As soon as the August issue went out, I got these messages from three beautiful spirits (who actually read the masthead!)

Just saw the dedication to Sprecher and wanted to say I am really sorry! He was a wonderful, well-loved fellow, and I’m glad I got to meet him at your house several times.

Emily Auerbach
I just finished reading the current EI. ... I also saw a small mention about the loss of Sprecher Cook and I wanted to send my condolences. Losing a family member is never easy but the older we get the more difficult it becomes. So sorry to hear of your sadness.

Barbara Burris
[W]as Sprecher your dog? I think I recall that, in one of your books telling about you and your family. If so, can you tell me a few things about your pet? And I am sorry for the loss.

Bonny Conway
Prompted by the kindness and concern and by Bonny’s request, here’s a remembrance of my dog Sprecher, the Psycho Schnauzer, aka “Rosie’s Revenge.”

My wife and I picked him out from the liter because he was the most energetic and brave.

Turns out he was also perpetually frightened and could turn into a fighter if cornered.

We never worked with a dog so hard—sessions with a pet-owner therapist, three multi-week training courses, and two alleged “bark buster” cures.

He remained our noisy, stormy soul.
You know how you sometimes hold all the more dear the one who gives you the most trouble? I feel that way about Sprecher, a special bond. He called on all the love and patience I possess and even extended them a bit.

He was always so sullenly contrite after he had lashed out.

I have a ton of happy memories of him.

* I loved seeing him run back to me across the yard with the partially-deflated basketball in his mouth. (Took him 10 years, but he finally learned to fetch.)

* He was the only dog I’ve ever been able to take jogging with me (back when we both could run), and when I’d let him off the leash in the park before sun-up, I swear he’d leave a vapor trail; fastest dog I have EVER known.

* In the winter he would sleep on the bed with us, often cuddling up next to me, letting out a contented sigh, and falling asleep.

* I so miss the sight of him curled up in the cloth cat bed, which was much too small for him.

Life does have a way of going on. We still have two Persian princess cats to care for, and our little zippy back-up dog, Pixie, has been promoted to Number One Dog, a position she seems to like very much, thank you. I’ll never forget Sprecher or stop loving him, just as I’ve never stopped cherishing all the others who have gone ahead.

Continued on next page
I how to meet up with them again. My vision of heaven has all my loved ones there to greet me, and that includes dogs, cats, a canary named Admiral, a turtle named Jocko, and some peep frogs. To me that would make for some great choir of angels.

Who knows. Maybe Sprecher and I will run together again?

Sprecher in a mellow mood. Photo by Ellen Cook

The Word Whisperer
Jan Kent

Three unwords to shun

ALOT -- as in “A lot of this grammar stuff leaves me cold.” Alas, you can’t get away with that. This is an unword, and the way to be correct is to write “A lot of this grammar stuff makes my heart beat faster.”

ALRIGHT -- Same problem -- no such word, although you see it everywhere. Recently I saw it misspelled in two foot high letters on a movie screen. Two words – all right. All right?

IRREGARDLESS -- such a fine-sounding unword. Drop that “ir” and you’ve got the real thing – regardless of what you thought before. How about it, E.I. readers? Got some favorite unwords to share? Send them along to the Word Whisperer, c/o the Coach: mcook@dcs.wisc.edu

Word Whisperer originally appeared in Jane’s Stories Press Foundation e-letter, reprinted with kind permission of the author, Jan Kent, who for many years wrote a column for her 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. She is also a fiber artist.

Extra Innings #23

In which we celebrate writers, their enablers, and anyone who picked the Brewers to win their division this year.

Madison, Wisconsin September, 2011
Our stars: Madonna Dries Christensen, Jacob McLaughlin, Rex A. Owens, Den Adler, Norma Sundberg
Web Weavers: Celeste Anton, Andy Stravers Poets: Bonny Conway, Esther Leiper, Jan Kent
Internet clippers: Steve Born, Larry Tobin

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 good graces of the writing program through continuing studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, led by Christine DeSmet. Find out about 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
Time out to lighten up
Sometimes, when I look at my children, I say to myself, “Lillian, you should have remained a virgin.”.
- Lillian Carter

I had a rose named after me and I was very flattered. But I was not pleased to read the description in the catalog: - 'No good in a bed, but fine against a wall.'
- Eleanor Roosevelt

Last week, I stated this woman was the ugliest woman I had ever seen. I have since been visited by her sister and now wish to withdraw that statement..
- Mark Twain

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending -- and to have the two as close together as possible
- George Burns

Santa Claus has the right idea. Visit people only once a year.
- Victor Borge

Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.
- Mark Twain

By all means, marry. If you get a good wife, you'll become happy; if you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher.
- Socrates

I was married by a judge. I should have asked for a jury.
- Groucho Marx

My wife has a slight impediment in her speech. Every now and then she stops to breathe.
- Jimmy Durante

I have never hated a man enough to give his diamonds back.
- Zsa Zsa Gabor

Only Irish coffee provides in one glass all four essential food groups: alcohol, caffeine, sugar, and fat.
- Alex Levine

My luck is so bad that if I bought a cemetery, people would stop dying.
- Rodney Dangerfield

from the Internet, via Steve Born
To hell with patience

In last month’s *E.I.*, Monette Bebow-Reinhard shared her article, “Patience pays – but it’s hell.” By the title of this month’s *Payers, Preyers and Pretenders* you’ve probably guessed that I will be offering a different viewpoint.

First, we must acknowledge that as authors we each have very different experiences and that any advice we offer will be based on personal experience. For Bebow-Reinhard patience has paid off and that’s fine. I certainly would never challenge her personal experience. However, as a guideline for other writers, I believe her advice is misguided in the current marketplace for freelance, non-fiction and fiction writers.

**Editors will NEVER select your work because you have patience. Editors select your work first because of excellent writing and second because of an interesting (read commercially viable) topic. PERIOD.**

There are two flaws in Bebow-Reinhard’s argument. First, an editor has no way of knowing if you’re patient and easy to work with until they actually work with you. Just because you don’t follow-up on a query or article or manuscript you submit, an editor can’t conclude you’re patient. For all they know, you could be dead.

The second flaw comes with her example of sending a re-write on October 3 and a follow-up on November 28, getting a rejection on December 7. This led her to the conclusion that the follow-up led to the rejection, but that has no support in fact. It’s more likely the rejection was generated because: 1) the writing needed improvement; 2) the topic was not right for the editor; 3) the editor didn’t think the book was commercially viable; or 4) the writer doesn’t have a track record of publishing.

**Our harsh reality is that a standard rejection letter is all we can expect even after all of that because most likely we’re just one of thousands of rejections that year.**

I once got to pitch a New York agent face to face. [At the famous Writer’s Institute in Madison. See [www.dcs.wisc.edu/writing](http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/writing) for details.] Based on the pitch I sent chapters and was then asked to submit the entire manuscript. After I waited 12 weeks for a response, the agent’s assistant sent an e-mail with a one line response: “XXX doesn’t feel she can make any money with this.” That was it – nothing about the writing, the topic, the theme of the novel. I didn’t receive the rejection e-mail because of a follow-up e-mail. It’s our world.

**My experience with follow-up has been exactly the opposite of Bebow-Reinhard’s.**

Here’s the timeline with my current publisher, Mischievous Muse Press:

* 8/16 sent query letter with synopsis
* 9/5 received request to send manuscript plus 1 page summary
* 1/6 sent follow-up e-mail
* 1/6 received e-mail that manuscript had merit
* 2/10 offered publication contract

Did I generate interest in my manuscript BECAUSE I sent the follow-up e-mail? I don’t know. Would I still have a contract if I hadn’t sent the follow-up e-mail? Again, I don’t know.

In the final analysis here’s how I think it shakes out. If you never send a follow-up you’re guaranteeing no response. If you do send a follow-up for sure you’ll get closure – one way or another. So to hell with patience – send that follow-up!

*Your thoughts of course welcome. Email mcook@dcs.wisc.edu.*
What do you do if you’re a retired Baby Boomer who is not ready or willing to lead a sedentary life? The answer for three women Boomers (and one Boomer’s daughter) was to start a publishing company. Housed in Abilene, Texas, Silver Boomer Books is the brainchild of Ginny Greene, Becky Haigler, Barbara B. Rollins, and Karen Greene. Karen has since departed the firm to pursue her writing.

On their Facebook page, the Silver Boomers explain how they started the firm in 2007. “We didn't mean to become publishers. We simply began as friends to compile a book together. As we worked... [w]e learned to defend our artistic vision, craft a consensus, and stretch our comfort zones to the zenith.”

The original idea was for one book, Silver Boomers, a collection of short stories and poetry by and about the boomer generation. This blossomed into another anthology, Freckles to Wrinkles. Adding two Imprints, they’ve now published 17 books.

The latest anthology was timed to commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11. I’m pleased to have two stories included in The Harsh And The Heart—Celebrating The Military. Riding the coattails of The Harsh And The Heart is A Cloud of Witnesses—Two Big Books and Us, by Barbara B. Rollins with OAStepper.

“We have learned so much.” they say, “about ourselves, our ambitions, each other, publishing, and push, push, pushing until we achieve. We do not believe in deadlines. Rather, we set goals!”

Ginny Greene writes newspaper features and columns and poetry and edits newsletters. She says she was born with a blue pencil in her hand; she edits street signs, yard sale signs, and edits in her sleep.

Becky Haigler is retired from teaching Spanish and Reading in Texas public schools. Her poetry has appeared in national and regional periodicals, and her short stories for adolescents have been published by several religious publishing houses.

Barbara Rollins, a retired judge, began writing while waiting for lawyers. She published a novel for children: Syncopated Summer, as well as a four-book forensic series: Fingerprint Evidence, Ballistics, Cause of Death, and Blood Evidence. Her work has appeared in Byline, Kidz Ch@t, R*A*D*A*R, and Off the Record, an anthology of poetry by lawyers. She’s the proud new grandmother of twin boys.

Karen Greene, aka Kerin Riley-Bishop, is a poet, essayist, photographer, casual painter, and blogger. She’s an active member of writing and critique groups and an advocate of social networking.

Each of the women has published one or more books through their company. Haigler authored not so GRIMM; Ginny Greene penned Song of County Roads; Rollins wrote A Time For Verse, and Karen Greene’s first collection of poetry is Three Thousand Doors. Together, they create whimsical verses from their snippets of conversation while editing, like a quilting bee where scraps of fabric become a work of art.

SBB anthologies are high quality, distinguished by a crawl line at the bottom of each page, a continuous text in keeping with the subject. For example, quotes about grandparents adorn the pages of From The Porch Swing: memories of our grandparents.

The Silver Boomer team has only begun and they’re brimming with ideas. Their next anthology will be On Our Own: Widowhood for Smarties. You can find all their projects and writers’ guidelines for contributors on their website: www.silverboomerbooks.com.

Carma Smidt, the writer Madonna profiled in last month’s E.I., is going to be on the adjunct faculty of Dordt College, Sioux Center, IA. “It seems nothing stands in her way of moving forward,” Madonna notes. Access this and all back issues at the website: www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing/extrainnings.
A Steady Rhythm:
Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks' Journey
by Norma J. Sundberg

Esther M. Leiper knew her destiny at age eight. She drew when she could hold a pencil and wrote when she was able to print. Small publications began in high school.

She was surrounded by a family of artists, her mother, an illustrator for magazines in the 1930's and 40's, her father a reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer for 35 years. Esther entered the university planning to major in journalism but decided she didn't want to be a reporter and changed to English, aiming for writing and poetry.

Her father was a great support. Her mother, increasingly proud of her writing, would have preferred she'd have a coming out party and become a social belle. Her mother never dreamed she'd be raising a poet. Esther regrets her mother didn't live to see her illustrations. This gift blossomed after Esther's writing and poetry were established.

Peter Estabrooks came into her life on a Labor Day weekend at the Pennsylvania home of Esther and her parents (the 42 acre estate once owned by Claude Raines). Peter was helping a friend move out of one of the family's three tenant properties.

"Mom invited Peter to swim after a hot day of loading furniture," Esther says.

"She cornered me where I was typing a story and told me, 'Go put on your bathing suit and meet this young man!'"

"I was amused and annoyed. Ten days later Peter proposed!"

The couple married at Christmas and immediately moved to Maryland, where he had a new job as a Troubleshooter in Production Inventory Control. A good troubleshooter eventually works himself out of a job. Thus the Estabrooks moved-- from Pennsylvania to Maryland to Tennessee to Ohio.

In Cookeville, Tennessee, Esther began grad work at Tennessee Tech but dropped out to become Poet-In-The-Schools, "which paid a huge salary for only half a day of classroom work," she says.

"One principal used my class as a dumping ground for slow-learners," she recalls. "The kids were seventh graders whose hormones did little for their writing or listening skills. But they were at least exposed to poetry."

After Ohio came a return to Peter’s home town in New Hampshire, where Esther got a job teaching a poetry class in return for a summer pass to a music festival.

“This was a great learning curve,” she says, “and I wrote a book length collection of sonnets about the experience”.

Next came a job as a stringer digging up news for The North Country Weekly. Soon she graduated to humor columnist. “I used anything available to write notes -- picnic plates or scraps of paper.

Daughter Hannah was born October 6, 1983, and son Tom, May 4, 1985, aiming the muse in a totally new direction.

In 1982-83 Esther received an honorable mention in contests run by The Inkling magazine. An essay and another poem didn't place, but one got her an assignment to write a column explaining poetry. Eventually the magazine became Writers' Journal. Esther is nearing year 29 as Poetry Editor at Writers' Journal.

After Esther had been selling her writing for 20 years, she and husband Peter started Blue Jay Writing Services, with Peter serving as her agent.

She continues to capture the joys of everyday life in verse and prose: frolicking kittens, fresh vegetables from the garden, the great outdoors-- and now she has two new grandsons to write about. She serves as Poet Laureate of the White Mountain Region of New Hampshire, which offers her opportunities to give readings, lecture, and participate in workshops. Most recently she gave a reading at a day-long Book Fair in Berlin, New Hampshire.

Rhythm reigns and the beat goes on.

Norma J. Sundberg first connected with Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks in the 1980's when she submitted poetry to The Inkling, which published several pieces. They've kept in touch ever since.

“We have a strong personal connection,” Norma says, “even though we've never met in person.
Tucking in

By Esther M. Leiper

Each fall the question rises: when to sheet
The garden against frost-- unnatural shield
of blankets or bright quilts draped wide to thwart
Night dews which sparkle into rime, and kill?

This way I can prolong the summer growth
Make tangible in vines that twist and twine
Then spill their tendrils-- tentacles-- of green,
So greedy for more space, and more, and more.

The “plot” is at the thick. It halfway scares,
Such forward drive, zucchini’s lavish sprawl,
While the flapping, green-hued tongues of corn
Are whispering, although subliminal.

But cover up-- or take what autumn sends?
My cellar holds the best of summer now,
As much as we can use in gleaming rows;
The freezer filled, all plenitude safe-sealed.

Let Florida’s smudge pots heat orange groves.
Here marigolds fling brightness on the air
And spread a scent I might call dragon’s breath
If dragons push out any air but smoke.

And soon now smoke will stain September air
Puffed out of hearth dragons that chew up wood
With bellies going from black to glowing red;
Beasts that belch along their long black throats.

My neighbor never stoops to spread a sheet
To save her brilliant blooming. “When it's time
God calls them home,” she said (but of her mother)
Whose death she wouldn’t mourn this icy spring.

Still, I want last tomatoes to turn red.
Begrudging my gifting offered, lost.
And thus I spread the coverlets, each one
Brought forth from closet recess, folded clean.

But know I’ll spend as much on washing them
Of damp and dirt, when all is finally counted,
As might be saved of produce: the last cukes
Gone limp ore bunched beans bulging from within.

You might say it’s a simple pride of mine
That each year I can serve on Christmas day
The last of fresh tomatoes, carefully stored
Within the cold-room, tasting of the sun.

Joel Hodgson created Mystery Science Theater 3000 in 1988 where he and his two robot companions, Tom Servo (voiced by J. Elvis Weinstein during season 1 and then by Kevin Murphy for the remainder of the series) and Crow T. Robot (voiced by Trace Beaulieu seasons 1 through 6 and then by Bill Corbett), are stuck on the Satellite of Love forced to watch terribly cheesy movies.

After Hodgson left the show in season five, head writer, Michael J. Nelson, took over as host. It's a truly brilliant show, as in episode after episode seeing those black silhouettes on the bottom of the screen riff the films perfectly. So, since it's my all time favorite show, I thought I'd list five of my (many) favorite episodes.

**Manos: The Hands of Fate**
(Hosted by Joel Hodgson)
"You know, there are certain flaws to this film," Tom Servo says. That sums up the film.

This is perhaps the greatest episode of MST3K of all time. The film is the absolute worst the SOL crew has ever had to endure. (To this day it's still my worst film of all time.) The film was destined to be riffed by Joel and the 'bots. There is so much wrong with the film, the acting, the "suspense," the dubbing, all atrocious. If you call some modern day blockbuster your worst film of all time, trust me, you haven't seen anything yet.

**Santa Claus Conquers the Martians**
(Hosted by Joel Hodgson)
Like Manos, this is another essential episode of MST3K. I reviewed the film for the December issue of E! last year, but there is no way I would ever see the movie on its own. It’s one of the dumbest films I’ve ever seen. Now I know it's a Christmas movie most likely aimed at kids, but even children deserve a better movie than this.

But the MST3K episode is perfect. This was their first Christmas episode and they hit all the right notes. The skits in between are great, especially when the crew sings Crow's favorite carol, "Let's Have A Patrick Swayze Christmas," and the riffing of the film itself is spot on. A classic MST3K episode.

**The Gamera films**
(Hosted by Joel Hodgson)
The latest volume of MST3K on DVD is all five of the Gamera episodes, and it's a fantastic set of truly cheesy movies and essential MST3K. Each movie is poorly dubbed with guys in rubber monster suits looking ridiculous. These gems from season three are a delight.

**The Brain That Wouldn't Die**
(Hosted by Mike Nelson)
Mike's first episode as host. Since he was a head writer for the first five seasons, he was the perfect choice to take over. The film is ridiculous. Somehow a man is able to save his wife's decapitated head and connect it to tubes filled with fluids (neck juice, as Crow calls it) that allow her to speak as if nothing happened to her. It's a perfect film for Mike to start with.

**The Final Sacrifice**
(Hosted by Mike Nelson)
One of the best episodes from the show's run on the Sci Fi channel. This Canadian film is a work of bad movie art. It follows Troy, a teenage boy trying to figure out how his father died. His house is soon attacked by a sacrificial cult that was involved in his father's death. He meets up with Zap Rowsdower, a heavy drinker who lives in his truck. The movie is full of poorly developed characters, dumb action, and a dull script, all torn to pieces by Mike and the 'bots. The skits are highly enjoyable, especially when the riffers sing a song about Canada. This just may be my favorite Mike episode.
Ten* Thoughts to Ponder

Number 10
Life is sexually transmitted.

Number 9
**Good health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die.**

Number 8
Men have two emotions: Hungry and...[censored in case Lisa shows this to Anna and Joel]... [M]ake him a sandwich.

* For truth in advertising, it’s really only nine thoughts to ponder, then, unless you ponder what words were omitted.

Number 7
**Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach a person to use the Internet and they won't bother you for weeks, months, maybe years.**

Number 6
Some people are like a Slinky-not really good for anything, but you still can't help but smile when you shove them down the stairs.

Number 5
**Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in the hospitals, dying of nothing.**

Number 4
All of us could take a lesson from the weather. It pays no attention to criticism.

Number 3
**Why does a slight tax increase cost you $800, and a substantial tax cut saves you $30?**

Number 2
In the 60's, people took acid to make the world weird. Now the world is weird and people take Prozac to make it normal.

And The Number 1 Thought
**Life is like a jar of Jalapeno peppers--what you do today might burn your ass tomorrow.**

Once again thanks to Steve Born. If you want the full text of #8, email him, not me.
Coach’s Bullpen Briefs

Little Free Libraries set to sweep the world

Todd Bol got the idea, and Rick Brooks is growing it into an international movement. The idea is simple: Got books? Why not share with your neighbors? That’s it. That’s the big idea. So Todd built himself a “Little Library” in Hudson, Wisconsin and opened it for business with these ‘instructions’:

Take a Book,

Leave a Book

Rick describes the library as “a box of books on a stick,” although as you’ll see from the picture, they’re a lot nicer than that. Two Amish craftsmen make them, and Rick encourages those who are able and willing to make and design their own.

There’s no checkout, no due date, no library card. If you see a book you like, you can take it. If you have one you’d like to share, you give it.

So far at my library, more people have given books than have taken them, and Rick says that’s fairly common.

“I hope nobody takes advantage of you,” somebody said when I told them about my Little Free Library.

“I hope they do,” I replied.

“You can’t steal these books,” Rick stresses.

“They’re free!”

The idea’s little, but the goal is big: to promote literacy and the love of reading by building free book exchanges worldwide. Rick wants folks to build and stock at least 2,510 little libraries around the world—which would be one more library than Andrew Carnegie famously funded.

Most of the LLs have gone up in the Madison area, but Rick’s had inquiries from all over, including India, Australia, the UK and Canada. As I write this they’ve had over 27,000 hits to the website.

Rick’s a community organizer working through the division of continuing studies, my old shop at the University, which is where I met him.

He’s had some great projects in the past and has traveled pretty much all over the world, but this one, started right in his own backyard, may just turn out to be the greatest.

You can learn all about it at www.littlefreelibrary.org

Where in the world is Dave Fox?

Ask longtime friend of E.I. Dave Fox “What’s new?” and you won’t get a perfunctory “Nothin’ much.”

Since we last checked in with Dave, he got married and moved to Singapore (from Seattle). The married part is definitely something new for Dave, but the globetrotting isn’t. He’s lived in Norway, England, and Turkey and visited and/or led tours of 50 countries on five continents. He’s the author of Getting Lost: Mishaps of an Accidental Nomad and Globejotting: How to Write Extraordinary Travel Journals (and still have time to enjoy your trip). He’s the proprietor of the Dave Fox website and teaches classes in humor and travel writing (often both at once).

Which brings us to today’s topic, his new online writing class, Professional Humor Tricks for Writers, Speakers, and Other Misfits, appearing on the very computer you’re staring at now starting September 13 and running every Tuesday (or Wednesday if you’re on the far side of the International Date Line) through October 18.

Cost is $169 US, which gets you six weeks of lessons, weekly assignments with timely
feedback, and access to Dave’s private Google Group and a list of resources.

I can recommend Dave’s class to you without reservations (you still have to register for the course in advance, though) and, since my beloved Department of Continuing Studies isn’t offering humor writing just now, with a clear conscience.

Dave will be happy to supply details. Email him at dave@davethefox.com, and check out this class and his other offerings at www.davethefox.com. Also congratulate him on finding a beautiful, smart, funny, insightful woman whose one flaw appears to be judgment in men.

Rex and Coach’s very big day at the old ball park

My friend Rex Owens (our very own marketing guru and author of Murphy’s Troubles, forthcoming from Mischievous Muse Press) went to Old World Wisconsin this summer to see a baseball game played by 1860s rules.

I’d read about old timey baseball, but here I went back in time and saw it-- guys in woolen uniforms (they asked permission from the ladies to roll up their sleeves before the match) playing barchanded.

The umpire/arbiter wore a period tuxedo and top hat. He didn’t call balls and strikes nor render any decision on a play-- players call them on the honor system-- unless asked by the players. Anything fair or foul caught on the fly or on one bounce is an out, including anything caught by the "behind" (catcher). (Our Eagle Diamonds behind was the star of the game in my opinion.) The hurler lobs the ball slow underhand, the goal being to put it right over the line so the striker can hit it. Foul balls don't count as strikes.

The home team Diamonds whipped the visiting Quarreymen, 6-0; the whole nine-inning game took about one hour and 10 minutes! No stepping out to adjust batting gloves (no batting gloves, either), no conferences on the mound (and no mound, just a rubber), no hurler changes, just base ball (two words then).

You cheer a good play by doffing you cap and shouting "Huzz-zah!" There were many of those.

The field is literally a field, the "fence" just the natural line of trees and bushes. (The center fielder lost one fly ball in the tree branches.) If the ball gets lost in the bushes, the fielder throws up his arms, and the striker is held to a ground rule double.

Oh, Lordy, it was fun. Afterwards, as we rode the tram back to the parking lot (Old World Wisconsin is HUGE-- and full of recreated old towns and farms), we chatted up two young Quarreymen, up from Northern Illinois on their own nickel (they're also responsible for laundering their uniforms).

They play for the love of the game, truly. Base ball as it used to be on a perfect summer afternoon in Wisconsin. As a friend of mine is wont to say, “What could be more better?”

Reality
By Jan Kent

“I never read poetry,” he said.

“It’s not real, it’s not important.

Facts are what count.”

So we sat on the beach
Side by side on a weathered log
And watched the sun slip into the splashing Pacific

As a full moon rose behind us.
And he pointed out the cannery across the bay
And told me how many fish per can
And how many cans per day.
Man to English Dictionary

"I'm going fishing."
Really means... "I'm going to drink myself dangerously stupid and stand by a stream with a stick in my hand while the fish swim by in complete safety."

"Let's take your car."
Really means.... "Mine is full of beer cans and burger wrappers and is completely out of gas."

"Woman driver."
Really means.... "Someone who doesn't speed, tailgate, swear, make obscene gestures and who has a better driving record than me."

"Can I help with dinner?"
Really means.... "Why isn't it already on the table?"

"Uh huh," "Sure, honey," or "Yes, dear."
Really mean.... Absolutely nothing. It's a conditioned response like Pavlov's dog drooling.

"Have you lost weight?"
Really means.... "I've just spent our last $30 on a cordless drill."

"It would take too long to explain."
Really means.... "I have no idea how it works."

"I'm getting more exercise lately."
Really means.... "The batteries in the remote are dead."

"I got a lot done."
Really means.... "I found 'Waldo' in almost every picture."

"You cook just like my mother used to."
Really means.... "She used the smoke detector as a meal timer, too."

"Take a break, honey, you're working too hard."
Really means.... "I can't hear the game over the vacuum cleaner."

"Honey, we don't need material things to prove our love."
Really means.... "I forgot our anniversary again."

"You expect too much of me."
Really means.... "You expect me to stay awake."

Thanks to alert Internet clipper Larry Tobin
I suppose no one expects an apology after 50 years, but I want to confess and apologize to those who ate the peas I helped can in 1961.

I worked both shifts that summer at the Waunakee Canning Company, mixing all the brine—the water that canned veggies come in.

I had graduated from high school and signed on to work at the village cannery to make money for college. My pay was $1.20 per hour, a lot higher, it seemed, than the $1.05 minimum wage other guys were getting.

The factory, shown here in the 1940s, was put up in 1928, and the brine room was on the second floor at the northeast corner. It held two 150-gallon stainless-steel mixing tanks and a 300-gallon holding tank below them. The holding tank drained the brine to the five first-floor canning machines, which could fill, cap, and seal 360 cans a minute. When all the machines were operating, I had to mix a lot of brine.

The company’s recipe for its brine was 150 gallons of water, 50 pounds of sugar, and 24 pounds of salt, heated to 150 degrees in the mixing tank before draining into the holding tank. Today I’m confessing that I changed that recipe.

To heat the water, which came cold from the factory’s well, I turned on valves to the steam pipes in the bottoms of the tanks. Even though I turned on the steam as soon as the water covered the coils, the canning machines emptied the holding tank too quickly for brine to reach 150 degrees, so I had to drain the brine when it was still lukewarm. I made the mistake of trying to explain my dilemma to the plant manager.

“We can’t have cold brine,” he yelled, but when I said the holding tank would go dry and the canners would have to stop while the brine heated, he didn’t want me to do that either. So I kept draining the lukewarm brine, and I heard no more about it.

The salt and sugar came in 100-pound sacks from the Diamond Crystal Salt Co. A hoist lifted the sacks to the second floor. In my dad’s day, he had to carry 100-pound sacks of sugar and salt up the stairs to the brine room.

My job was to open the sacks, pour and weigh 25 pounds of sugar into each of two pails and 24 pounds of salt into the third, and then dump those into a 150-gallon tank as it filled with water. That left me with four pounds of salt in each bag, and I had to collect six of those near-empty sacks to have enough salt to fill a pail. And when the plant was running at full capacity, weighing took more time than I had to spare.

I decided it didn’t matter if I weighed the sugar or not: Half a bag, more or less, went into two pails to mix one tank of brine, and the other half went into the next tank. Both tanks eventually drained into the holding tank, where any small inequities dissolved, so to speak.

The salt was a different problem. Those almost-empty 100-pound-capacity bags containing just four pounds of salt kept getting in my way, and weighing out exactly 24 pounds took time and extra lifting. So I made an executive decision: I changed “my” brine formula to 25-25-25. That way, after making four tanks of brine, my 100-pound bag of salt was empty.

What difference, I asked, would one pound of salt make in 150 gallons of water? That was just one ounce of salt in about nine gallons. Of course, I never announced my new, improved recipe to the manager.

If you ate canned peas in 1961, you may have tasted my new brine, because the company sold its products to many private food companies. If it seemed just a bit saltier than you expected, well, sorry about that.

Den “Salty” Adler’s column is a regular feature. Season to taste.