What would Coach Taylor do?

Several years ago, I was invited to give a time management seminar at Penn State, and it was my delight to do so. I flew into College Station in the so-called “Happy Valley,” and a nice lady from the school picked me up and offered to take me on a tour of campus.

But the first place she showed me wasn’t on campus at all-- it was the home of legendary football coach Joe Paterno, one of the most iconic and respected figures in the history of American sports.

That was then; this is now. Paterno has been sacked, an inglorious end to a fabled career, brought down by the horrible revelation that one of his long-time assistant coaches, Jerry Sandusky, has been charged with 40 counts of sexually molesting young boys.

A former quarterback for Penn State, Mike McQueary, admitted to having witnessed Sandusky raping a 10-year-old boy in the locker room in 2002-- and did nothing to stop it. He told Paterno about it later, and Paterno told the athletic board-- and nothing happened.

Should Paterno have done more? Of course. And how about McQueary? Shouldn’t he have “intervened”-- and by that I mean physically restraining Sandusky and then calling the cops immediately! Again, of course.

I certainly like to think I would have. I’m no big-time college athlete and never was. Maybe Sandusky would have beaten the daylights out of me if I’d tried to stop him. But I still want to think that I would have tried.

Fact is, though, we never know how we’ll respond to pressure like that until and unless we find ourselves in the situation.

As a Christian, I’m invited to ask myself “What would Jesus do?” (That’s what all those “WWJD?” bumper stickers are about, in case you didn’t know.) I’ve always thought it was the wrong question. Jesus could turn water into wine, walk on water, calm the storms with a word, cure the leper with a kiss, raise the dead from their slumber.

For me, the real question is: what would Jesus have ME do?

I ask myself that all the time and then try to act accordingly.

Continued on next page
I think of another football coach, this one fictional, Coach Eric Taylor of the East Dillon (Texas) High School football Lions. Kyle Chandler played Coach Taylor for five memorable seasons of the television drama *Friday Night Lights*, in my view the best television show that has ever aired. Chandler was completely convincing as Taylor, who was the kind of coach you’d want your own kid to play for.

I know damn well what Coach Taylor would have done if put in McQueary’s place! Sandusky’s child-raping days would have been over back in 2002.

Another fictional Taylor, Sheriff Andy of Mayberry (played by Andy Griffith) wouldn’t have had any doubts about the right and wrong of things either.

Paterno is another fallen idol, another sad object lesson, another stain on college athletics. And a lot of young boys lives have been broken irreparably. (Don’t kid yourself; people don’t get “over” being raped.)

We face touch moral choices every day, and we fiction writers put our poor characters through them, too. Often the issues are complex, the decision not always clear cut. But deep down, we know good from evil. Whether it’s the voice of Jesus, Coach Taylor, Andy of Mayberry, or some other spiritual guide we’re following, we know what’s right.

I just pray for the strength to do it, regardless of the cost.
When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor I was six-years-old. I have no recollection of the date that would live in infamy—December 7, 1941. Within months, my two oldest brothers were in the Navy.

My memories of those years are clouded and fragmented. We used ration books for meat, gasoline, coffee, sugar, butter, nylon stockings, and shoes. We recycled newspapers, tin cans, rubber, and metal scraps. Small banners appeared in household windows, with a star for each member of the family in the war; a gold star for those killed. Several families my parents knew lost a son. A billboard in the park listed the names of servicemen and women from the county; those who’d died had a special column, with a gold star. Several families my parents knew lost a son. A billboard in the park listed the names of servicemen and women from the county; those who’d died had a special column, with a gold star. Years later, I wondered about the term Gold Star Mother. Was a mother’s grief considered greater than that of a father, a sibling, a spouse?

Santa Claus brought my sister and me Little Army Nurse kits. We did our duty while my brothers played war games. At the Royal theater, The March Of Time newsreels brought the battles home. I waited impatiently for the movie to begin. Real life air raid drills excited us. We called them blackouts. When the siren sounded we turned off all lights; even the streetlights blinked out. Wardens patrolled the neighborhoods looking for violations. I didn’t realize how little chance there was that a rural town in Northwest Iowa would be bombed.

There was an airbase in Sioux City, about 60 miles away, and on the rare occasion a plane thundered overhead, we scanned the sky for a glimpse.

One afternoon, an army plane crashed on a nearby farm. My older brother recalls, “I was in music class and we heard a tremendous crash. After school we learned the news and raced out to see the wreckage.” In addition to his memory, I resorted to a scrapbook of newspaper clippings from World War II. It tells me that the time was January, 1943; the plane was a two-motor Martin B-26 bomber en route from Florida to Omaha, Nebraska. When trouble erupted, they were instructed to fly to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. They didn’t make it; six crew members and one passenger parachuted to safety before the plane crashed and exploded in a field.

My two older sisters worked in Sioux City, in a dry cleaner near the airbase. One time they came home to visit, bringing a drawstring from a pajama, which they’d taken as a souvenir from Jimmy Stewart’s laundry.

To shore up this memory, I checked Google: Early in World War II, the U.S. Army established a major training base at Sioux City. The Air Base became one of the prime locations for B-17 heavy bomber basic flight qualification training as well as home to various support and maintenance units. Hollywood actor and Pilot-Captain Jimmy Stewart was posted to Sioux City with his squadron in 1943, where he and his crew completed their B-17 qualification prior to deployment overseas.

In April of 1945, President Roosevelt died. A couple of weeks later, Adolf Hitler shot himself. I recall those events; I was nearly ten.

The 1940s remains my favorite era for novels, movies, and music: Glenn Miller’s orchestra; Sinatra; The Andrew’s Sisters; Don’t Sit Under The Apple Tree; The White Cliffs Of Dover; We’ll Meet Again, I’ll Be Seeing You.

My clearest war memory involves a song. Both my brothers had married, and one sister-in-law lived with us for a while. One day after the war had ended, she received a letter from my brother. “Joe’s coming home,” she announced after reading the V-Mail. From the radio came the trumpet of Harry James accompanying Helen Forest singing, “Kiss me once, and kiss me twice, and kiss me once again; it’s been a long, long, time.”

With a smile that defined her personality, Iris crooned, “It has been a long, long time.”
By Gary E. Dries
During the war years, 1941-45, troop trains moving young soldiers through Northwest Iowa stopped in our little town of Sibley for water or other supplies. They were coming from, or going to, the killing fields of Europe and the South Pacific. I don't recall how often they arrived, and I'm sure on school days they arrived unnoticed. They'd stay 30 minutes or less, and the hundreds of young men weren’t allowed to get off the train.

They stopped at the Rock Island depot, an East-West bound train in South Sibley. In plain view, just yards away, was the Osceola County Creamery. We met the train, a half dozen of us 10-year-olds from the South part of town. At first we just wanted to greet them, but suddenly the windows flew open and GIs by the dozens waved money at us, to go buy them some milk: quarts, pints, chocolate milk, buttermilk. We grabbed the money, dashed to the creamery, filled one order, dashed back and grabbed another soldier’s money, filled his order, and did it all over again until the train pulled out. It was fast, furious, and disorganized.

Don't ask me how we remembered whose order we had, or didn't have, but they were generous tippers and we all had about ten dollars by the time it was over.

My boyhood friend, who was part of the adventure, remembers some of them wanted beer. I think his memory is faulty. I think they were under orders to not "want" beer. Just like they were under orders to not "want" to get off the train to meet and charm the young ladies of Sibley (who were, by the way, nowhere in sight).

It's fun to think about those guys and wonder who they were. Some of them likely died in combat weeks, even days, later; the law of averages tells us that. Some likely went on to become decorated war heroes. We know many were kids from the farms, factories, and high schools of America, unaware they were on a fast-track to becoming men on a mission, charter members of what would later be called the Greatest Generation. Hired guns, draftees and volunteers, deputized, for the duration.

Could we have made those milk runs for future presidential candidate Robert Dole? Or future movie star, medal-of-honor winner Audie Murphy? Maybe Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Feller was in our midst. How about the dishonored Pvt. Eddie Slovik, the only soldier executed by our military for desertion since the Civil War. Could he have been one of those boys? We'll never know.

I'm sure we didn't buy war bonds with our windfall. But kids were part of what the grown-ups called the "war effort." Sometimes we hunted for scrap iron and dragged it to the scrap yards. It seems like no matter how much it weighed the dealer always gave us two cents, and we'd run to a store and spend it on some low budget junk food. Pogey-bait and gedunk, in military jargon.

We wrote letters to brothers or friends on Iwo Jima, or in France, and some were POWs in North Africa. Moms prayed and planted victory gardens, Dads rationed gas and sugar, and together they put stars in the front window, one for each family member in service. There were gold stars for the KIA (killed in action) families. My classmate lost a brother whom the townspeople called Jeep.

Like poker, baseball, and romance, war has its winners and losers. The world proclaimed our nation a big part of winning the war over Japan and Germany. The 10-year-old milk peddlers grew up and became Korean War veterans. Nations focused on strategies to prevent a World War III but ended up with the Vietnam War and a “Cold War with communist China and Russia.” The history of war is a book with no end. This is Gary’s first contribution to Extra Innings and proves that his sister, Madonna, isn’t the only writer in the family.
Kids do say the darnedest things

with apologies to Art Linkletter and thanks to Sandy Mickelson, who spotted this on the I-net and sent it along.

1) NUDITY
I was driving with my three young children one warm summer evening when a woman in the convertible ahead of us stood up and waved. She was stark naked! As I was reeling from the shock, I heard my 5-year-old shout from the back seat, “Mom, that lady isn't wearing a seat belt!”

2) OPINIONS
On the first day of school, a first-grader handed his teacher a note from his mother. The note read, “The opinions expressed by this child are not necessarily those of his parents.”

3) KETCHUP
A woman was trying hard to get the ketchup out of the jar. During her struggle the phone rang so she asked her 4-year-old daughter to answer the phone. “Mommy can't come to the phone to talk to you right now. She's hitting the bottle.”

4) MORE NUDITY
A little boy got lost at the YMCA and found himself in the women's locker room. When he was spotted, the room burst into shrieks, ladies grabbing towels and running for cover. The little boy watched in amazement and then asked, “What's the matter, haven't you ever seen a little boy before?”

5) POLICE
I parked my police van in front of the station at the end of my shift, as always. As I gathered my equipment, my K-9 partner, Jake, started barking, and I saw a little boy staring in at me.

   “Is that a dog you got back there?” he asked.
   “It sure is,” I replied.
   The boy looked at me and then towards the back of the van. Finally he said, “What'd he do?”

6) ELDERLY
While delivering lunches to elderly shut-ins, I took my 4-year-old daughter on my afternoon rounds. She was intrigued by the various appliances of old age, particularly the canes, walkers and wheelchairs. One day I found her staring at a pair of false teeth soaking in a glass. As I braced myself for the inevitable barrage of questions, she turned and whispered, “The tooth fairy will never believe this!”

7) DRESS-UP
A little girl was watching her parents dress for a party. When she saw her dad donning his tuxedo, she warned, “Daddy, you shouldn't wear that suit.”

   “And why not, darling?”
   “It always gives you a headache the next morning.'

8) SCHOOL
A little girl had just finished her first week of school. “I'm just wasting my time,” she informed her mother. “I can't read, I can't write, and they won't let me talk!”

9) BIBLE
A little boy opened the big family Bible. He was fascinated as he fingered through the old pages. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible, an old leaf that had been pressed in between the pages.

   “Mama, look what I found,” the boy called out.
   “What is it, dear?”
   With astonishment in his voice, he stammered, “I think it's Adam 's underwear!”
Comparisons are odious

We don’t need another Shakespeare. We need you.

By Suzanne Beecher

Once again, Suzanne has generously given me permission to reprint her column, which runs daily in her DearReader e-letter.

Today's question is from Sean. "Suzanne, I am so inspired by works of literature. Recently I have been reading through several works of Thoreau, and I am in awe of his knowledge and insight into what he experiences. I have shared this with my sister, and she tells me (over and over) that I should write. My issue is that with so many great authors, how do I rate at being in their shoes? Writing isn't just expression. It is expression with a vast history of thought and beauty. So I ask myself, can I express myself better than Thoreau or Homer? Will I add to the greatness of writing, or will I just add to the motion or act of writing? What are your thoughts?"

--Sean

Suzanne replies:

Dear Sean,

Every once in a while I have a bad habit of comparing myself to others, and you know, I can't think of one time that it's done me any good. Writing isn't about how I measure up to other authors. Look hard enough and you'll always be able to find someone who you think is more intelligent, better looking, or a more talented writer than yourself.

Writing isn't about how I measure up to other authors. Look hard enough and you'll always be able to find someone who you think is more intelligent, better looking, or a more talented writer than yourself.

I say this to you in kindness, Sean, I feel you're using the "how do I compare thinking" as a reason to not start writing. Almost every writer will confess there are familiar stumbling blocks they face when they begin a new writing project.

In my case, there's a fear inside of me that I have to push through before I can begin. Beginning is scary to me. Where will it take me? How on earth am I going to get there? Hey, do I really know what the heck I'm doing? And yes, sometimes I fear, 'what if the words I write doesn't measure up?'

But my writing only needs to answer to me.

Sure, it's nice when people tell me they enjoyed reading my daily column or my book. I appreciate hearing it. But my real reason for writing is that I'm hoping when someone reads what I've written, they'll be a little easier on themselves. The reason I openly talk about my feelings, good and bad, is that I'm hoping my words will ease a pain in someone's heart and allow them to recognize that it's okay to be themselves--whatever that might be at the moment.

Every author tells a story in their own unique voice. I suspect there's a reader patiently waiting to hear yours--start writing, Sean.

Suzanne@Emailbookclub.com

Go to www.dearreader.com for a daily dose of Suzanne's wit, warmth, and wisdom and excerpts from new books, all for free.

Glorious insults from an era before English got boiled down to 4-letter words

A member of Parliament to Disraeli: "Sir, you will either die on the gallows or of some unspeakable disease."

"That depends, Sir," said Disraeli, "whether I embrace your policies or your mistress."

"He had delusions of adequacy." - Walter Kerr

"He has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire." - Winston Churchill

"I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure." - Clarence Darrow

"He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary." - William Faulkner (about Ernest Hemingway)

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it." - Moses Hadas

"I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it." - Mark Twain

"He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends..." - Oscar Wilde

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend, if you have one." - George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second ... if there is one." - Winston Churchill, in response.

"His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork." - Mae West
The purpose of both the query letter and synopsis is to snare the interest of an agent or publisher in wanting to read a portion of, or if the stars are aligned, your entire manuscript. In my experience a request for manuscript material occurs from about five percent of the queries you send – yup, five out of 100. Those odds increase dramatically if you have the opportunity to pitch an agent at a writer’s conference.

The range of material requested is from five pages to the entire manuscript. The request for manuscript material ALWAYS takes the form of THE FIRST five, 10, 15, or 50 pages. Most frequently the request is for the first five. There’s a reason for that.

The days when you could write, ‘It was the best of times, it was the worst to times’ are long, long gone. In the first five pages a fiction writer must introduce the protagonist, create the initial conflict, and show what is at risk for the protagonist.

How often have you browsed through books at your local bookstore, opened the cover, read two-three pages, and decided to return it to the self or buy it? That’s exactly the process an agent or publisher is doing when they request your first five pages. Those who ask for more have the hook set and want to learn if you can deliver the promises of your query letter and synopsis.

In our world most communication is by e-mail, and you need to copy your manuscript pages and paste them into the body of the e-mail. If you send the manuscript as an attachment, they won’t open, let alone read it.

The only time you should attach a portion or your total manuscript is when the agent or publisher specifically requests an attachment.

After pasting the pages into the e-mail check it over carefully because often the formatting changes – always for the worse-- and you need to fix it before sending.

If intrigued by the first five pages, the editor or agent is rarely ready to request the entire manuscript but instead may ask for another hunk – generally about 50 pages. It may take up to 12 weeks to receive the second request for material.

This second request for pages is critical. You’ve definitely set the hook, and the agent or publisher is now looking for voice and craft in your writing and to determine the arc of your story. All of these elements should be evident in the first 50 pages.

Again, it may take up to 12 weeks to have the agent or publisher respond, and in many cases silence can be interpreted as – NO THANKS. However, if you’re like me, after waiting 12 weeks, I’m frazzled and having nightmares, so a polite follow-up e-mail asking the status of the review is appropriate.

The holy grail is for the agent or publisher to request your entire manuscript, and in most cases they will provide instructions on the format they want and how to attach a document to them.

Again, a response may take up to 12 weeks. If you’ve kept count we’ve chewed up 36 weeks – 9 months-- just in getting the manuscript read.

In my case from the date I submitted a query letter to the date I was offered a contract, 30 weeks lapsed. It might have taken this long because I’m an unknown in the publishing community, and this will be my debut novel.

The agent’s or publisher’s response to the manuscript may take one of two paths. One path a request for specific changes and re-submission for further consideration. The second path is to offer a contract, often with the condition that you consider specific suggestions to alter the story or writing.

Next month, we’ll review the contract negotiation process.
During the 2011 Open House New York weekend, I toured a dozen buildings, then gave myself an extra day to explore the city. I walked up Fifth Avenue after breakfast, taking pictures as the early-morning sun created different angles of light on the Manhattan buildings. When I reached the New York Public Library at 42nd Street, the sun was reflecting off the head of the marble lion on the south side of the building’s front stairway. I began shooting the scene from different angles, including in the images some of the people on the steps below the library’s Corinthian columns and around the marble base of the lion.

After taking five pictures, I noticed a man in a black hat approaching from my left. He was headed for the lion, so I waited, and as he passed beneath the statue I captured this view of him silhouetted against its white marble base.

The New York Public Library sits where George Washington’s troops battled the pursuing British in 1776. The site later contained the city’s one-block-square Croton Reservoir, built in 1845 in the Egyptian Revival style. In 1897 the block was chosen for the city’s new library. It was close to Grand Central Depot a few blocks away at 42nd Street and Park Avenue (replaced by the current Grand Central Terminal in 1913), and the planned Pennsylvania Station at 33rd Street and 7th Avenue (completed in 1910 but torn down in 1963). Construction of the new library took 12 years, starting in 1899 when it took 500 workers two years just to tear down the solidly built reservoir.

The library’s architects, John Merven Carrere and Thomas Hastings, used 530,000 cubic feet of white Vermont marble for the building’s exterior and parts of the interior. It was the largest marble structure in the United States at that time.

Ornamental details in the stone were hand carved—many by French, German, and Italian workmen—experienced in Old World techniques. The library formally opened on May 23, 1911, and for 50 years, from 1913 to 1963, Grand Central Terminal, Pennsylvania Station, and the New York Public Library were considered the center of New York’s Beaux-Arts architecture.

Two lions flank the steps leading to the library’s front entrance on Fifth Avenue. They were modeled in pink Tennessee marble by noted animal sculptor Edward Clark Potter and were carved by the Picarrilli Brothers, considered the finest stone carvers of the time.

The lions have had various names, but the most famous are “Patience” and “Fortitude,” given to them by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia for the qualities he felt New Yorkers would need to endure the Great Depression.

After I got back to Wisconsin, I entered this photo in openhousenewyork inc.’s Focus on Architecture photo contest. It was awarded one of the three Judges’ Choice Awards. You can see the 2011 winners, as well as the other entries, in openhousenewyork’s blog at www.ohny.org.

The four judges, all with excellent credentials, picked my photograph for an award. But I have no doubt that it was the man in the hat—a type of hat I didn’t notice anyone else wearing in New York—walking past the sunlit base of the library’s marble lion that won that award.
The Missouri Muse  
Perry “Paw Joe” Stone  

Facts for fiction:  
The buck stopped here-- but didn’t stay long

Stranger than fiction, facts propel the imagination to soar.
A recent issue of the Advocate, Berry County's local paper, had an article about a body found along a creek bed running through Cassville. The sheriff announced the man's death to be from natural causes. Foul play was never a consideration even though a plastic bag had been tied over the deceased's head.

That county sheriff found a place in the novel I’m writing:
"Sheriff Cecil Cannonberry's eyes searched the length of the body from head to toe. ‘Looks to me like he died of natural causes.’"
"'Not much more natural than dying, especially if you have a plastic bag over your face.' The deputy agreed.

“The deceased lay listening with indifference. Any expression over such calloused attitudes by the backwoods authorities was hidden inside the triple strength Glad trash bag tied tightly around the man's tattooed neck.

“No one noted how the man had duct taped his wrists behind his back, after bagging his head, or the struggle it must have been to hide the roll of tape before suffocation laid him to rest at the edge of the water.”

Another article, this one from Asbury, Missouri's, paper, was perfect fodder to write about a family feud. The column told of two hunters sitting in their camouflaged hiding spots, neither knowing the other was across the clearing. The proverbial buck stopped, literally right between them, and both fired. The buck dropped, and the two hunters discovered each other.

An argument started over who should get the prize-- loud enough to wake the dead apparently, because the buck jumped up and ran off with both hunter's weapons tangled in its antlers, where they had put them to stake their claims.

That sparked a fictional feud where a buck is killed in the middle of Apple Seed Lane between the McGruber’s and the Hanchie’s properties.

Facts for fiction comes in abundance--from everywhere. For example, one day as my neighbors, Helen and Herman, crossed the street, a mighty gust of that fierce western Kansas wind lifted the dress of a woman crossing in the opposite direction. Her arms went over her head, and she fought frantically to hold the hem line without success.

Herman, gentleman that he was, handed Helen the grocery sacks he was carrying and ran to the stranger's rescue. Finally, they fought the dress back down to just above the knee. Herman continued to help hold it in place until they were across the street and into a store. The embarrassed young lady gratefully thanked the old blushing knight in shining armor, after which, Helen, who had followed along, offered, "If you live very far I will be happy to buy you a pair of slacks. I really need Herman here to carry these groceries home before the ice cream melts."

In my fictional version of the story, my protagonist, Leroy, ended up having to explain to the police what he was doing with his head under the screaming woman's dress at the moment Wichita’s finest drove by.

Of course discretion is best whether fact or fiction. Uncle Perry had a pet coyote named Friendly that liked to sneak up on visitors and nip them on the butt. One day it slithered up to the unsuspecting Avon lady, biting her good on the behind. Uncle Perry came to the rescue and ran Friendly off. He explained that farmers didn’t carry insurance covering such injuries, but he’d be happy to kiss the hurt to make it feel better.

I wrote 3,000 words, including Friendly's greeting the Avon lady. Even though it was true, years later I was asked to edit that part out before Aunt Louise could read about it. It came as a revelation: Aunt Louise wasn't home that morning. I can mention it in this piece now, Uncle Perry being dead--of natural causes, though, no trash bags or duct tape was involved.

Bless you and yours, Coach, Paw Joe
Whose story is it?

*Horseman, Pass By and Hud*, a comparison

by Pat Fitzgerald

*Hud* is just shy of fifty-years-old and a true film classic. Its conflicts - a father/son clash, nature and disease ruining a man's life's work, a teen torn between loyalty to family and longing for the wild life - are as relevant today as they were in 1963. The main character is the wild, lowdown, underhanded yet uncannily charming Hud, played by Paul Newman. But despite the movie's title, is the story truly about Hud?

The movie is based on Larry McMurtry's novel *Horseman, Pass By*, published in 1961. It's a first person tale, told by seventeen-year-old Lonnie Bannon, who lives on a lonely ranch, 12 miles outside of Thalia, Texas, i.e. the middle of nowhere. He has a crush on the ranch housekeeper, loves his grandfather, and has little use for his step-uncle, Hud. When foot and mouth disease threatens the demise of the Bannon cattle herd, Lonnie does his best to keep his life normal by attending Thalia's rodeo, hanging out with his buddies, and playing checkers with the housekeeper.

**Hud lives on the periphery of the plot. He shines around only to shake things up and make life on the ranch unpleasant. This Hud is humorless, nasty, scheming and violent. He's everything Lonnie doesn't want to be.**

So how did Hud become the film's lead character? Perhaps writers who adapted the novel to screenplay realized a modern Western coming-of-age story would hardly be a blockbuster. They may have taken to heart a line spoken by Lonnie's grandfather, Homer Bannon, in *Horseman, Pass By*. He says about Hud: “Women just like to be around something dangerous part of the time.” It's also possible they had Paul Newman in mind for the lead role and understood Newman would be attracted to a Hud who had morphed from violent to volatile, nasty to possessing an edgy humor - “I always thought the law was meant to be interpreted in a lenient manner. Sometimes I lean one way and sometimes I lean the other.”

Newman's Hud is capable of unabashed charisma, even in his first on-screen appearance, when he strolls from the home of a married woman whose husband happens to be out of town.

Still, the film's opening scene does not belong to Newman. The story starts with Lonnie, played by Brandon de Wilde, as he searches Thalia for his uncle. It's clear from the start that Lonnie is conflicted about Hud. He considers him to be a pain in the butt, yet Lonnie admires Hud's wild side. He revels in those occasions when he goes to town with Hud and drinks and fights alongside him. Lonnie defends Hud to his grandfather, who has little use for him because he's "unprincipled.” Lonnie states that Hud isn't much different from everyone else in town.

Lonnie and Hud's relationship isn't the only area where the film strays from the novel. The Hud of *Horseman, Pass By* is ranch owner Homer Bannon's stepson. His mother is alive, which may be why Homer allows Hud to stick around. Though Lonnie does say: “he was as good as the best and more reckless than the wildest of the thousand wild-ass cowboys.” We learn that Homer Bannon was once himself pretty wild, in the days when the West was still untamed and lawless. Homer may see a little of himself in Hud, despite the fact that Hud dislikes, if not hates, Homer.

Hud is Homer's son in the film. Though disdain between them is prevalent, when Homer displays health problems, Hud shows genuine concern for his father. Homer's death plays a big part in the climax of both film and novel. In *Hud*, Homer dies in Hud's arms, but not without Homer admonishing his son with his dying words: “Hud there's waiting on me and he ain't a patient man.” Incidentally, Melvyn Douglas won an Oscar for his impeccable performance as tough-hided Homer Bannon.

In *Horseman, Pass By* Homer dies by the hand of Hud when he performs what is arguably a mercy killing by shooting mortally wounded Homer. Yet in both film and novel it's Lonnie who bears the emotional brunt of Homer's death. Losing his grandfather causes Lonnie to become fully aware of Hud's ruthlessness.
The Bannon's housekeeper plays an important role in both film and novel. She is African American Halmea in Horseman, Pass By. Maybe in 1963 the world wasn't ready for two white men - Lonnie and Hud - to lust after a black woman. Therefore Hud's housekeeper was played by Patricia Neal who also won an Oscar for her portrayal of Alma. In Horseman, Pass By, Hud insults Halmea in the vilest of racist terms. He molests her whenever the mood strikes him. In the film, Hud irritates Alma with unwanted passes, though she is not immune to his charm.

However, when drunken Hud tries to force himself on Alma he's stopped by Lonnie. Halmea suffers a worse fate. Hud rapes her.

Lonnie's behavior toward the housekeeper remains constant on screen and on paper. He flirts, yet he treats both Halmea and Alma with respect. Though he is heartbroken to lose the housekeeper's friendship, Lonnie drives Halmea away from the ranch - as he does Alma - once it's obvious they must get away from Hud.

Hud does not change is either Hud or Horseman, Pass By. Lonnie has the character arc. He matures and makes the choice to walk away from the life lived by his uncle. He leaves hard-hearted Hud and the ranch where he grew up. That's why, despite Newman's amazing performance as Hud and Hollywood naming the film after his character, I am convinced that the essence of the plot belongs to Lonnie Bannon.

It's a cliché - the book was better than the movie. In the case of Horseman, Pass By versus Hud, I don't believe that cliché applies.

Filmed in black and white, Hud illustrates the absolute ruralness of ranch life from the opening to the closing scene. The film starts with Lonnie being driven to Thalia in a pick-up truck pulling a trailer that carries a saddled horse. It ends when he walks down a dirt road that leads away from the ranch, carrying only his suitcase and heading toward who-knows-where.

Horseman, Pass By is a marvelous novel, a poetic description of life in the West: “The first red streamers of light were dusty and brilliant on the green mesquite. Banks of mist rose from the dewy grass and hung gray around the bellies of the moving cattle. ...All of them [ranch hands] wanted more and seemed to end up with less; they wanted excitement and ended up stomped by a bull or smashed against a highway; or they wanted a girl to court; and anyway, whatever it was they wanted, that was what they ended up doing without.”

Both are brilliant. One is worth seeing, if you haven't already - and it's available on Netflix. The other is a great read - and downloadable on Kindle.

I now live of New Mexico's ranch country, and I note that some things haven't changed in the West since the days of Hud and Horseman, Pass By. At least once a week I notice a pick-up truck pulling a trailer that contains a saddled horse. It's usually parked outside the local grocery store or post office. My neighbors leave home every summer weekend to compete in small town rodeos, much like the rodeo that came to Thalia. The housedress - so sexily worn by Patricia Neal in Hud - has long gone out of style, but a good 70% of local men live in jeans, cowboy boots and Stetsons. And the plaid cowboy shirts similar to those worn in Hud are sold at the local mercantile. My husband now owns three.

Homer Bannon mourned the demise of long-horned cattle, but he didn't have worried. A herd of long-horns happily grazes just outside Capitan's town limits. I refer to them as our suburbanites.
In the Projection Booth
with Jake McLaughlon

Honorable movies worth mentioning from 2011

Foo Fighters: Back and Forth-
I don't usually buy films blind, but this one looked great and didn’t disappoint. The film chronicles the story of the rock band Foo Fighters up to present day, an amazing story from their formation after Kurt Cobain’s death to becoming one of the biggest bands on the planet. If you’re a fan or just looking for a great music documentary, this is definitely worth checking out.

Paul-
I really enjoyed this film, but it just isn't as good as Simon Pegg and Nick Frost's two collaborations with Edgar Wright. Greg Mottola is a good choice for directing this comedy full of geek humor. It has its fun moments.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2-
My second favorite film in the series after Prisoner of Azkaban, this is the finale I was hoping for. I have not read the books, but as a film alone, it works well. There are a few scenes that I have problems with, mainly the final half hour. The pacing is done so well for the first hour and a half, and then it seems they rush everything to wrap it up. I wouldn't have minded them taking their time, but this is a minor problem. It's still a great ending to a magical series.

Cedar Rapids-
I think this just may be my favorite comedy of the year. Ed Helms is hilarious as a man from Wisconsin who visits the Iowa city and acts as if he's visiting New York. His enthusiasm and kindness are delightful and provide many laughs. John C. Reilly is a wonderful scene stealer as always.

Kung Fu Panda 2-
Dreamworks can't hold a candle to the magic of Pixar's films, but the two Kung Fu Panda movies have really impressed me. They don't rely on pop culture references for laughs like so many other animated films these days. Like the first film, the sequel looks gorgeous with well choreographed fight scenes and beautiful landscape shots. A very entertaining animated film.

Bridesmaids-
This film took me by surprise. When the first trailer was released, I thought it looked terrible and unfunny. But it turned out to be one of the funniest movies of the year. Not only is it a great comedy, but it has dramatic moments as well. The downward slope of Kristen Wiig's character is heartbreaking. Things turn out fine for her in the end, but there are still some sad moments. Melissa McCarthy is easily the best part of the film. She is hysterical in every scene she's in, and I'm sure this film has made her a star.

Beginners-
A bittersweet, beautiful film. The love stories are believable, and this is far from your typical romance. The cast is fantastic. Ewan McGregor and Melanie Laurent are one of the best onscreen couples I have seen in a long time, as are Christopher Plummer and Goran Visnjic. Plummer gives one of the best performances I've seen this year as the dying father who reveals he's gay after the passing of his wife. It's a beautiful, heartbreaking performance that should get attention come award season. Do see this film about new beginnings of happiness and heartbreak.

Horrible Bosses-
As good as the ensemble was in Bridesmaids, this film gets my vote for best cast in a comedy this year. Everyone is hilarious and very enjoyable to watch. The bosses themselves are all vile, especially Kevin Spacey. This is the most intimidating he's been since his performance in Seven. Jennifer Aniston is the funniest she's been in years, and Colin Farrell plays awful great. The three employees are just as great. Jason Bateman, Charlie Day and Jason Sudeikis make an unexpected but wonderful trio.

Other honorable mentions: Rango, Super, Hanna, Our Idiot Brother, and Cowboys and Aliens.
OCTOBER'S LOOM
by Bonny Conway

Autumn is a weaver
spinning rugs on ancient looms
she hand knots her carpets
for outdoor parlor rooms
she dips in her dye-jars
of ochre and bordeaux
stirring up the pigments
until the colors glow
winds howl like timberwolves
across gray flannel skies
snarl at oak and apple
just as the harvest dies
unraveling has begun
bare branches start to snap
fasting of November ends
with ash trees freezing sap.

It's just dawnd on me !

My dog sleeps about 20 hours a day.
He has his food prepared for him.
He can eat whenever he wants.
His meals are provided at no cost to him.
He visits the Dr. once a year for his checkup,
and again during the year if any medical needs arise.
For this he pays nothing, and nothing is required of him.
He lives in a nice neighborhood in a house
that is much larger than he needs, but he is not required to do any upkeep.
If he makes a mess, someone else cleans it up.
He has his choice of luxurious places to sleep.
He receives these accommodations absolutely free.
He is living like a King, with no expenses whatsoever.
All of his costs are picked up by others who go out and earn a living every day.
I was just thinking about all this, and suddenly it hit me like a brick .......
I think my dog is a member of Congress!

One eye opened
As I looked both left and right
I hadn't been asleep but moments
It as the middle of the night
Then I came wide awake
Putting patience to the test
I started to toss and turn
I couldn't get my rest
Flipping to my left side
Then over to my right
Throwing covers across the bed
Then pulling them around me tight
Finally, sitting on the patio
I gazed at stars and moon
A warm cup of milk would calm me soon
Shortly I felt relaxed
I could return to bed once more
If when going outside I hadn't locked the door.

Perry Stone
Coach’s Mailbag

Giving Tree gets response

Hello Marsh,

Just read the latest edition and as usual enjoyed every item. I was so pleased to hear Bonny Conway admit she’d kept The Giving Tree. I thought I was the only parent who kept that book. My grandson will soon be old enough to enjoy it, so I’ll haul it out again, but I know I won't let go of it. The first time I read it to my step-kids I cried. They, of course, thought I was nutty. I’m sure I confirmed that idea when I read them George’s Marvellous Medicine (Roald Dahl) and laughed so hard I cried again.

Also, I was thrilled to read “In Praise of Boredom.” I’m with you 100% that creativity blossoms when kids have time to just BE. The youngest (by 6+ yrs.) of a tribe of seven (five cousins, my sister and me) raised by our grandmother, I was far too young to keep up with the others. Trust me when I say that aside from weekly laundry duty, Gramma definitely wasn't out there orchestrating our daily events, so we all had plenty of freedom.

I spent a LOT of time contemplating my navel, the clouds in the sky, ants, etc. I learned that one of the most peaceful places on earth was lying back in my little boat (Small Fry - I still have her! Daddy built her from a kit for my 7th birthday, and Bruce refinished her for me last year.) drifting with the current and staring up at the sky. A person can truly let go of every shred of anxiety and stress that way. That bit of knowledge served me well in later years when I went through my corporate stress addict phase.

Once a summer I’d drive to Mom and Dad’s place up in Manitowish Waters, row Small Fry out into the middle of Rest Lake, and just drift. After an hour, even the bald eagles would ignore me. They'd be teaching their offspring to fish, screaming and diving down to the surface to grab a snack and soaring back to the tippy tops of the pine trees. Work deadlines didn't even enter my mind. Now people take pills hoping to get the same results. Sad.

One more thing...I have a story coming out in November in Chicken Soup for the Soul’s book titled Food and Love. It’s called “Everything I Would Need to Know.” Exciting!

Thanks again for keeping the issues coming! I look forward to every one.

Barbara Burris

COACH,

I just finished reading EI #25. Thought the article on comparing grouting to writing was right on. Good comparison.

I recall a Christmas when I gave a copy of The Giving Tree to my daughter and she gave one to me!

Andrea Schoenthal

We don’t need no stinking proofreaders

Good reading.

Your piece on boredom reminded me of this past summer in the Black Hills of SD. We were standing at one of the most famous places in the US, Mount Rushmore, when my 8-year-old granddaughter announced that she was bored. Sigh.

Madonna Dries Christensen

P.S. In the photo with my article (last issue), David is on the right.

Sorry! But proofreading is SO boring!

That’s David Dries on the right!

News from our writer/readers

Pahnke pleases with

The Chiefs Investigate

Ed Pahnke has a new anthology of short stories, all involving a father-son detective team, Native Americans Charlie and Jimmy Chief. They compete to see who can solve the 15 mysteries in this nice collection and also who can get in the last quip at the end of each story.

Three years ago Ed published his first novel, Northern Knights, a mystery set in Wisconsin’s North Woods in the 1930’s. He has a volume of Charlie Chief shaggy-dog mysteries in the works and expects to keep writing “until ginkgo biloba is no longer effective,” at which time he says he’ll run for public office.

Pourchot dishes up poignant, playful tales of plunging into puberty

Becky Pourchot bounces from one embarrassing story to another in this funny memoir, *I Look Better in Binary: childhood stories*—but don’t be deceived. Under the humor, you’ll recognize a lot of the struggles of your own growing-up time.

Even the blurbs on the cover are marvelous—and give you a taste of Becky’s sense of humor.

“After 12 hours of labor, this is how she repays me!”
- Becky’s mom
“None of this ever happened.”
- Becky’s brother
“It’s apparent that she still has a lot to work through.”
- Becky’s therapist

Becky’s an active freelancer living in Flagler Beach, Florida with her husband, three no doubt embarrassed kids, and her parrot, Zoe.

Read more about her and her book and order your copy at [www.laughingtigerpublications.com](http://www.laughingtigerpublications.com).

First Person Singular

**Elvis, Christmas, and me**

By Andrea Schoenthal

I am an Elvis Presley fan. In 2004 my husband and I took a short pre-Christmas trip to Memphis, and I had the opportunity to tour Graceland, the home Elvis purchased in 1957. The trip and especially the tour were my husband’s Christmas gift to me.

We checked into a motel across Elvis Presley Boulevard from Graceland. (We could get Elvis movies upon request on T.V.) From the motel windows, I could see holiday decorations and lights on display at nearby Graceland Plaza.

The next day, my husband dropped me off at the Visitor Center. He’d explore Memphis while I enjoyed my tour. After I purchased my ticket and viewed an Elvis video, my group boarded our shuttle. While we waited in line and went through security, I heard piped-in music: Elvis singing traditional carols.

The tour was self-conducted, proceed at your own pace. I received a head set. Some of the audio was done by Lisa Marie, the daughter of Elvis and Priscilla Presley.

The shuttle carried us through the “music notes” gates onto the grounds and let us off at the mansion. There were two prominent Christmas displays: Santa, with his sled and reindeer, with a sign “MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, ELVIS, suspended above, and a life-sized Nativity Scene.

Inside, the mansion was decorated with poinsettias lining the staircase in the foyer, red draperies, a white sofa in the living room, and a Christmas tree in the dining room.

I took my time exploring the house and grounds. When I reached the Meditation Garden and the grave sites of Elvis, his parents, and his paternal grandmother, I was alone. The audio played Elvis singing “If I Can Dream.” As the tears fell I knew this was one Christmas gift I would cherish forever.

Madonna’s anthologies gain place of honor in Merrill library

*Toys Remembered* and *Dolls Remembered*, both edited by our meandering historian, Madonna Dries Christensen, are on the Memorial Shelf at the T.B. Scott Free Library in Merrill, Wisconsin.

“I don’t know anyone in Merrill,” she notes. “I have no connection to the small town. I e-mailed the librarian, asking if he could tell me who made the donation and in whose memory.”

Librarian Don Litzer explained that the Memorial Shelf holds books and audio-videos that donors may purchase for a special occasion, in memory of or in honor of someone. Each donated volume contains a personalized bookplate and goes into general circulation.

“Out of thousands of books published each year, it’s an honor to have these chosen,” Madonna says. To contributors to the books she adds, “Your story will last a long, long time.”