“You force people to stop asking questions, and before you know it they have auctioned off the question mark, or sold it for scrap.” Barbara Kingsolver, *The Lacuna*

Conflict fuels story, and the stakes need to be high enough to engage your reader. So you need to keep asking yourself what’s really at stake for your protagonist in each scene. It’s a good question to ask when you’re reading someone else’s story, too.

It might be an important question to ask of any sort of tune someone’s playing for you, including the tsunami of political rhetoric that assaults us daily. (Raise your hands if you hate “robo-calls.”)

One of the ancillary insights imbedded in Barbara Kingsolver’s great novel, *The Lacuna*, is the notion that the virulent anti-Communism that tore our country apart in the 1950s and ‘60s and cost a lot of writers, artists and performers their careers wasn’t really about Communism at all, in fact had almost nothing to do with what actual Communists believed or practiced.

In the same way, I suspect the current political slugfest, with the ‘small-government’ “tea-party,” led in my state by our March Hare Governor, Scott Walker, duking it out with the ‘big government’ unionists, led just now by nobody, isn’t about collective bargaining and taxes.

It’s about what “America” means.

Mere rhetoric?

We’re writers. Words are our tools.

Words are also what every human being uses to think with. The words we choose—or are given—determine what concepts we can formulate, embrace, reject, or ignore.

*The American dream: for or against?*

*Pro life or pro choice?*

*In favor of raising taxes or cutting them?*

We’re all in favor of “the American dream”; we just don’t come close to agreeing on what that dream is.

The fierce debate raging over abortion rights is all about being “pro-life” or “pro-choice.” It’s either/or— you’re one or the other; you can’t be both. And if you’re “pro-life,” then you’re “anti-choice.” Simple as that.

Is it? If we let these bumper-sticker labels define the agenda, there’s really nothing to discuss, is there? Nobody’s *anti*-life or *anti*-choice.

--Continued on next page--
The debate over taxes (should we cut ‘em, hike ‘em, redistribute them, or leave them alone) defines the agenda strictly in terms of how much we ought to have to pay to the government. Is that really all it’s about?

What should the government be doing for and to its people, and how much should it rightly cost to do it? Shouldn’t we start there and figure out tax rates accordingly?

Both “sides” in the debate (as if there were really only two) clearly want to redistribute wealth, so that’s not the issue. They just want to send it in opposite directions. So let’s talk more about that and less about whether or not taxes are “too high.”

In the heat of debate, folks on each side might accuse the folks and the other side of not knowing what they’re talking about. And they’re probably both right. Let’s stop shouting, take a deep breath, and see if we can figure out just what we are talking about. Maybe then we can start looking for solutions instead of assigning blame.

WISDOM AWRY
My husband and I divorced over religious differences. He thought he was God and I didn’t. I don’t suffer from insanity; I enjoy every minute of it.
I’m not a complete idiot -- Some parts are missing.
God must love average folk; He made so many of us.
The gene pool could use a little chlorine.
Consciousness: That pesky time between naps.
Ever stop to think-- and forget to start again?
A hangover is the wrath of grapes.
A journey of a thousand miles begins with an argument about the best way to get there.
He who dies with the most toys is still DEAD.
The Reader Rules

Reactions vary to our last issue

**First some kind words**

Your opening piece ["What would Coach Taylor do?"] is wonderful. You hit all the right notes.

**Madonna Dries Christensen**

I just read the December E.I. and the article on “What would Coach Taylor Do” would be perfect for my blog. Frankly, as writers and as people, we need a voice like yours - hopefully not crying out from the wilderness.

Have a peaceful day.

**Rex Owens**

To which Coach blushingly replies:

That's a very nice thing you said about my Coach Taylor scree-- but I'm not fit to tie John's sandal straps, and he wasn't fit to tie Jesus's, so that leaves me as a fairly feeble voice. But I'll probably keep crying out anyway, and wilderness seems to be the status quo these days.

Hey, Coach,

Just wanted to let you know your item on the Penn State matter is the best I've read. Right on.

**Larry Tobin**

Thanks for publishing my baseball poems--I am enjoying *Extra Innings*. This summer I gave readings in Fargo at Zandbroz and Kiwanis and also the Rotary Club in Detroit Lakes. I have also given several readings of my first two books in the Palm Desert, Cal. area where I am now and where my wife and I spend our winters. I hope you and yours have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

**John Manesis**

Two Thanks, Marshall, one for publishing "Extra Innings" and a special thanks for an honorable mention of my book, *The Chiefs Investigate*.

Sincerely,

**Ed Pahnke**

Coach replies (without blush this time): Well, I wasn't awarding ribbons, of course, but if I had been, you would have rated better than an honorable mention. It's a very engaging and entertaining book, Ed, and shows that your devotion to your writing is really paying off.

Oh, you son-of-a-gun!

You just HAD to include a railroad story to needle me, didn't you? Here I sit with 40 plus years of broadcasting experiences, and I am dying to "do" my railroad days stories. But, for whom? Heck, rail magazines do mostly "what's going on now"-type stories. The experiences of being slammed in the face with a Bulgarian fist, and knocked out on the floor of Union Station-Chicago don't fit that mag anymore! Where does it go?

Or what about the day in Glacier Park, at the Great Northern desk, when the hotel manager said, "We need your help-fast! A guy just died last night, his body in heading to Kalispell for embalming, and coming back to go home. His wife needs to change her coach reservations." I gave her a roomette - no extra charge! The real twist here: She lived a half block from me, back in suburban Chicago...something I didn't know until I put her on the train.

Oh heck, yeah...the rails and trains were more fun that the radio and the TV. But, I can't stir up interest. My kids? Yawn!

**Bob (Ho, Ho) Hale**

*See Bob's first piece for E.I., starting on page 11.*

As always, I especially like the "The doting grammarian Oft-overlooked rules of English" section of *Extra Innings*.

**Tana Polansky-Maurer**
I got one decidedly unhappy response and felt that I should print and respond to that one, too.

Subject: adios amigo

MCook. Unsubscribe me from your extra innings site, and then remove the story I submitted about Troop Trains that you butchered with your ending, without my permission or knowledge, before you misrepresented it to your readers as being written by me. (Don't even try to tell me that it was an innocent error or edited for purposes of space. I'm not some fuzzy-faced teenager from Rhinelander)

Who in hell do you think you are? If you have some thoughts on war, it's your site, have the courage of your convictions and spell them out under your own name.

Try telling the Jews of Europe that war wasn't the answer for them, as well as the billions of current victims of the sub-human thugs on planet Earth. The naive, and double-digit IQ required to be a pacifist, (i.e. anti-war peace-nik) must be staggering.

My most indelible memories of the 60's anti-war rallies that I observed was they were populated by twerps who wouldn't have defended their mothers if they saw them being bullied across the street from the drug-fueled rally. Have a nice day.

Gary E. Dries

Coach responds:

I'm so very sorry I offended you with my editing. I try hard, but I obviously make mistakes.

In answer to your only question (which I believe was rhetorical), I am among other things the proud son of my father, Lieutenant Commander George Cook, an Annapolis graduate, a 20-year Navy man, an officer, and a World War II veteran who saw lots of combat. He was the Captain of the U.S.S. Holder on its maiden voyage. (It was sunk on its second voyage, killing 17 of his shipmates, but he was in the hospital and was thus spared.) He also served on the Rueben James, which was also sunk by the enemy.

My dad knew that I respected and loved him without reservation, although we disagreed about war, politics, and whether or not the pass-interference call was a valid rule in football, among other things. He also knew that I would have willingly died defending my mother or him.

In answer to your challenge (“have the courage of your convictions and spell them out under your own name”), I'm pleased to do so by simply quoting another man I admire and respect greatly, another Annapolis graduate and Navy officer, former President James Earl Carter:

“War may sometimes be a necessary evil, but it is always evil.”

Here is Gary's originally ending to his article, unedited:

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. As the war years faded away, 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, as well as a “Cold War with communist China and Russia.” The history of war is a book with no end, while bumper-stickers proclaim that war is not the answer. Ironically, it very often is.

THE WORD WHISPERER

JAN KENT

“I” might sound more important than ‘me,’ but sometimes ‘me’ is the one you want

Which has more status – I or me? Somehow me seems more humble, self-effacing, don't you think? I is more likely the one to be chosen by, say, the mother-in-law.

So – try out these sentences: "There is a vulnerability with Mia and I now that has transformed our relationship," or "The gifts my mother bestowed upon Alice and I were never quite equally charming." There it is – the awesome I.

But, to check it out, take out the proper name and the "and", then see what you think.

Sometimes, mothers-in-law aren't right.

Coach's note: Just between you and I, I’m very glad to have Jan's column back.
Places I have and haven’t been

I have been in many places, but I've never been in Cahoots. Apparently, you can't go alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone.

I've also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognizes you there.

I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there. I have made several trips there, thanks to my friends, family and work.

I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump to get there, and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.

I have also been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go, and I try not to visit there too often.

I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.

Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.

One of my favorite places to be is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenalin flowing and pumps up the old heart! At my age I need all the stimuli I can get!

And, sometimes I think I am in Vincible but life shows me I am not!

I have been in Deep@#*t many times; the older I get, the easier it is to get there.

GREAT TRUTHS ADULTS LEARN:

Raising teenagers is like nailing jelly to a tree.
Wrinkles don't hurt.
Families are like fudge...mostly sweet, with a few nuts
Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground...
Laughing is good exercise. It's like jogging on the inside.
Middle age is when you choose your cereal for the fiber, not the toy..

SUCCESS:

At age 4 success is . . . Not piddling in your pants.
At age 12 success is . . . Having friends.
At age 17 success is . . Having a driver's license.
At age 35 success is . . . Having money.
At age 50 success is . . . Having money.
At age 70 success is . . . Having a driver’s license.
At age 75 success is . . . Having friends.
At age 80 success is . . . Not piddling in your pants.
There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration.

~ Andrew Carnegie

In this digital age there is much speculation about the future of printed books. Although the day might come when books are no longer published as we know them, I believe that books will long be revered and safely held in libraries, museums, in private collections, and in homes around the world. Bound books will be tangible proof that our way of life existed, that we were here for a spell and left a message.

As a child frequenting my hometown library in Iowa, it would not have occurred to me that someday there would be books on these shelves with my name as author. But it was there I developed a love for reading, for the feel of a book in my hands, for the smell of printers ink and paste, for the construction and artistry, from an enticing cover to a synopsis about what to expect from the story, an author’s photo and bio, and, in some cases, colorful illustrations.

My four books are now shelved in the Iowa Room of the Sibley Public Library, and I have an open invitation to stop by for an author book signing.

Much to my surprise, I recently found a Google entry showing that two of my books were on the Memorial Shelf at the T.B. Scott Free Library in Merrill, Wisconsin. I don’t know anyone in Merrill; I have no connection to the small town, although my German and Irish ancestors emigrated to Wisconsin and I have family still there. Naturally, I was curious about why my books were on the Memorial Shelf.

I e-mailed the librarian, asking if he could tell me who made the donation and in whose memory. Donald Litzer’s reply was: The answer to your question is: Not yet.

He explained that the Memorial Shelf contains books and audio-videos that donors may purchase for a special occasion, in memory of or in honor of someone. The gift often represents a particular interest of the honoree. When a gift is purchased, a personalized bookplate is added and the item goes into general circulation.

The items offered for sale as memorials are selected by a librarian assistant, sometimes personal choices; others are recommended by staff members. Memories and nostalgia are considered good topics, and Mr. Litzer believes that my books, Toys Remembered and Dolls Remembered, were chosen for that reason.

Statistics vary on how many books are published in a given year—thousands, to be sure. I’m honored that my anthologies were selected by T.B. Scott Free Library. I have since donated another of my books, Swinging Sisters.

The library’s Website captures the spirit and value of their unique endowment and gift program: Libraries hold the wealth of the world. They allow free access to the accumulated thoughts of many cultures. They open their doors to all of us; they connect us to one another. Gifts to libraries are a time-honored way of contributing to the quality of life of the community, and by extension, the world at large.

When we give a gift to our community library, we affirm the people and the places that hold meaning and promise for us. We leave a legacy for the enrichment of this and future generations. [Coach contributed a story to Toys Remembered and Mrs. Coach contributed a story to Dolls Remembered. The books are available through Amazon and other bookstores and all royalties go to charity.]
ESSAYS FROM IMAGES
DEN ADLER
Train timetable sparks memories

When I was growing up in Waunakee, WI., 9.8 railroad miles from Madison, the Chicago & North Western Railway’s yellow-and-green locomotives often distracted my best friend and me from our ball games in his yard. When the engines’ firemen leaned out their windows to watch passengers boarding or detraining at the depot across the street, we shouted our questions about where the train was going.

I found the Chicago & North Western timetable from June 17, 1957 (pictured) in a box of photographs, postcards, and other memorabilia in the attic we’ve filled during our 40 years in this house. Except for a slight ding at the bottom center and a small scrape on the fold, the timetable is in pristine condition, which is probably why I was willing to pay $9 for it at the Madison train show many years ago. The North Western (yes, the railroad split that into two words; see the timetable) still existed then, but the Union Pacific Railroad took it over in 1995.

The front cover (the section at far right) shows a drawing of a classic E-8 streamlined locomotive stopped at a station. A happy young woman in a red suit has been met by two people after getting off the train.

When the C&NW issued this timetable, no northbound passenger trains and only one southbound each day stopped at Waunakee. In the 1950s and 1960s, with more people driving cars and riding in airplanes, passenger-train cutbacks became common on all U.S. railroads, and finally Amtrak took over most intercity rail passenger operations on May 1, 1971.

The North Western, along with many other railroads, invested in new streamlined engines and passenger cars in the 1950s. The company’s flagship train between Chicago and Minneapolis was given the name The 400 in 1935 because it travelled 400-some miles in about 400 minutes.

Some weekends, my family, friends, and I watched special trains of yellow-and-green cars bulging with football fans on their way from Madison to Minneapolis to watch the University of Wisconsin Badgers play the Minnesota Gophers.

On page 7 of the timetable, a small ad for the Rail Travel Card says, “New ‘Charge-It’ Service on 47 Railroads … ask about it!” I didn’t realize there were that many railroads carrying passengers then. Page 2 says, “Telegrams are accepted at all open telegraph offices in railway stations along the C. & N. W. Railway.”

The timetable also lists bus service between many towns not served by trains, as well as connections to trains of all the major railroads across the country: the Union Pacific, Santa Fe, Pennsylvania, New York Central, Baltimore and Ohio, and others.

The Pullman Company still operated sleeping cars on most railroads’ trains, and the timetable gives examples of prices for “Railroad, Pullman, and Parlor Car Fares.”

As passenger trains dwindled, my friends and I watched the North Western’s freight trains roll through and sometimes stop to switch at the lumber yard, feed mill, or cannery. Before locomotives had radios, freight crews lit bright red fusees to signal their engineers during switching, especially in fog or darkness. Sometimes we found a partly used fusee along the tracks where a crewman dropped it before climbing aboard the caboose and leaving town. (All freight trains had cabooses then.) Some of the fusees were still lit, and we pretended to signal each other.

In 2000, after the Union Pacific leased the tracks through Waunakee to the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad, my dad and I rode a red-and-silver Wisconsin & Southern excursion train—pulled by one of those classic E-8 locomotives like the North Western depicted on its timetable—from Madison through Waunakee to Devil’s Lake and back. We had a great time, but both of us would have much preferred a ride in the old yellow and green cars of the Chicago & North Western.
Little known and mostly bogus ‘facts’ about Minnesota

Minnesota became the 32nd state on May 11, 1858 and was originally settled by a lost tribe of Norwegians seeking refuge from the searing heat of Wisconsin’s winters.

**Minnesota gets its name from the Sioux Indian word "mah-nee-soo-tah," meaning, "No, really... They eat fish soaked in lye."**
The state song of Minnesota is "Someday the Vikings will... Aw, never mind."
The Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota covers 9.5 million square feet and has enough space to hold 185,000 idiot teenagers yapping away on cell phones.

**Madison, Minnesota is known as "the lutefisk capital of the world." Avoid this city at all costs.**
Cartoonist Charles M. Shultz was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota and grew up in St. Paul. He was the only artist to accurately depict the perfectly circular heads of Minnesota natives.

**The Hormel Company of Austin, Minnesota produces 6 million cans of Spam a year, even though no one eats it.**
Minnesota license plates are blue & white and contain the phrase "Blizzards on the 4th of July - you get used to it."

**Author Laura Ingalls Wilder was raised at Walnut Grove, Minnesota, and was famous for writing the "Little House" series of books, as well as inventing the "Spam diet" which consists of looking at a plate of Spam until you lose your appetite. Much like the "lutefisk diet"**
The snowmobile was invented in Roseau, Minnesota so as to allow families a means of attending 4th of July picnics.

**Minnesotans are almost indistinguishable from Wisconsinites. The only way to tell them apart is to ask if they voted for Mondale in ’84.**

**Cold is relative**
At 65 degrees, Arizonans turn on the heat. People in Minnesota plant gardens.
At 60, Californians shiver uncontrollably. People in Minnesota sunbathe.
At 50, Italian & English cars won't start. People in Minnesota drive with the windows down.
At 40, Georgians don coats, thermal underwear, gloves, wool hats. People in Minnesota throw on a flannel shirt.
At 35, New York landlords finally turn up the heat. People in Minnesota have the last cookout before it gets cold.
At 20, People in Miami all die.
At 10 below zero, Hollywood disintegrates. The Girl Scouts in Minnesota sell cookies door to door.
At 0, Californians fly away to Mexico. People in Minnesota get out their winter coats.
At 10 below zero, Hollywood disintegrates. The Girl Scouts in Minnesota sell cookies door to door.

**Author Laura Ingalls Wilder was raised at Walnut Grove, Minnesota, and was famous for writing the "Little House" series of books, as well as inventing the "Spam diet" which consists of looking at a plate of Spam until you lose your appetite. Much like the "lutefisk diet"**
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**Minnesotans are almost indistinguishable from Wisconsinites. The only way to tell them apart is to ask if they voted for Mondale in ‘84.**
I offer all Extra Innings readers this caveat—my experience with contracts has only been with one publisher and not an agent. I can only share with you how one novice approached negotiating a contract—after I took a few days to calm down from my initial exhilaration.

At the UW-Madison Writer’s Institute in 2011, I took a class on literary contracting from Lawyer Paul S. Levine, who owns a literary agency. Mr. Levine offered practical tips and gave us red flags to look out for in literary contracts.

His primary advice was that when offered a contract, have an attorney specializing in literary contracts review the document. His advice was not self-serving. Literary contracts are unique even within the esoteric world of contracts. My attorney noted that he had no expertise in literary contracts and recommended I search for a lawyer who did. I appreciated his honesty but this is Madison, Wisconsin—not New York or L.A.

Next I asked someone with extensive publishing experience to review the contract. Our very own Marshall Cook fit the bill with over 30 books in a variety of genres. Marshall reviewed the contract and offered a series of questions.

So my initial strategy wasn’t to negotiate but to ask questions to make sure I understood the contract and find out what could be negotiated.

I sent the publisher a list of 25 questions, most of them technical, on various topics, such as: grants of rights, royalties, editing process and deadlines, publication timeline, marketing support, visual media and contact information. One critical concern that wasn’t an issue was copyright. My publisher’s contract clearly states that the author retains copyright and sole responsibility for the book and its content.

The royalty method in the contract proved to be the most problematic. The publisher offered a flat amount per book sold. I expected a percentage royalty, and Marshall said flat-fee royalties were unusual. The explanation given was that the flat rate per book protects the author from fluctuating book sales price. For example, if Amazon discounted my book, I would still make the same amount per book. Amazon discounts book prices to stimulate sales, and of course to sell books in today’s world, an author needs to be listed on Amazon.

As a result of my questions, the publisher offered a three-step graduated scale on sales for the first 5,000, 5000-10,000, and over 10,000. I appreciated their response, and these sales categories were identical to those Mr. Levine said were standard in the industry.

The majority of questions centered on the publisher’s marketing support on my behalf. Most of today’s publishers offer little or no support for a novice author, the expectation clearly being that you “market thyself.” I was concerned that the contract had an escape clause that didn’t guarantee any specific marketing mechanism.

They told me that the marketing plan is individual and at a minimum would include web and bookstore marketing, book signings, book reviews, and media interviews. The goal in the first year of publication is to draw attention to the book in a variety of ways. The publisher also agreed to assist me in setting up book signing dates in whatever market I want to visit and place my book in bookstores in the target city. Because my historical novel takes place in Ireland, the publisher said my book would be available on Amazon U.K.

My final concern was to market my book as an e-book. The publisher’s strategy is to consider e-publication after the first year the book is out, which again seems reasonable.

By asking questions I received clarification and detailed responses. I was completely satisfied, and we consummated our contract on April 15th.

For more about the novel, MURPHY’S TROUBLES, please visit: www.rexowens.us

“Every action of our lives touches on some chord that will vibrate in eternity.”
Sean O’Casey
10. Source Code
Duncan Jones' directorial debut, Moon, was an impressive sci-fi film; his second, while not as great, is the year’s best sci-fi film. Jake Gyllenhaal gives one of his best performances as a man who wakes on a train in another man's body.

9. Super 8
JJ Abrams brings us a wonderful tribute to the early films of Steven Spielberg. The cast of kids is funny, smart and good actors. The film also has the best visual effects scene of the year when the train derails and causes a massive crash.

8. Win Win
It's always a pleasure to see Paul Giamatti in an independent film, where he can really shine. Amy Ryan is awesome as his wife, and Alex Schaffer does pretty well in his debut performance. The plot sounds like something you may dread, but here it works.

7. The Descendants
Many people say this is George Clooney's best performance, but I still think that would be Up In The Air. It's right up there with it though. Clooney plays a man who finds out his wife will never wake up and then learns she was having an affair. Shailene Woodley gives a breakout performance as Clooney's older daughter. The director, Alexander Payne hadn't released a film since 2004's Sideways; after seeing this film, I hope we don't have to wait that long until his next film.

6. 50/50
So many things could have gone wrong in a comedy about cancer. But this one works. I didn't think I could laugh at such a risky subject. The film takes us through a man's experience with the disease and gives us one of the year's most memorable films. Joseph Gordon-Levitt gives his best performance to date as we watch him slowly come to terms with what's wrong with him. The film is as heartbreaking as it is funny.

5. The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo
This film is not for the faint of heart. There's disturbing content; those who have read the book or seen the Swedish version of the film know what I'm taking about. But this adaptation is another great thriller from director David Fincher. Rooney Mara gives the breakout performance of the year as Lisbeth Salander. This one flows better than the Swedish film.

4. Conan O’Brien Can’t Stop
Conan O'Brien is one of the best entertainers out there, and this documentary shows why. After losing the Tonight Show, Conan wasn't allowed to be on TV for six months, so he went on a cross country tour, which this documentary captures wonderfully. The on stage moments are fun, but it's the rest of the film that stands out. We get a good peek at what Conan was going through in this fun and entertaining documentary.

3. The Muppets
If you were to take pure joy and put it on film, this would be the result. I have not left a theater so upbeat and happy in a long time. Seeing these wonderful characters return to the big screen is truly a treat. Jason Segel stars in the film and co-wrote the script, which has some of the catchiest songs you’ll hear all year. Segel, being a Muppet fan, brings us a fantastic tribute made for other Muppet fans. You can tell that a lot of heart and devotion went into this film; this tribute would make Jim Henson proud.

2. Hugo
Martin Scorsese directing a family film sounds odd, but it's a love letter to what Scorsese knows best-- film. This is Scorsese's best since Goodfellas. I'm not a fan of 3D, but I'm glad I saw Hugo in the format, because it's done right. Asa Butterfield as Hugo gives one of the best performances I've seen from a child actor. Ben Kingsley as filmmaker Georges Méliès is wonderful as always. This is a magnificent film for film lovers.

And the number one film of 2011 is...

Drive
No other film this year left me so impressed, thrilled and satisfied. This film oozes cool, from the hot pink opening titles to Ryan Gosling in his satin scorpion jacket to the awesome score. In this stellar arthouse thriller from Nicholas Winding Refn, Gosling really impresses. He probably doesn't even have a hundred words of dialogue, but his presence as the Driver is fantastic. Albert Brooks is the most memorable part of the film as the villain, Berine Rose. He's so intimidating, and you can't take your eyes off him each scene he's in. Drive is unique. Buckle up and enjoy the ride.
Thanks to GARBO fewer men were killed and wounded! Thanks to GARBO the European half of World War II ended sooner than anticipated.

During World War II there was little doubt that an invasion of mainland Europe would come from Great Britain. France was but a fast boat ride across the English Channel. That was no secret, but just where on the coast of France -- that part was the unknown.

The obvious choice was at Pas de Calais, the closest point from British ports. The Allies did everything they could to convince the Germans that the Pas was the invasion point...then they landed at three beaches down the coast!

The greater distance of those beaches from British ports gave the Allies the distance needed to “hide” the huge invasion fleet in the English Channel as the ships moved toward the beaches.

It was a tricky maneuver. To make it work false information had to be fed to the Germans months before the actual landings. At the same time, that information had to be verifiable.

And this is where we meet GARBO.

Juan Pujol Garcia was a Spanish national who hated fascism. When the Germans began to overrun Europe, Garcia tried to get the British to hire him as a secret agent – a spy. His idea was to offer his services to the Germans as a spy against Great Britain, and then work with the British against Germany. The British authorities turned him down.

Garcia calmly walked into the German embassy in Madrid and offered to spy for them. The Nazis jumped at the chance to have someone in England sending back vital information. Once Garcia was on the German payroll, he went to work – not in England, but at the library where he read up on everything he could, to create the illusion he had great knowledge and contacts in Great Britain.

Eventually Garcia - code named ALARIC by the Germans - had given himself a history lesson sufficient to fake it as an expert. With his Nazi contacts and his new-found knowledge, he was eventually able to convince the British espionage services that he was working against the Nazis and for the Allies. Once his fealty was established, he went to work.

**The British called him GARBO**

Now operating for the Germans as ALARIC, GARBO provided the Third Reich with bogus “information” about the Normandy invasion, giving time, locations, and unit numbers. The Normandy invasion was a feint, ALARIC told them; the real attack was to come at the expected beach of Calais. So effective was GARBO that his information kept German tank units, and other divisions tied up at the Pas de Calais, not for hours, but for days - some for weeks! -- enough time for the Allies to gain a foothold on the beaches.

The battles were ferocious. At times it appeared the Allies, especially American units, would be thrown back into the sea with no way back to England. Without the on-going belief in GARBO, the Americans would most likely have been slaughtered.

Garcia told his German radio contacts that he was building a network of agents and sub-agents. By the time he had his team in place he boasted seven top tier agents and 18 sub-agents. Not one of whom existed! Through this notional cadre of “loyal German sympathizers” GARBO fed the Nazi war machine information the Allies wanted the enemy to have and to respond to.

On D-Day, when the forces of the US, Great Britain, Canada and France stormed ashore in France, the German military – including Hitler himself - kept large forces on alert at the Pas de Calais. While some German commanders were convinced that the Normandy invasion was the invasion, GARBO and other sources had fooled the minds in Berlin.

General George Patton the fiery U.S. leader reprimanded by General Eisenhower and removed from command of the Army, was on the prowl in England, supposedly reviewing his new First United States Army Group - FUSAG.

Continued next page
GARBO and several of the captured German agents, now under the control of the British counter-intelligence unit, kept feeding the Germans reports that the invasion was a feint, and the real invasion was yet to come, and that Patton would be leading that main invasion force.

When Patton and his FUSAG force failed to show up with an invasion force, GARBO, with the help of his British handlers, simply said the initial invasion had been more successful than expected, and Eisenhower decided to cancel the Pas de Calais invasion.

Garcia-GARBO was so successful in feeding information about troop movements and notional armies to the Nazis that they awarded him the Iron Cross, one of Germany’s highest medals. At the end of the war Garcia was given the equivalent by Great Britain, the Order of the British Empire, becoming the only person in World War II to be honored by both sides!

With the end of the war, GARBO become almost invisible. Then in 1949 Britain received a report of his death, in Angola They closed the book on Garcia-GARBO.

…and then a few years later, they reopened the book. GARBO wasn’t dead! Garcia had managed to slip away from everyone, including his former spymasters in Britain, and headed for Venezuela, where he ran a movie theater. He married and raised a family.

The spy of spies died – this time for real – October 10, 1988 at age 76. He is buried in Caracas, Venezuela.

A recent move about his life concludes with Garcia-GARBO walking the Normandy beaches, and pausing – without one word – at an Allied Cemetery.

One wonders of Garcia-GARBO thought of how many more Allied cemeteries there would have been had it not been for his unbelievable courage and creativity.

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**The Last Word**

**Think you got a bad review?**


“...It turns out, however, that Ms. Beattie isn’t really much interested in Mrs. Nixon or her life in the White House or her more than five decade-long marriage. Rather, she’s interested in deconstructing this famously opaque former first lady as a sort of literary exercise-- to test her own skills as a writer, and to find an excuse to blather on (and on and on) about her own ideas about fiction writing, about women and about the interface between life and art.

“The result ... is the sort of pretentious volume that makes people hate academics. In this case, a narcissistic, self-indulgent, hot-air-filled tome that condescends to its ostensible subject, Mrs. Nixon, and that wastes the reader’s time...”