So who’s that standing next to...

author, teacher, mother of two, quilter, and faithful E.I. reader Lisa Krenz?  

public relations guru, rare book collector, Yellow Dog Progressive, and faithful E.I. reader George Cutlip?

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**Extra Innings #34**

**Madison, Wisconsin August, 2012**

The All-Stars:
Madonna Dries Christensen,  
Rex Owens, Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks, Den Adler, Ron Hevey, Perry Stone  

Book reviewer: Pat Fitzgerald  
Film critic: Jake McLaughlin  
Word Whisperer: Jan Kent  
World’s cutest baby: Liliana Lenore Cook  
Head of office security: Pat Downes  
Web Weavers: Celeste Anton and Emily Baker  
Internetters: Steve Born, Perry Stone, Larry Tobin  

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I publish *Extra Innings* monthly and distribute it free to an open enrollment mailing list. To get on the list, email the Coach at: mcook@des.wisc.edu *Extra Innings* comes to you through the good graces of the writing program at 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
On Independence Day Eve morning, as I was about to leave for campus and my weekly “seminar” with pals on the Memorial Union terrace, Mrs. Coach asked me please to take a car rather than biking, as is my custom.

We were in the midst of a searing heat wave, with an extreme heat alert posted until that Friday night at 10 p.m.! (Lucky thing global warming isn’t real, huh, or we might really be in trouble!) Add to that high humidity and a drought (a third of an inch of rain in June), and you have some pretty yucky conditions.

My dear wife didn’t want me to get heat stroke. Again. I’ve made that poor woman call 9-1-1 far me more times.

The old me would have blustered and sulked and possibly even ridden my bike anyway— so there! But the more mature and mellow me (read old and broken down) actually agreed without complaint.

There really are advantages to getting old and decrepit, even if I am, in the words of Rudyard Kipling, “dropping down the ladder rung by rung.”

I of course had no intention of paying to park, so I drove the Skate (my 1995 del sol) up fraternity/sorority row until I found a free two-hour parking space on a side street. (My Skate can slip into a size-2 space, which all the size-18 “mini” vans can’t even dream about.)

As I walked the few blocks to the union, I noticed that party or parties unknown had chalked up the sidewalk, a common occurrence on a college campus. But these messages didn’t promote a meeting, film festival, or rally.

“SMILES ON LANGDON”

the first chalky proclaimed.

What followed was a series of positive, motivational messages, such as:

YOU ARE AWESOME!
SMILE! IT’S EASY!
BAD DAY? NO WAY!
YOU ARE SOMEONE’S PRIDE AND JOY!

Feel good stuff like that.

He/she/they had even chalked in a hopscotch grid for my enjoyment.

Many of the messages were quite funny, especially those directed at the male libido:

SHE WASN’T FAKING!
SHE THINKS IT’S HUGE!

Silly waste of time and chalk, right?

I need to make an admission here. My favorite Saint is Barnabas. (The name means “Son of encouragement.”) So I actually loved all those silly little pep talks. I found myself smiling, laughing, nodding, wishing I could shake the hand of the man or woman who had held the chalk. It was a wonderful way to start the day, a real lift to the spirits, a good deed done in complete anonymity, for which I hereby issue this public “thank you.”

And here’s the thing: all those statements were true, every one of them. (Well, maybe not those libido ones.) I am awesome! I am someone’s pride and joy.

I would have added “God’s beloved child,” but this is a public institution, in the heart of Madison, WI, home of the “Freedom from Religion Society,” so I refrained.

I do have the power to shape the kind of day it will be— not the actual events, of course, but my reaction and response to them.

And so do you.

YOU ARE GORGEOUS!
And don’t you forget it.

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
Back issues of E.I. available at: www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing/extrainnings
Elsie Hayes Roberts often told her granddaughter, Barbara Anne Waite, stories about the happy years she taught school in primitive Arizona from 1913 to 1916. Elsie Hayes, valedictorian of the Long Beach, CA, High School’s class of 1907, had been hired as a mail-order teacher in Arizona just after it was admitted to statehood and when Cornville, the first town she taught in, lacked electricity and running water.

After her grandmother died in 1987, Waite began reading her grandmother’s “well-worn black leather diary, not realizing it would reveal a young Elsie I had never imagined. The diary told of her first love, of heartache and sorrow, and of fascinating adventure. Never had I pictured my grandmother as being free-spirited, young, and in love. My curiosity was stirred, and I began to search for more records of her Arizona years.”

Thank goodness her granddaughter didn’t just read and file the diary away as a family keepsake. Instead, Barb Waite started researching letters and newspapers and searched out and interviewed Elsie’s former students, including 84-year-old Eva, who was eight when Elsie lived with her family on Shadyvale Ranch in 1913.

Waite sent her questions to a newspaper near Cornville (which was still too small to have its own), and Eva answered. “I certainly do remember Elsie Hayes,” she wrote. “She was my third grade teacher, and I loved her! … The area here was very primitive at that time, and my folks wondered how the teachers would ever adjust to our ways of living. But your grandmother, especially, adjusted beautifully.”

I discovered Elsie: Adventures of an Arizona Schoolteacher 1913-1916 in an Arizona gift shop during a recent visit with a friend. In this case, I judged a book by its cover. Elsie was very pretty, and her photograph surrounded by memorabilia from that time, with mention of 1916, the year my dad was born, led me to pick up the book.

Waite includes short notes to help readers understand items in Elsie’s diary and letters and inserted delightful photographs that Elsie took of her students and their surroundings.

The book tells of Karl, a cowboy who fell in love with Elsie and entered college to make himself worthy of her. Decades later, Waite’s question about her grandmother’s early loves brought Elsie to tears. “There was this cowboy …,” she began, but that’s all she said, and Waite didn’t discover the reason for the tears until she read Elsie’s diary and discovered newspaper clippings.

The book also includes memories from Elsie’s now-aging students, which remind us that we will usually never know the influence we have had in children’s lives.

I was reminded of Elsie’s story a couple of weeks ago when a friend and I had one of our photographic day trips, this time to Old World Wisconsin, a living museum in the Kettle Moraine area south of Eagle. OWW is made up of 18th- and early 19th-century buildings relocated from all over Wisconsin. This photo (above) shows the one-room Raspberry School in the Norwegian Area, and the re-enactor “teacher” is outside the door with a basket. The day was ending, and I didn’t have time to visit the school or meet her.

With only a few minutes until closing time, I stupidly didn’t wait for a tram to carry me back to the entrance but instead started walking, as I had been doing the entire day. I chose the wrong route, however, and after 20 minutes, when I saw a tram approaching I waved it down.

It wasn’t full of visitors like me, but of re-enactors heading to their cars. The teacher was sitting across from me and was telling her coworkers that a 12-year-old boy made her day when he asked, “Were all the teachers back then as nice as you are?”

I wanted to tell her I knew of one who was. Waite has a website with more information, including Elsie’s photos, at www.barbaraannewaite.com.
At 5 a.m. August 2, 1955, we drove into Truax Field along with Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey circus wagons. “The Greatest Show on Earth” was arriving from some 60 rail cars parked at an Oscar Mayer siding nearby to begin setup about where Madison Area Technical College now stands.

Dad, who had taken a break from supervising to be milkman for the day with me as helper, wheeled the Borden’s Milk truck to the first tent up, the cookhouse. He found the man in charge, and they did their business as the place jumped into action, live and in color, no second takes, an act that circus pros performed daily from April to December. Dad had primed me that circus people were no-nonsense. Mother considered them gypsies, and you had better beware around folks who did not put down stakes, a tough sell to a teen learning the world’s ways with his dad.

The cookhouse tent, an outdoor greasy spoon, was drenched in the aroma of hotcakes, eggs fried in bacon grease, and coffee as the 400 circus workers filed in to fuel up. The man in charge motioned us to have breakfast, a welcome change from Mother’s Cheerios-in-the-morning regimen. Who knew if the gents sitting next to us were just clowning or really clowns?

What could be better than a day at the circus? Ringling Bros. came to Madison most years. They performed every few years in Wisconsin burgs like Beloit, Janesville, Racine, Kenosha, Oshkosh, Appleton, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Eau Claire and La Crosse. Wisconsin was circus country: many 19th and early 20th century circuses originated in Baraboo with the Ringlings and in Delavan, which claimed four circuses at one time.

The August day was full summer, clear, yet hot and humid, a jumping-off-the-pier kind of day. Enduring Truax’s treeless fields did not seem to matter because shows under the big top were unique - full of circus magic. Yet the parades and clowns and high wires were still seven hours away from the time they had arrived on trains with flat cars for wagons, sleepers and animal railcars. It took know-how to succeed as a circus. Did you know an unwelcome draft through the elephant car could kill them? Setup and teardown were sequenced to load finished acts during the last performances, to speed the move to tomorrow’s town where the circus put on yet another afternoon and evening performance. Schedulers were kind enough to include one day off every two weeks.

The circus was about all the people who made the show happen. I was fascinated by life lived out of a wagon, how they created a one-day-at-a-time community, how performers raised their kids on the road, and how they hung washed clothes wherever there was a line or hook.

The sun beat down by the time thousands gathered to the 76 Trombones blare of circus marches and elephants, high wires and parades of performers in painted wagons extolling the show’s greatness.

How did I remember that the year was 1955? It was a car thing. Out in the parking lot that day, Dad pointed to a new model Chevy V8, bumper bullets and all, which, as he said, “looks just like a Cadillac,” and wouldn’t you know within a year we had one of those new Chevys in our driveway. Funny what you remember. An Internet lookup confirmed that Ringling Bros.’ 1955 Madison date was August 2nd.

That day was the end of an era. Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey did not make Madison during their abbreviated 1956 schedule, which ended on July 16th in Pittsburgh with an entry that read: “Season Closed, Big top struck for last time, Home Run.” They headed home to regroup in Sarasota. John Ringling North announced, “The tented circus as it exists today is, in my opinion, a thing of the past.” A scaled down show did go on the next year in air conditioned arenas across the country and continues to this day, still, as they say: “The Greatest Show on Earth.”
DON'T STICK YOUR ELBOW
OUT SO FAR
IT MAY GO HOME
IN ANOTHER CAR.
BurmaShave

TRAINS DON'T WANDER
ALL OVER THE MAP
'CAUSE NOBODY SITS
IN THE ENGINEER'S LAP

DROVE TOO LONG
DRIVER SNOOZING
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT
IS NOT AMUSING

CAUTIOUS RIDER
TO HER RECKLESS DEAR
LET'S HAVE LESS BULL
AND A LITTLE MORE STEER

THE MIDNIGHT RIDE
OF PAUL FOR BEER
LED TO A WARMER
HEMISPHERE

AROUND THE CURVE
LICKETY-SPLIT
BEAUTIFUL CAR
WASN'T IT?

NO MATTER THE PRICE
NO MATTER HOW NEW
THE BEST SAFETY DEVICE
IN THE CAR IS YOU

A GUY WHO DRIVES
A CAR WIDE OPEN
IS NOT THINKIN'
HE'S JUST HOPIN'

THE ONE WHO DRIVES
WHEN HE'S BEEN DRINKING
DEPENDS ON YOU
TO DO HIS THINKING

CAR IN DITCH
DRIVER IN TREE
THE MOON WAS FULL
AND SO WAS HE.

PASSING SCHOOL ZONE
TAKE IT SLOW
LET OUR LITTLE
SHAVERS GROW
Poets play with words, yet we like to make the suckers work for a living. Leech-like, they attach to us and won’t let go. They demand clever usage, which brings me to REVERSALS. You’ve surely heard of these rhymed pairs but don’t know the name, because I made it up.

An example I can’t claim originating: “Butterfly, flutter by”—which I’ve recited since childhood. The first letter of the first word reverses with the first (and in this case second) letter of ‘fly,’ which would be the second word if ‘butter fly’ were typed separately.

Whoever thought up this switch, I delight in the word-play.

When he wrote her, SF writer Ted Sturgeon addressed SF writer Judy Merril as Jeer Dewdy, Jack Prelutsky titled a kid-poem BOWEN OUNCE AND OWEN BOUNCE. The Smithsonian Magazine stated in a 1992 article: Ambrose Bierce declared of the man who built the Southern Railroad by eminent domain: “Leland Stanford is a Stealand Landford.” These are mine:

**Dame Luck? / lame duck!**
**A lost cause / may cost laws**
**Saw loot? / law suit!**
**Boring rabble / roaring babble**
**Crazy lass/ lazy, crass**
**Fall showers / shawl flowers**
**Hank Bowers (keeps) bank hours**
**Nosy rub / rosy nub**

These reversed rhymes aren’t poetry as most people think of it, but word-flexibility is inherent in verse. Moreover, these phrases can easily be turned into riddles. If you teach, show students examples on antsy Friday afternoons and suggest they try thinking up their own pairs.

Here are more of mine, with tag lines:

**Commitment dilemma: Pretty girl or gritty pearl?**
**Hubby’s away and likes to play: Strip tease / trip sleaze**
**Provocative: His sexy ex gives exy sex**
**Roundup: Clearing steer means steering clear.**
**Plowboy with farmer’s daughter: Warm hay / harm’s way!**
**Doggone woebegone: Furry burr / burry fur**
**Cats like it dry: Wet path / pet wrath**

Tequila with salt: Quick, liquor / lick quicker!
*Bringing home the bacon: Hound dog / downed hog*

**Muddy kid, ripe banana: Yellow muck / mellow yuck**

**Marriage : Heady start / steady heart**

Some examples miss, like Hungry munchers have munchy hungers. Accurately, the words reversed are Hungry munchers have hungry munchers, which makes no sense. Even accurate reversals may not amuse. Day’s Jewelers / Jay’s Duelers is perfect, but can you find a clever caption?

Mental exercise is not trivial, yet today free verse seems the only poetry discipline respected by certain starchy academics. Nonetheless, dare to have fun with light verse and the vast variety of fixed forms. Poets and their poems, like roses, come in many varieties.

Think of a flower arrangement. The vase forms a base enhancing blooms. The blooms draw the eye upward, and the better the two halves suit each other, the stronger and finer the whole. In the same way, merge poetic form (the base) with poetic subject, (the flowers).

Be silly, serious, or both at once. Think of Lewis Carroll’s JABBERWOCKY. Is the piece indeed nonsense, or does it hold meanings we halfway grasp? In the same way, is enjoying REVERSALS a trivial pursuit or an activity truly worthy of a column?

I know how I feel and hope the above examples show you these wordplays are meant for fun, yet are harder to discover than you might guess.

**The Wisdom of Kids**
You can’t trust dogs to watch your food.
Don’t sneeze when someone is cutting your hair.
Never hold a Dust-Buster and a cat at the same time.
The coming of Christopher Nolan’s third and final Batman film, *The Dark Knight Rises* (reviewed next month), inspires me to present my favorite film trilogies.

**The Lord of the Rings—an epic saga**

This trilogy defines the word epic. If you watch all three films in a row, it’s like watching one long, epic story. The journey of Frodo Baggins and the Fellowship of the One Ring is a grand one that every fan of film should see. I may not be much of a fantasy fan, but this trilogy takes the number two spot on my list of favorite films of all time. Peter Jackson brings the world of Middle Earth to life, and ten years after *The Fellowship of the Ring* was released, this films have shown that they are timeless classics.

**Toy Story—a tug on the heartstrings**

To me, this is the greatest trilogy in animation. These characters are so solid and memorable. Woody and Buzz are one of the most dynamic duos I’ve seen onscreen. Their journey from rivalry into friendship in the first film is quite believable. The rest of the characters are just as memorable. Even though they may just be pieces of plastic, these are characters we care about.

The trilogy gets better with each film. *Toy Story 2* and *Toy Story 3* are two of the best sequels I have ever seen. These films also don’t hold back on pulling on your heartstrings. If you aren’t tearing up at the end of *Toy Story 3*, there may be something wrong with you.

**Indiana Jones—unlike any other hero**

First of all, I do not count *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* as an Indiana Jones film. To me, the series ended with Indy and friends riding off into the sunset at the end of *The Last Crusade*.

With that aside, these films were a vital part of my middle school years. I was bullied the hardest during those years, and these films were an escape from that. Indiana Jones is a great hero. He was unlike any hero I had ever seen.

The iconic theme was stuck in my head weeks after I saw *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. *Raiders* is my favorite film of all time. While *Temple of Doom* and *The Last Crusade* may not be on the same level, they are still a great way to spend two hours.

**Evil Dead—blends horror, comedy**

I enjoy very few horror movies. To me, the genre has been boring and cliched for years. But these films mix horror and slapstick comedy superbly. The original film is a fun horror film, but *Evil Dead 2* pretty much remakes the first film within its first ten minutes and then turns into one of the most fun sequels ever.

Bruce Campbell’s Ash is my favorite horror movie hero. The scene where he has to fight his own hand in *Evil Dead 2* is hilarious, and the chainsaw/shotgun combo he comes up with is one of cinema's coolest weapons.

**Army of Darkness** is the lightest of the films, where there is much more comedy than horror, and it works.

**Star Wars—a sci-fi classic**

This is a pretty obvious choice. The original films are sci-fi classics. The prequels tried to ruin all of it, but if you just ignore those and focus on the original films, you have a great trilogy. If you’ve somehow never seen the original *Star Wars* trilogy, get on that. Try to find the original theatrical versions, though. George Lucas added some really stupid stuff in his "special" editions.

**Back To The Future**-

I already wrote on this trilogy last year, but I’ll add that it is one of the most fun trilogies in film. *Next month: Jake’s review of the third in the Batman trilogy, The Dark Knight Rises.*

**Prodigal**

Many of us use this word often—especially if we heard all about the Prodigal Son in Sunday School. But most of us use it incorrectly. It wasn’t until I read Barbara Kingsolver’s great novel, *Prodigal Summer*, that I caught on that prodigal means recklessly wasteful, extravagant, profuse in giving. The famous son wasn’t prodigal because he came back home; he was prodigal because he spent all his money—and then had to come home.
Q. Name the four seasons.
A. Salt, pepper, mustard and vinegar.

Q. What causes the tides in the oceans?
A. The tides are a fight between the earth and the moon. All water tends to flow towards the moon, because there is no water on the moon, and nature abhors a vacuum. I forget where the sun joins the fight.

Q. What guarantees may a mortgage company insist on?
A. If you are buying a house they will insist that you are well endowed.

Q. In a democratic society, how important are elections?
A. Very important. Sex can only happen when a male gets an election.

Q. What are steroids?
A. Things for keeping carpets still on the stairs.

Q. What happens to your body as you age?
A. When you get old, so do your bowels and you get intercontinental.

Q. What happens to a boy when he reaches puberty?
A. He says goodbye to his boyhood and looks forward to his adultery. (Okay, this kid got lucky and got that one right.)

Q. Name a major disease associated with cigarettes.
A. Premature death.

Q. What is artificial insemination?
A. When the farmer does it to the bull instead of the cow

Q. How can you delay milk turning sour?
A. Keep it in the cow. (Well, yeah, actually...)

Q. What is the fibula?
A. A small lie.

Q. What does 'varicose' mean?
A. Nearby.

Q. What is the most common form of birth control?
A. Most people prevent contraception by wearing a condominium. (That would work)

Q. Give the meaning of the term 'Caesarean section.'
A. The caesarean section is a district in Rome.

Q. What is a seizure?
A. A Roman Emperor. (Julius Seizure, I came, I saw, I had a fit)

Q. What is a terminal illness?
A. When you are sick at the airport. (Irrefutable)

Q. What does the word 'benign' mean?
A. Benign is what you be after you be eight. (brilliant)
A chill enveloped me when I stepped into MacKinlay Kantor’s office at the Sarasota County History Center. *The air-conditioning*, I told myself. Or was it something more—the author’s presence?

Kantor and his artist wife, Irene, arrived in Sarasota in 1937. After her husband’s death in 1977, at age 73, Irene donated everything from his office to the History Center, where it was recreated using a photograph as a guide.

*Kantor holds sway there as if he were seated at the desk. The lamps are lit, his typewriter is at hand, and a Dictaphone attests to his habit of recording his work to hear how it sounded before committing it to paper. Bookshelves line the lower walls, and framed photos and memorabilia fill the upper space. Portraits of Kantor and Irene hang behind the desk. A bookshelf holds a stack of ten cent detective magazines for which he wrote pulp fiction.*

Born in Webster City, Iowa, in 1904, Benjamin McKinlay Kantor dropped his given name and adapted his mother’s Scottish maiden name, McKinlay, to MacKinlay. Leaving school at 17, he became a reporter for the local paper where his mother was editor. His father, a Jewish born Swede descended from rabbis, was a ne’er-do-well who posed as a Protestant clergyman. He abandoned his wife and daughter before Benjamin was born.

In 1924, Kantor penned an unsuccessful novel, *Diversey*. A decade later, his *Long Remember* became a best seller. He sold the film rights, which launched his career as a screenwriter and novelist. *Andersonville* (1955) won him a Pulitzer. (His great-uncle lost an arm at Andersonville.)

Kantor had been intrigued by the Civil War since childhood, when he marched in parades alongside veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic and boasted that he was one of them. During World War II, as a correspondent for the British Royal Air Force, he gathered material for his novel, *Glory For Me*, the basis for the award-winning movie *The Best Years Of Our Lives*. He saw combat with the U.S. Air Force, for which he was awarded the Medal of Freedom. He again saw combat during the Korean War, as a correspondent.

*Kantor’s work appeared in popular magazines of the era, the covers of which are framed and displayed in his office. Because his writing tended to be politically conservative and patriotic, there came a time in the 1960s when magazine publishers no longer sought his outlook. He continued to write novels, publishing *Valley Forge* two years before his death. Much of his writing relates to the 19th century, a period where he felt comfortable. He never owned a television, lived in Florida without central cooling or heat, and disliked the development of Siesta Key into a tourist attraction.*

*The local writing community enjoys the story about Kantor founding The Liar’s Club in the 1950s. Meeting weekly for lunch, drinks, and poker, the membership has included John Jakes, William Shirer, cartoonist Dik Browne, Mike Royko, John D. McDonald (Travis McGee series) Stuart Kaminsky, and the elusive Stephen King. Kaminsky once told a reporter, “King used to like the Liars, then he stopped coming.”* The club is men only. They want the freedom to discuss anything, including coarse language. Lillian Hellman barged in one day and sat down. Although she would likely have held her own with risqué language, she was asked to leave. Rules are rules.

The History Center holds a wealth of research information, while Kantor’s office affords it vitality and vintage charm.
The beginnings inspire hope and purpose. The middle excites possibilities. A perfect ending signifies a job well done. Only real life offers more as we reap the moment writing fiction.

Of the many blessing, there are the usual things many can testify to: kids, grandkids, money and health. Being able to hobble fast enough to stay continent is in a class by itself. Spell check could be a blessing for many who, like myself couldn't decipher the typo error secret code used during the hyper burst of an idea spilling out across the screen for the first time.

That brings us to fiction writing as one of my best blessings of all.

It should be said here, writing doesn’t ordinarily start with the first word typed on a page or screen. Not for me anyway. The preverbal starting point begins when an idea pops in my head, and I shuffle to find a scrap of paper or a napkin. A Walmart receipt works great. It begins in the doctor’s office or the car, waddling across the parking lot or watching television. Talking to a neighbor can incite an idea, as well as listening to strangers.

Just holding that thought becomes the major part of writing. I’ve often murmured, "Damn! I wish I hadn’t forgotten my note pad.” That thought multiplies into a batch of notes to be used in the first, last, or middle sentence of a paragraph or page and can end up anywhere in the book or article.

The middle of the process, then, actually starts with the first word on the page. Excitement carries over from the gathering of ideas. These are converted, through frenzied effort, and structured in such a basic way that ‘rough draft’ doesn’t begin to describe how crude this first effort is.

First draft won’t evolve until after all the vile efforts, a couple edits, a couple more rewrites, and a ‘well maybe’ are thrown out. All the while I may struggle for a way to finish, as no thoughts on the subject quite make the grade to become the intended perfect ending.

Reread and rewrite could become a never-ending passion for me. But once past that blessed segment, and the last word is typed, it’s time to let it mellow before the next to last read. Minor final changes bring the piece to completion-- prayers are answered, life goes on.

Writing this piece has caused me to think about my blessing dubbed ‘fiction writing’ at great lengths, and to sum it all up:

If I’m overworked, it relaxes me.
If I’m in pain, it soothes me.
If I’m tired, it wakes me.
If I’m lonely, characters befriend me.
When I can’t remember what the hell is real--it don’t matter.

Bless you and Yours, Coach
Paw Joe

They said it...

We could certainly slow the aging process down if it had to work its way through Congress.
- Will Rogers

By the time a man is wise enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere.
- Billy Crystal
Last month I wrote about the reasons authors should have their own website rather than relying on an author’s page in Amazon or a blog. This month I’ll discuss the research I completed to select a web host and a domain name.

The first choice involves, as you might expect, money. You may decide to have a custom website that’s expensive but professional and maximizes interactivity. Being a new author I thought my meager financial resources needed to be spread among a variety of marketing activities and didn’t want to put all my eggs into the website basket. There are a large number of private web-hosting services to choose from.

The second choice involves what features you want on your website. In my case I wanted a separate business e-mail and the ability to create a blog within my website. It doesn’t make sense to me to spend time maintaining both a website and a blog. However, some blog hosts, such as blogspot, have become very sophisticated, and the blog site is very similar in appearance to a standard website, but the functionality differs in meaningful ways.

The web host I selected allows the owner to have webmail and create a contact page on the website and also has the ability to build and maintain a blog, so I was all set.

The final choice is what software to use to create your website. Many writing publications suggest using wordpress because it’s easy to learn and use. The web host you chose should offer several website creating software options to meet your comfort and technical level.

Being visual, I chose Weebly Drag and Drop builder to create my website. This uses templates to build and customize the website, and it can be edited any time. Since creating my site in December 2011, I’ve modified it significantly four times, based on comments and suggestions from many people, including my publisher.

To determine the web host that best fit my needs and budget, I googled the top ten web hosting sites. The site I liked best, Ipage, was rated #2 but had the extra feature of being powered solely by wind. It also had all the other features I wanted.

I learned that December is a great time to be in the market for a web host because there are a myriad of special or introductory offers. My choice was the basic package, which included: creating a domain name, creating the website, creating webmail and creating a web blog. I set up a three year contract for less than $100.

Selecting a domain name can be dizzying. I wanted to avoid the “cutesy” type name or a name with “writer” or “author” because they are too common. I also wanted to link my book with me, so I decided the simple answer was to have my domain name be ‘rexowens dot something.’

The ipage web host allows you to ask for a domain name, and they check the registry to determine if it has been taken. Of course, my first choice, ‘rexowens.com,’ was taken. (I’d really like to talk to that guy!) I tried several combinations trying to get the .com and failed. Ipage then offered suggestions for what I could use. There’s a protocol to use certain extensions like .biz that didn’t fit my situation. So I did what any frustrated non-techy would do – I chose the .something that was available. So my website is now registered as www.rexowens.us.

Make sure that when a web host creates a domain name that it is registered; that protects you from having anyone else in the world use the same domain name. Because I have the basic plan, my domain name is registered for only three years. However, I don’t expect that three years from now there will be any competition for my domain name.

I devoted nearly two months to researching web hosts, features, cost and domain names. I am most likely a bit slower than most E.I. readers would be at this job.

Next month I’ll cover the blood, sweat, and tears I shed building my website. Any and all reader comments are welcome.
THE FITZGERALD BOOK REVIEW
PAT FITZGERALD

Bittersweet love story
deals with real people

The Bluff, a novella by Sue Wentz, published by Smashwords.com

She’s a woman who never fully blossomed. Divorced and held back by a lack of feelings of self-worth, she’s reconciled to a life of mediocrity. A son and daughter provide her only joy.

The town newcomer cannot help but be attracted to the woman who lunches alone in a local diner. After admiring her spunk when she puts down her jerk of an ex-husband, he works up the nerve to ask her on a date. She courageously accepts, despite worries over what might be wrong with a man who finds her intriguing.

Their attraction combusts into flaming affection. Neither one is about to squelch the fire, though both realize his situation will inevitably reduce their love to ashes. He is also divorced and cannot remain at his temporary job in the small town where she lives, because his daughters need him at home. She can’t follow him. Split custody with her ex is simply not an option.

This is no sugary romance, but rather a bittersweet and sometimes gut-wrenching love story about real people with realistic jobs and easily identifiable problems and emotions. They could be our neighbors, if not ourselves. The story’s poignancy will linger long after the final page has been read.

The Bluff is available at Smashwords and the ever-ubiquitous Amazon.com. It’s available in electronic and paperback form.

COACH’S BULLPEN BLURB

Rosati finishes 8th novel!

Angela M. Rosati will soon celebrate her 83 birthday! But first she’s celebrating publication of her novel, The Unmatched Love Match. It’s the eighth she’s written and third she’s published. The other two published books are Wanted: Husband (Feb, 2010) and Did I Kill Mr. Right? (Nov 2012).

“None have X-rated scenes,” she reports.

UPDATE:

The Little Free Library of Felton Place names its first three inductees in its Author Hall of Fame

Last month I asked the published authors among you to send a copy of your book or books to my Little Free Library. Here are our first three members of the LFL Hall of Fame

Janice Kaat, for her novel SECOND CHANCES

Andrea Schoenthal for her writers’ group anthology, PEARLS OF WISDOM-- 30th anniversary edition, compiled by the Creative Writers of the Southern Tier

Elaine Shaw for her novels, THE VIEW FROM THREE WINDOWS and CHLOE’S CHOICE

Thanks to Janice, Andrea, and Elaine! Anyone else have a book to give?

Q: What book made you want to become a writer?

A: My checkbook.


HOW DO YOU REALLY FEEL ABOUT HER, MS. McCArTHY?

Mary McCarthy called playwright Lillian Hellman "overrated, a bad writer, a dishonest writer ..." and "every word she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the.'" Hellman sued her but died before the suit was settled.

OUR WONDERFUL NATIVE TONGUE

Meandering Madonna spotted this headline on her AOL news update:

Obama Hosts Indiana Woman Who Lost Legs In Twister In Oval Office

And from a brief Associated Press account of the kidnapping of baseball legend Cal Ripken, Jr.’s mother, who, it said, was found “with her hands bound and blindfolded in the back seat of her car.” Can’t be too careful.
COACH’S MAILBOX

Where does all that alleged “humor” come from?

Hey, Coach,
Thanks for the PUNy acknowledgment in E.I. However, I would have preferred a notation that I 'sent' them to you. I hope no one thinks I tried to pass them off as something I created myself. Heck, I'm not even close to being that good. More importantly, however, I don't need any lawsuits for plagiarism or word theft or something. Otherwise, another outstanding E.I. Hope you're summer is filled with baseball and other good things. Go K.C. Royals (at least they're marginally better).

Larry Tobin

Coach note: Larry makes a good point, worth underscoring. When I note that jokes are “thanks to” someone, I mean they poached them off the Internet and sent them along. The stuff seldom has attribution, so I can’t run the name of the person we should actually blame for creating the stuff. I also edit them liberally.

We welcome a new teammate

Please add me to your mailing list for Extra-Innings. I am a friend of Norma Sundberg & she has been forwarding recent issues to me. I enjoy them very much.

Poets Rock & Write!

Patricia Stevenson-Gingrich

Coach’s note: Patricia prepares the newsletter and website and keeps track of membership for the Big Bend Poets (BBP), a chapter of the Florida State Poetry Association and open to anyone with a love or interest in poetry.

“We have a roster of 40 with around 10 - 12 constant members who range in age from 18 to 89,” Patricia tells me.

“Basically we endeavor to educate members in the writing and reading of poetry and to promote an understanding and appreciation of poetry to members and the community,” she adds.

Their once a month meetings at a local bookstore include an open-mike session for members to read their poems.

Good advice from a friend

Marsh:
Sorry to hear about your experiences with your new novel [Bullpen Bloviation, last issue]. Honestly, there are so many young eager ebook/pod publishers out there that it surprises me that subsidy publishers still exist. I imagine though it's a little harder for a literary novel.

You hang in there. You shouldn't have to subsidize. In the meantime, see if there's a way to make it better. There's always a way.

Monette Bebow-Reinhard

It’s all in the delivery

Marsh:
Your latest edition finally opened after a long "spinning ball" episode. But your latest issue was worth the wait. One of your best! Thanks for including my Rick Nelson comment.

Also, (regarding your lead article) a few years back, I had a similar contact with Mr. Pruett and his proposal for Subsidy Publishing. I understand his logic. Been there. But I didn't go for it either. Too risky. Now, at my age, I've about given up on the traditional book publishing route. Too time consuming. I have a few more books in me (I hope) and will probably publish them myself, via MagCloud, Lulu, or as digital ebooks. My friends and followers always know where to find me. And that's good enough for me right now.

Thanks again for a super issue.

Best,

Ned Burke

www.epburke.com<http://www.epburke.com>

Coach’s note: Many folks had trouble accessing the last issue. For some, the hotlink prompt only gave you the previous month’s issue and all issues prior to that. Our web mavens tell me that you can remedy that by hitting “refresh” and then opening it again.

None of us has any idea why this is happening, but I do apologize. (As Harry Truman so memorably said, “The Buck Stops Here.”)
Little Free Library book requests draws comments

Enjoyed the *EI*, esp PUNishment, your little free library info, the movie review and comments by readers.

You "done good"....as per.

**Mary Tracy**

Hi, Marsh,
My book is on its way to the Little Free Library at Felton Place. That is a neat idea. I wonder if that would work here?

I enjoyed the *Extra Innings* and especially the part you wrote and also Jeremiah. Next month things should settle down a little and I can work on some more Cryptograms. They don't all enjoy them but some do.

**Jan Kaat**

COACH,
I just finished reading the July *Extra Innings*. As usual enjoyed the eclectic collection of true stories, poetry, humor and Meanderings. I was wondering about the Little Free Library of Felton Place. I don't have a published book but I do have a 2008 self-published collection of works by members of my writing group. If that would be suitable, I can sign my name in it and send it to the address.

**Andrea Schoenthal**

Coach's note: I received the book, with great thanks, and have given it a place of honor in the LFLoFP.

Hello Marshall:
One of our local TV stations had a piece on the Little Free Libraries last night. There are several right here in the Des Moines area. They noted that it all started in Wisconsin. Seeing your piece in your July *Extra Innings* prompted me to send this bit of info--thought you would be interested in what Iowa is doing to promote books. Liked your idea of writers sending their books to you.

I loved the photo of the "divine Lilly." How exciting that you have a grandchild near you for you and your wife to enjoy.

Found your piece about your experience with subsidy publishing quite interesting. It will certainly help your readers to know what to agree to when they self-publish. And, I enjoyed "Rank & File" by Robert Hale--a date with Edward R. Murrow, Miss Glacier Park, & destiny.

**Sharon Young**

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We welcome new teammates all graduates of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Odyssey Project

**James Robinson**

**Marcia Hampton**

**Helen Montgomery**

**Juba Moten**

**Marilyn Sims**

**Thomas Gardner**

And finally...

**Your monthly moment with Lily**