Some paid ahead back then. Amazing. There were lots of honest working men back then. And women.”

“Of course.”

“The people I remember most, however, lived in a shack down by the creek.”

“Sounds like they lived in a van down by the river,” Diane says with a snicker. I duck the SNL reference.

“Heavy smokers hacking and coughing they were. These people were past their working years, yet they paid every week and had me in for hot chocolate too. They even wrote a note to Madison Newspapers about their favorite paperboy.”

“Isn’t that special. I bet you folded their paper and placed it carefully in their door.”

“No way. I folded papers riding the bike and threw them from the middle of the street – only broke a few storm windows peddling papers.”

“They don’t peddle papers anymore,” she says.

“Someone is peddling the New York Times to our neighbor across the street.”

“Look out some morning and you’ll see a well-dressed woman driving a Cadillac Escalade deliver that New York Times.”

“I guess we didn’t have gals, just guys ‘cause we pedaled and it was tough work.”

“I understand. Women had better things to do back in the day.”

interrobang

An explanation point with a question mark.

Really?!

Yes, really.

from Norma J. Sundberg
Put your heart in your writing

*Writing with Style*

By John R. Trimble

Reviewed by Jeffrey Brooks

Trimble pours all of his heart and soul into this book. 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.

“Each time we write,” he explains, “we’re making a choice as to the kind of person we prefer to be.” Writing requires thinking, and it allows us to be creative. But we don’t have to be original to be creative. We are creative, because our thoughts make us unique and our uniqueness gives us the privilege and opportunity to be heard.

Trimble mentions three major writing styles: informal, which is conversational, formal, which can be pretentious, and general, a happy compromise. The general style is the hardest to achieve, he says.

Personally, I prefer the informal style, because you don’t have to use big words to make a bold statement.

The difference between an experienced and an inexperienced writer, Trimble says, is that the inexperienced writer writes to impress himself and/or others. But an experienced writer “writes to serve the reader.” For this reason, he considers writing applied psychology, because it creates desired effects. “Good writing is good manners,” he asserts.

Above all, “writing is like romancing,” he says. “One’s heart must be into it.” Otherwise, “no amount of expertise will help.”

Perhaps Hemingway said it best: “Writing must be a labor of love or it is not writing.”

Extra Innings #22

In which we celebrate writers, their enablers, and anyone who’s managed to refrain from saying “It isn’t the heat, it’s the humidity.”

Madison, Wisconsin August, 2011

Our stars: Madonna Dries Christensen, Jacob McLaughlin, Rex A. Owens, Bonny Conway, Den Adler, Randi Mrvos, Ron Hevey, Monette Bebow-Reinhard, Larry M. Tobin, Jeffrey Brooks, Karyn J. Powers

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I publish Extra Innings monthly and distribute it free to an open enrollment mailing list. To get on the list, email the Coach at: mcook@dcs.wisc.edu

Extra Innings comes to you through the tolerance and kindness 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 School of the Arts at Rhinelander

Weekend with your Novel and the Odyssey Project

No added sugar, carbs, trans-fats, or taste. 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.

Back issues available at: www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing/extrainnings

In Memory

Sprecher Cook

2000-2011
SUMMER'S GRAND OPENING

Summer tucked her cotton clouds inside her blue-jean skies rolled up the cuffs on April and unzipped the butterflies let out cornfield's belt a notch perfumed the rose's ear papered fields with daisies and polished oak's veneer draped river's neck with jewelweed packed away ferns wolly hoods opened wide her orchards and hung out the ripened goods loosened up her meadows raised the sun above her knees drank a pint of August and danced a jig with bees.

BONFIRE GLASS

We followed fireflies down woodsy paths to a private beach where a driftwood fire glowed sat on a blanket drinking fruity wine celebrating summer under the Strawberry Moon slow-danced in tides arms around waists bare feet sinking in watery sand to our ankles bottles thrown in the fire exploded into molten shards the way my heart blew open when you proposed.

Bonny Conway

GARDEN PSALM

Zucchini, arise and stretch beyond the murky half-light of your leafy shrouds to shout out loud and show what lengths to which you'll go to grow.

Cucumbers, sprawl along the garden wall throw off the yoke of soil to toil and climb with intertwining spines among the vines.

Yellow beans, do not be held to meld to narrow norms of strings so straight and true, embrace the twist, and turn to spurn such common rule.

Green peppers, lift yourselves, your shells upon your own green shoots. Let not the roots that tie you to the earth define your worth.

Lettuce, leeks, tomatoes, large and small stand tall. Let not the black spot or the brown rust strike you down.

Let all your efforts be both great and true lest ye not be set for harvest and undo all the care t’was taken with your needs and find your august gifts have gone to seed.

Karyn J. Powers
Herod takes first place at Alabama Writers’ Conclave

Jim Herod’s short story, “Hear What I See,” has captured first prize at the 2011 Alabama Writers’ Conclave. Herod created his 2,500-word story from his experiences in Kenya last October.

Marian Lewis, AWC contest chairperson, told Jim, “Your descriptions and the presentation of your story are so rich, I almost felt as if I were there. You capture the beauty of the language and the harshness of the land and you make it come alive. To say that I enjoyed reading the story is an understatement.”

The Alabama Writers’ Conclave is one of the oldest continuing writers' organizations in the United States. It attracts writers and contest participants from all over the country.

Jim, one of our fine columnists, wrote the story from the perspective of a Maasai mystic whose English name is I See (in Swahili, Kunoa). Kunoa sees what is to be. He is called to translate for two Americans who have been kidnapped by Somalian bandits. Jim draws on the culture, the environment, and the struggle for survival by the Maasai tribesmen, and even Kunoa finds a surprise.

Next year’s AWC meeting will be July 20-22 in Huntsville, Alabama. They’ll be posting information at: www.alabamawritersconclave.org.

Once every blue moon

KJL Powers reports: “Just sold ‘All Saints Day’ flash fiction to Fiction 365. Should come out in about a month [mid-August, check it out]. This keeps up, (one piece of paid fiction per decade), I will definitely quit my day-job (on or about my 67th birthday).

Cheers!

K’Pow

Department of red faces

Janaan Giles (name carefully double checked) writes: “Loved the fact that you printed my submission-- hated the fact that you gave me a new name, but I’m flexible. I’ll use it as my new nom de plume for when I start writing more x-rated material. Thanks for using the article.

The truly amazing part is, I managed to spell her name one wrong way in the masthead and ANOTHER wrong way in the byline.

Creativity? There are other, more accurate words for it.

My apologies, Janaan. (And I REALLY hope I’m spelling that correctly!)

TRUTHS ABOUT GROWING OLD

1) Growing old is mandatory; growing up is optional...
2) Forget the health food. I need all the preservatives I can get.
3) When you fall down, you wonder what else you can do while you're down there.
4) You're getting old when you get the same sensation from a rocking chair that you once got from a roller coaster.
5) It's frustrating when you know all the answers but nobody bothers to ask you the questions.
6) Time may be a great healer, but it's a lousy beautician
7) Wisdom comes with age, but sometimes age comes alone.

THE FOUR STAGES OF LIFE:

1) You believe in Santa Claus.
2) You don't believe in Santa Claus.
3) You are Santa Claus.
4) You look like Santa Claus.

Thanks to Linda Lee Konichek
I just read a magnificent piece of writing about the game I love, baseball. In his essay on “Loving Baseball” in the July 25 Sports Illustrated, staff writer Joe Posnanski answers the question “what keeps the grand game great?”

He points out that in 1891, we didn’t have movies, let alone television or radio, no Hershey bars, no Wrigley’s gum. Cars hadn’t arrived to clog the streets and pollute the air. The Wright Brothers were more than a decade away from Kitty Hawk. Even more unbelievably, Brett Favre hadn’t even thrown his first pass in the National Football League.

No Roosevelt had been our president, and America the Beautiful had yet to be written. Football was played at only a few colleges, and basketball was still a vague notion (something about peach baskets) bouncing in the head of a YMCA instructor named James Naismith.

But we had baseball— and we still do, in essentially the same form as it was then. It has been our national treasure, our gift to the world (along with free public libraries and Dixieland jazz) and has shaped our culture for the better-- especially when Jackie Robinson came into the major leagues in 1947, and the Civil Rights movement began for real.

Baseball didn’t have Vin Scully announcing Dodger games in 1891, but it seems as if he joined up shortly thereafter. He has been announcing Dodger games since back when Jackie played for “Dem Bums” in Brooklyn. We’ve lost Jackie, of course, but Vinny is still announcing, and he’s still the best at it there ever was. It’s a case of the student, Scully, surpassing his mentor, the late Red Barber.

What makes baseball so enduring and endearing? “Dreams and escape,” Scully told Posnanski. “Children dream about this game, and when we grow older, the game provides our escape from the troubles of day-to-day life.”

It has also nurtured some of the best writing in American letters, essays by Roger Angell, Tom Boswell, and, in one memorable piece, John Updike, who wrote “Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu” in tribute to Ted Williams, “Teddy Ballgame,” as he played his last game. Baseball has spawned the humor of Jim Murray, the fiction of W.P. Kinsella, and the poetry of Donald Hall. All of them are in my personal Baseball Writers’ Hall of Fame. All of them attest to the fact that a great baseball writer is a great writer who writes about baseball.

Announcer Scully is in my Hall of Fame, too, by the way. Several transcriptions of his play-by-play calls have been anthologized in collections of great essays, most notably his brilliant call of the ninth inning of Dodger pitcher Sandy Koufax’s perfect game in 1965.

Think about that. Scully was making the stuff up as he went along, reporting what he saw in front of him in real time, and his words wind up in literary anthologies!

I have my own theories about why baseball has inspired so many great writers and so much great writing. Baseball resonates with history, it is timeless, and it is beautiful. Timeless? There’s no clock in baseball; theoretically, if a team could just keep a rally going, a baseball game could last forever.

I’m going to prepare a place for Posnanski in my Hall of Fame (which exists only in my head), and I’ll be looking for his stuff every week.

Who’s in your writers’ hall of fame? If you want to be a writer, seek those folks out and read them-- marinate in them!-- the ones who make it seem effortless, who hide the seams and the hard work-- and who touch your heart with simple words and clear phrases.

That’s 30 for this issue. Thanks for reading.