Two issues ago I reviewed Girl with Stars on Skirt, a gorgeous debut novel by Jennifer Kitchell. (If you missed it, you can access back issues of E.I. archived at the same site where you found this issue.) She very nicely agreed to an interview for this issue.

Jennifer was born near Canada but went ‘home’ with her mother to the desert Southwest every year, where she grew interested in Navajo culture. She took a PhD in geology and has received awards for her science writing. Wanting to give her readers an experience, not just information, she wrote a novel.

EI It's relatively unusual for a scientist to write a novel (let alone a beautiful one, which is unusual for anybody). What drew you to writing fiction?

JK The problem itself led me to writing fiction. I considered writing nonfiction (which I had so much experience doing), but came instead to the realization that I wanted the reader to inhabit another world, an exotic world, and that only fiction could transport the reader. The decision became a blessing, in that we read to inhabit other worlds and other lives, but it turns out – as all fiction writers come to know – that we write to do the same.

But in the sciences, and the papers and books that describe the actual doing of science, the data shape the story. And in feature writing (which I had done some of between my Masters and Ph.D.), the interview subjects shape the story.

But I quickly realized that there were no bounds to the shape of fiction: that is a wonderfully freeing idea and a terrifying idea at the same time, because the choices are limitless. How to begin?

I did the easiest thing: I started with the research, and that took a very long time. But once your mind is open to the possibility of telling a novel-length story, you begin to encounter what someone has referred to as “sticky” things. That fits: the sticky things do stick to you, and a story begins to evolve that allows those sticky things to fit in.

EI How did you learn how? (Interpret that any way you wish.)

JK My first idea on to how to learn to write a novel was completely ridiculous although it seemed sane before I began. I actually brought home a relatively thick and interesting new novel, opened it, and began making algebraic assignments to the characters and plot, all in -- as you who are much wiser can imagine -- a futile stab at it! The novel is much too complex.

I then turned to listening to writers, in local writing sessions and conferences here in Madison, and then at the University of Iowa. I also devoured books on the subject, falling in love...
with the classics by John Gardner and E. M. Forster, and Lamott’s *Bird by Bird*, and scores of others. Annie Dillard was a favorite too.

**EI** How did you make time for it, with all the other things in your life?

**JK** A good question. And besides all the others things in our lives, I found that one’s own ‘monkey brain’ could become quite a problem: that inner voice that keeps reminding you, as soon as you are settled and about to begin to write, that you need to jump out of the chair and do this and that first.

You really have to say “No” to that incessant inner chatter and let yourself have whatever time you’ve carved out for silence and staring at the monitor and letting your fingers hear something inside your mind that starts to come out, forming a phrase, and then a sentence, and finally a scene.

My other problem, besides time, was space: I don’t really have enough space to write a novel, and so I invested in scotch tape and would fill wall surfaces with consecutive sheets of a scene, in revision, so that I could ‘see’ it all as I walked around the room. I wound up taping sheets to the microwave and the refrigerator, and the sliding patio doors, and even the glass of framed art – trying to get the scene at eye level so that I could physically walk around inside it. Revision, of course, being at least 90% of the writing process.

**EI** While writing this novel, did you ever lose hope? Lose your way? Become disgusted? Supply your own adjective.

**JK** Of course I lost hope, and lost my way, and became totally disgusted by my lack of ability to get something on paper that remotely resembled what I’d hoped I could say.

A writer, and writing teacher, said something that stayed with me: how there’s no such thing as a bad idea for a novel; that it’s all in the execution. And that our real task was to marry intention with effect. Is our intention, as writer, marrying effect for the reader?

What makes that charge doubly hard to judge is that I as a writer is having to try to see what the reader sees, when my head is full of what I writer intend. My only solution was to do it again and again, and then when I couldn’t ‘see’ anything more to change, to put it away and move on, knowing that when I came back and did another read, I’d be disappointed by what I’d written, and see lots of things that needed changing.

Some sentences it seems you can never get right. And other sentences arrive and even in re-reading them in revision hundreds of times, you don’t change a thing.

Writing is a wonderful way to live. And writing fiction turns out to be an expansive way to think.

"Isn't it odd how much fatter a book gets when you've read it several times?...As if something were left between the pages every time you read it. Feelings, thoughts, sounds, smells...and then, when you look at the book again many years later, you find yourself there, too, a slightly younger self, slightly different, as if the book had preserved you like a pressed flower...both strange and familiar."

*Inkheart*, by Cornelia Funke

Passed along to us from Mary Chace
By Madonna Dries Christensen

During a pause while reading, how do you mark your place in the book? It might be a convenient scrap of paper, a knitting needle, a pencil, a twig, a subway ticket -- or maybe you have a stash of bookmarks.

While wandering on the Internet, I happened on a site devoted to bookmarks. Isn’t the Internet a wonder? Of course, I bookmarked the site so I could easily return.

Bookmarks are as ubiquitous as Chicken Soup anthologies. You’ll find racks of bookmarks in gift shops and bookstores, as well as freebies at libraries, museums, and other public places. Bookmarks are crafted from paper, silk, pewter, beads, leather, needlepoint, macramé, ivory, woven straw, feathers—just about anything.

The bookmark site includes quotes about bookmarks (“Why spend a dollar on a bookmark; use the dollar.” — Steven Spielberg), photos of bookmarks, essays, websites, and blogs related to bookmarks, and a history of bookmarks. At the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, bookmarks were often shaped like a knife because the pages in books were not always completely separated. The bookmark could be used as a page cutter.

Librarians report finding bizarre items in returned books, among them a slice of bacon. But this oddity has been reported countless times, with many variations of the story, making it perhaps an urban myth.

One librarian listed her weirdest find as a Hostess apple pie. I hope it was wrapped. Also on the list were hair clips, a bullet, and a clothespin.

The most unusual items I’ve found in a book were probably not intended as bookmarks but tucked away for safekeeping. In a vintage book titled *Album*, which I bought for fifty cents at an estate sale, the handwritten entries are dated 1836. The volume appears to be a death album, if there were such a thing in times past. Pasted on the first page is a poem titled “The Last Words Of A Dying Girl.” The verses, penned by different people, are in that old cursive penmanship that is difficult to read, plus the ink is faded. I was able to decipher one verse written on a loose clipping.

Farewell dear girl, the time has come,  
When thee and I must part,  
But distance ne’er shall break the tie,  
That binds thee to my heart.  
— To Sarah

The other clipping, on newsprint faded to sepia, is an obituary.

**Death Of Mr. Lincoln’s Stepmother** —

On the 19\textsuperscript{th} inst, Mrs. Sallie Elizabeth Lincoln, widow of the late Thomas Lincoln, and stepmother of the late President Lincoln, and by whom he was principally raised (his own mother having died while he was very young), died in Coles County at an advanced age. “Mrs. Lincoln,” says the Decatur *Magnet*, had for many years resided with her grandson, John Hall, a well-to-do farmer, who lives about nine miles southeast of Charleston, Coles County, near the line between that and Cumberland, and also near the little country village of Farmington. She was much devoted to her illustrious stepson, and took as deep a pride and interest in his rise to fame and fortune as his own mother could have. It is said that she never spoke of him since his tragic death without tears, and the nation or the world had no more sincere mourner over his fall than she.” Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln was born December 13, 1788 and died April 12, 1869, so this item is, at this writing, 140 years old.

For everything you want to know about bookmarks: [http://www.miragebookmark.ch/index.html](http://www.miragebookmark.ch/index.html)

For everything you want to know about Madonna, Google her and see all the great books and articles that come up. Or just wait for her to appear right back here next month.
You are what you read?

By Jim Hemingway Herod

In every writing workshop I have attended, some time along the way, the teacher will remind the participants to read good books. It’s true. We should search them out. I find that, just as I begin to imitate a British accent after watching an English movie, I write differently depending on what I’ve been reading.

For example, the evening after reading in a Hemingway collection of short stories, I wrote a bit of flash fiction that ended this way.

***

“Will you come back? To see me, I mean.” She smiled and tilted her head. “Maybe. Perhaps this summer, to see how hot it gets.”

“Yes, to see the heat. You must see what it’s like,” He laughed. “How it feels, too.” He opened the door of her car. “Stop to rest and to eat something before you get home.”

“Birmingham is not far. I’ll rest there and remember this lovely place.” She slid into the car and looked up at him. “I’ll think of the people who live here, too.”

“Good.” They looked at each other for a moment. “I’m glad you came. Call me.” He pushed the door closed and watched her start the car.

She won’t call. He’ll have to call her. Maybe tomorrow morning.

***

Don’t misunderstand. I am not so full of hubris as to say that I write like Hemingway. Rather, reading Hemingway changes what I choose as subject and how I hear the dialogue.

The other day, I finished an Elmore Leonard novel. It was a good afternoon to get out for a hike in the woods. You can imagine the dialogue I heard while walking. The story ended like this.

***

Richard didn’t see the knife until it was flying through the air. It slammed into his chest knocking him backwards.

He pulled the trigger, yanked on it actually. Richard was set to do that. It would have been a surprise to God and everybody if he hadn’t. But, he did. The blast of the rifle was so loud up close to his ear, that it was just one more thing that startled him.

Then, everything was quiet. He didn’t hear the rifle being kicked across the road. It hurt when the old man stomped him in the chest. He saw the man’s lips moving, “Yeah, Vietnam. I didn’t want this. Dammit. You should have paid attention.”

***

Grove Hill readers are now caught up in Mark Twain and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer as part of Alabama’s Big Read program. If it’s not too cold on the next full moon, I’ll take my shovel and dig at the edge of the oak tree’s shadow out at edge the cemetery. Maybe, this time, I’ll find some treasure there, too.

Jim’s normal cadence when speaking is much more Alabama than England. He was our running man last issue. His column is a regular feature.

About the column name:

In Journey Beyond Innocence Jim wrote:

“As long as Grandmother Stone lived, she had The Plantation’s tenants keep the meadow down toward the river cleared. She called it The Nethermost. The memory of the fun we cousins had in that meadow still causes me to smile. When we were little we would run and play down in the gardens. I shot my first deer down in The Nethermost. Grandfather was sitting beside me, and he roared with laughter.”

So look for Jim in the Nethermost, southern Grove Hill, southern Alabama, southern United States.

Jim Herod?
Netting an editor
by Randi Lynn Mrvos

When I was a kid, my father introduced me to fishing. It didn’t take long to realize that this wasn’t for me (live bait, dead fish). Yet when it comes to writing nonfiction articles for children’s magazines, I’ve learned that I have to think like a fisherman to interest an editor.

Experienced fishermen will tell you to become familiar with the physical environment and the habits of the species you plan to fish. In other words, they study their target.

I get to know my “target” by going to the archives and reading several articles. This way, I get a feel for the magazine. Is the tone casual or formal? Does the magazine use sidebars or photographs? What is the average word count for the articles?

I also acquaint myself with the magazine’s guidelines. Even if I’ve submitted to the magazine before, I read the guidelines again. (Believe me, guidelines change faster than you’d think.) Failure to follow the guidelines annoys editors and courts rejection.

After I’ve written my article, I compose an irresistible query. I keep the query to one page. A standard query usually starts with a hook to catch the editor’s attention. Some writers use the first paragraph of their article as the hook.

Next, I include a brief synopsis (including a word count and the intended audience) and a short biography. But to make my query stand out from the others, I add “lures.”

Firstly, I mention that my article has been reviewed by an expert. An expert review adds depth to facts that have been researched and strengthens my writing by making it clear and precise. You can find experts on the Internet by typing the topic of your article into a search engine like Yahoo. I search for a prominent source such as a professor, researcher, or author. In exchange for a review, offer to credit him and mail him a copy of my published article.

Secondly, I state that I can provide photographs for my article. I search the Internet for free images or visit www.wikipedia.org, a website where you can use images without charge. Offering photos shows an editor that I’m willing to go the extra mile to make my piece shine.

Lastly, I include two to three impressive clips. The clips that I send are similar in style and format to the publication to which I’m pitching. I close the query letter by thanking the editor for her time and enclose a self-addressed envelope if I’m submitting by paper post.

Since turn-around time could be several weeks, I start searching for fresh topics and new markets. I study the magazines and the guidelines. I try to stay focused on my next project. But it’s hard not to think about my submission. Even so, I wait as patiently as a fisherman, knowing that my article may net an editor’s nod. 

Randi made the move from Creativity Connection to Extra Innings. Her column will be a regular feature.

“It’s a beautiful day. Let’s play two.” Mr. Cub, patron saint of optimists.
A stranger in Tucson finds a writing community

By Janice Kaat

Arriving in Tucson Arizona in September of 2007, my first goal was finding a writer’s group or at least writers. Nobody knew of a writer’s group in the area. The librarian did find a couple of numbers and emails for a couple of writer’s groups, but all attempts at contacting them by phone and email failed.

In January of this year the librarian emailed me with information about The Winter Writer’s Workshop that Pima Community College was sponsoring. It fit into my schedule, and the classes sounded interesting.

My day at the first Winter Writers Workshop was terrific. I had six classes with six different teachers and liked them all.

The first session was for all of us with Nancy Turner talking about Writing with the lights out. She said to write as if this were the last story you could ever write. She talked about making it feel like you care. Hear your characters. Write with music. Get to know the place or what you’re writing about. Don’t start with the weather report. What is your theme? Time is important. Study your rule book, and then throw it away.

Then we got to choose what classes to go to. I chose How Could This Be? by Kit McIlroy. When you hear something or read something and you can’t figure out how that could happen, let your imagination run with it and come up with a reason. We got to write in this class. I got to read mine. The crowd loved it and I had fun doing it.

We got to write in our third class too which was Dream/Life by Beth Alvarado. She said a writer should strive to see things as if they never saw it before. Also, try to turn the natural into the unnatural. She had us pick a number, a character, and a place. We had to write a story about the character at that age and their description of that place. She threw words at us during our writing, and we had to incorporate them into our writing.

The words were pumpernickel, moon, saint, strawberry, flying saucer, and cowboy.

After lunch my next class was How the Sentence Tells the Story by Aurelie Sheehan. She had us read from four different authors to show how they used words to give us a feel for the story. She said fault lines in your life can become different languages. She wanted to know what part of where we came from scared us and suggested that was a good thing to write from.

Next up, Writing on the Edge by Lydia Millet dealt with first sentences and how you should write a lot of them to get good at it. We had to write three first sentences and check which one we thought was best. Then she collected them all and different people read them. We voted on which one we thought was best. With mine, only two people raised their hand on the one I had chosen. But almost all of them raised their hand on the last one: "Shut up you idiot, do you want them to hear us?"

We all came together again for Reality that Wanders into our Writing by Laila Halaby. She said that her fiction sounds more real than her non-fiction. She said you can get reality from family, news, smells, what you see, department stores and stuff you see along the road. She said to overwrite, capture the emotions, research, don't argue with your characters, and let the story unfold.

I met lots of nice people and got some names and numbers of people who want to start a writers group.

When she lived in Wisconsin, Jan lead the Sheboygan Writers’ Group. She was a regular contributor to Creativity Connection. This is her first piece for E. I.
Coach’s Picks to Click

Three brilliant novels strike at the nature of truth by telling wonderful stories

Lots of you have been recommending these first two books to me for a long time, and I’m so glad you did. The third I stumbled across on my own. All are available in paperback editions, and all are worthy of your attention.

The Book Thief, Markus Zusak (2005)
I suppose the high-concept pitch line for this brilliant novel might go something like this: “German girl discovers the joy of reading amidst the despair and danger of Nazi Germany, as told by Mr. Death.” If you were an agent, would you ask to see the manuscript? Me, neither.

Having Death narrate the story almost put me off of it. Fortunately, I persevered. This book moved me mightily without once stooping to sentimentality. This story will stay with me for a long time.

Young Liesel Meminger steals her first book at her brother’s grace. As unlikely as it might seem, The Grave Digger’s Handbook fires a yearning for words and stories so strong, she risks stealing her second book from a Nazi book burning. When her foster parents shelter a Jew in their basement, Liesel experiences the capacity of the human soul for savage cruelty and transcendent love.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society, Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows (2008)
The cute title put me off, but again, your recommendations got me to open the cover. That’s all it took.

This is a beautifully rendered novel of letters, a rarity these days. The various voices of the letter writers are distinctive and delightful, and the stories that unfold are engrossing.

Like Book Thief, this book takes as its text the suffering inflicted by the Nazis, this time on the people of one of the tiny Channel Islands off the coast of England. And like Book Thief, the subtext is all about the power of story and the love of the written word.

All similarities end there, except that both books are marvelous.

How I Became a Famous Novelist, Steve Hely (2009)
A bitter and disillusioned young man sets out to construct a bestseller for the sole purpose of making his ex-girlfriend eat her guts out with jealousy when The Famous Novelist Who Got Away shows up at her wedding.

Okay, that’s not quite right. That’s only one of four reasons for writing a bestseller. The others are 1) fame, 2) financial comfort, and 3) stately home on ocean (or scenic lake).

At times our cynical, anti-heroic narrator is even less pleasant to be around than one of his literary forbears, Holden Caulfield. He’s also hysterically funny. His 16 rules for writing a bestseller and the list of faux bestsellers are worth the price of admissions all by themselves.

From Pete Tarslaw’s 16 rules for writing a bestseller:

1) Abandon Truth
12) Give readers versions of themselves, infused with extra awesomeness.

If you’re thinking, “Hey, this guy might be on to something,” you really need to read this book.

The tome that results, The Tornado Ashes Club (genre: literary/crime -- indeed!), does manage to slither its way up the Amazon.com scoreboard and onto the bestseller list, due in large part to the literary feud that develops when Tarslaw slips and tells the truth in a television interview, boldly labeling beloved literary light Preston Brooks as a con man.

The story arcs toward a showdown, mano-a-mano, Tarslaw nose to nose with Brooks. In it, the book moves well beyond mere satire and a hoot of a read to become a book to treasure.

Here’s the difference. In most books, there are good guys and bad guys. The good guys are right, and the bad guys are wrong. In a really good book, there are good guys and bad guys. The good guys and right and wrong, and so are the bad guys. This is a really good book.

Pete and Preston have a lot to teach us. The author allows us to decide which one ‘wins’ the debate.
E.I. Poetry Pause

Snowflake

Some twenty thousand feet it fell, this shimmer of symmetry . . . threatened,
every instant, every inch by winter-fickled winds, till
tender and fern-fingered, it touched my rough black glove and there, in less than the length of a breath surrendered its essence.

Now a cold thought holds me.
A single crystal in some twenty thousand centuries of human living
my own life
falls melting.

A poem may be a clumsy camera but I focus it with hope knowing it holds my only chance to capture now in mid-melt.

Elizabeth King is the author of six books and over 500 articles and poems published under her former name, Marilyn Morgan Helleberg. She likes to rock babies and listen to music in the dark.

Maxine Hong Kingston and Bill Moyers discussing the use of writing after the wars as a healing tool and as memoir.

Memorial

After the wars, searching to find a new path through life, through the woods, around the rubble
created by humans or manifested through natural forces, bringing firestorm, flood, earthquake. Raking away the ashes, pushing back emotions, salving the injured soul through the written word, so that old soldiers won’t fade away

but live on through a body of work through a poem, a story, a memoir. Telling the truth behind the words not written on the simple white markers.

Norma J. Sundberg

Norma on Norma: I started writing in earnest back when my third child was due. I didn't want to wait until I was 60 or 80 to "start" writing. It proved a lifesaver while raising 10 children, helping with grandchildren and great-grands, penning a column for 10 years for a newspaper in Ohio; having poetry and prose published in a wide arena of publications; editing a church newsletter; giving poetry readings to church and school groups and teaching poetry classes at College for Kids at Kent State University Ashtabula, Ohio Campus in Summertime. Ran away from home in 1991 to live in Tallahassee Florida, still writing and publishing. My article about Erma Bombeck is on the Humor writers site about my relationship with Erma. www.humorwriters.org/sundberg. Published a children's book in 2007, An Odd Fable, and working on finishing touches for Remembering Childhood, poems about those children, Illustrated by Esther M. Leiper ARC printed through Peony Press.
**E.I. Email Box**

**Thinking hard gives you wrinkles**
Marshall,
Love "Extra Innings" -- it's a very welcomed relief from the intenseness of grant writing! Never, ever, did I think I would be into such brainy stuff! -- Larry Tobin says "wrinkles hurt" ... thinking so hard hurts!!!
Thanks for the humor and the laughs. I wish I had something to submit -- and grant stuff is wayyyyy too boring for your newsletter!

**Ann Brigham**
Northcentral Technical College, Wausau
Grants may be boring, but they occasionally go out and find some money for you. Thinking up all this stuff for Extra Innings don't pay a dime.

**Elementary, my dear Hornung**
Hi Marshall,
Got the new issue & printed it to read (nope. Won't read it on the screen. Don't have a Kindle, either).
Would you be interested in an article about books vs movies? My son is doing a project in school where he has to read a book, see the movie, and discuss the differences. I recently went back to some classics - after seeing the new Sherlock Holmes movie, I wanted to find out just how much Hollywood changed the original stories. Came to some interesting conclusions.
I thought the article could also be used as a springboard for reader feedback - "What books have you seen turned into movies that you loved? Hated? Why?"
I'd love to write a piece for Extra Innings. What kind of word count would you require? Thanks!

**Carol Hornung**
Well, for openers, Holmes never said, "Elementary, my dear Watson" in the printed version. Sounded like such a great idea, I gave Carol the go-ahead, and she went and did it. You'll see the results on the next page.

**Aw, it ain’t all that hard**
Marshall,
Just wanted to drop you a line. 'Extra Innings' is looking great. Keep up the hard work in retirement!

**Mike Simon**
Thanks, Mike. Making E.I. more closely resembles fun.

**You get tingles up and down your legs**
So if your ears burn when someone's talking about you and your nose itches when you're going to come into money, what happens when someone is reading your Extra Innings? And then an e-mail from the EI editor appears in your box at the same time. Some kind of cyber coordination I suppose.
Was sitting down to work on the next chapter of the quilt novel when I found EI in my inbox. Cool webpage that it takes you to first--looks very professional. Great issue, as well. Love the account of the running guy's conversation with his characters--always nice to be reminded that others have characters talking to them, too.

**Lisa Krenz**
Cosmic convergence. Happens once every 76 years.
Our running guy is novelist Jim Herod. Keeper of the website is Celeste Anton, and she is very professional.

**The inner workings of Coach’s mind**
Movies and Books - A Love-Hate Relationship (with popcorn!)
By Carol Shay Hornung

What is it about books and movies that is so polarizing? I saw the new Sherlock Holmes movie and had a great time, while a friend of mine refused to even consider going because it looks so different from the books. Holmes, an action hero? Sacrilege!

I wondered, just how different is this film from the original stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle? So I did some reading (and any movie that inspires you to read is good).

The screenwriters did study at least some of the original canon. One line from the film is lifted directly from a story, “The Man With The Twisted Lip”: “‘You have a grand gift of silence, Watson,’ said (Holmes). ‘It makes you quite invaluable as a companion.’”

In the book, he continues speaking, working through the case aloud.

In the movie, Watson punches him.

This gets a laugh from the modern audience, primed for action and humor. Same line, but presented in a different way. The whole movie is like that. Holmes was, by the author’s description, a boxer. Here, we actually see him fight. The literary Holmes is very self-confident. The cinematic one is more vulnerable, overwhelmed at times by his own sensitivity and attention to detail. I think that makes him more likable and adds a new dimension to the character. The plot is lightweight, but we’re here for the atmosphere (and popcorn) anyway.

Taking a story and telling it in a different way is risky, though. The movie based on Jodi Picoult’s novel My Sister’s Keeper chose a dramatically different ending for its story of two sisters, one of whom has cancer. Loyal fans of the book were infuriated by the more conventional ending, but after reading the book, my thought was that a two-hour movie simply didn’t have the time or skill to properly serve such a complex plot and its unexpected climax.

What beloved books have you seen enhanced (or destroyed) by Hollywood? Send ‘em to me and we’ll print some of your comments in a future edition of Extra Innings.

Carol Shay Hornung lives in Madison and spends plenty of time at the movies. She’s currently working on her mystery novel, Asperger Sunset. chornung88@aol.com

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Extra Innings
And, by, and for writers, their enablers, and their Valentines
Number Four Madison, Wisconsin, February, 2010

Editor-in-Coach: Marshall J. Cook
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Poets: Elizabeth King, Norma J. Sundberg
Book to movie editor: Carol Shay Hornung
Educational editor: Janice Kaat
Web Goddess: Celeste Anton
The Masked Man: Clayton Moore

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

Extra Innings comes to you through the good graces of the folks of the writing program at the Division of Continuing Studies, Liberal Studies and the Arts, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Christine DeSmet, Rita Mae Reese, and Laurel Yourke. Find out about their workshops, courses, conferences, and critiques services at: www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing

They’re the absolute best. Extra Innings is a proud booster of Write by the Lake
The Writers Institute
The Rhinelander School of the Arts
Weekend with your Novel
and the Odyssey Project

No added sugar, honey. No carbs, no trans fats, no salt-- pretty tasteless all in all. Like its predecessor, Creativity Connection, this newsletter contains your recommended daily dose of nouns, verbs (transigent and intransigent), gourds, adjectives, adverbs and other artificial sweeteners, pronouns, antinouns, prepositions, propositions, conjunctions, contradictions, contractions, eruditions, bloviation, chiasmus, charisma, metanoia, paranoia, trace metaphors and the occasional half-witticism.
Sounds a lot like
Stephen Wright
Courtesy of Steve Born
1. A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE AFRAID OF HEIGHTS. NOT ME, I'M AFRAID OF WIDTHS.
2. CURIOSITY KILLED THE CAT, BUT FOR A WHILE I WAS A SUSPECT.
3. DO YOU THINK THAT WHEN THEY ASKED GEORGE WASHINGTON FOR ID THAT HE JUST WHIPPED OUT A QUARTER?
4. DON'T YOU HATE WHEN YOUR HAND FALLS ASLEEP AND YOU KNOW IT WILL BE UP ALL NIGHT.
5. I BOUGHT SOME BATTERIES, BUT THEY WEREN'T INCLUDED.
6. I BOUGHT SOME INSTANT WATER ONE TIME BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO ADD TO IT.
7. I HAD A FRIEND WHO WAS A CLOWN. WHEN HE DIED, ALL HIS FRIENDS WENT TO THE FUNERAL IN ONE CAR.
8. I HAD SOME EYEGLASSES. I WAS WALKING DOWN THE STREET WHEN SUDDENLY THE PRESCRIPTION RAN OUT.
9. I HAD TO STOP DRIVING MY CAR FOR A WHILE....THE TIRES GOT DIZZY.
10. I HAVE AN ANSWERING MACHINE IN MY CAR. IT SAYS, I'M HOME NOW. BUT LEAVE A MESSAGE AND I'LL CALL WHEN I'M OUT.
11. I HAVE THE WORLD'S LARGEST COLLECTION OF SEASHELLS. I KEEP IT ON ALL THE BEACHES OF THE WORLD....PERHAPS YOU'VE SEEN IT.
12. I INSTALLED A SKYLIGHT IN MY APARTMENT...THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE ABOVE ME ARE FURIOUS.
13. I INVENTED THE CORDLESS EXTENSION CORD.
15. I USED TO WORK IN A FIRE HYDRANT FACTORY. YOUCouldn't PARK ANYWHERE NEAR THE PLACE.
16. I WAS READING THE DICTIONARY. I THOUGHT IT WAS A POEM ABOUT EVERYTHING.
17. I WENT TO A GENERAL STORE BUT THEY WOULDN'T LET ME BUY ANYTHING SPECIFIC.
18. I WENT TO A RESTAURANT THAT SERVES "BREAKFAST AT ANY TIME.' SO I ORDERED FRENCH TOAST DURING THE RENAISSANCE.
19. I WROTE A FEW CHILDREN'S BOOKS...NOT ON PURPOSE.
20. I'M WRITING A BOOK. I'VE GOT THE PAGE NUMBERS DONE.
21. IT DOESN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHAT TEMPERATURE A ROOM IS, IT'S ALWAYS ROOM TEMPERATURE.
22. MY ROOMMATE GOT A PET ELEPHANT. THEN IT GOT LOST. IT'S IN THE APARTMENT SOMEWHERE.
23. ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE DIFFERENT FINGERS.
24. SPONGES GROW IN THE OCEAN. THAT JUST KILLS ME. I WONDER HOW MUCH DEEPER THE OCEAN WOULD BE IF THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN.
25. THE OTHER DAY I.....UH, NO, THAT WASN'T ME.
26. THERE'S A FINE LINE BETWEEN FISHING AND JUST STANDING ON THE SHORE LIKE AN IDIOT.
27. WHAT'S ANOTHER WORD FOR "THESAURUS"?
28. WHEN I WAS CROSSING THE BORDER INTO CANADA, THEY ASKED IF I HAD ANY FIREARMS WITH ME. I SAID, "WELL, WHAT DO YOU NEED?"
29. YOU CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING. WHERE WOULD YOU PUT IT?
30. WHEN I WOKE UP THIS MORNING MY GIRLFRIEND ASKED ME, "DID YOU SLEEP GOOD?" I SAID "NO, I MADE A FEW MISTAKES."
Coach’s note: My nephew, Rob Freeman, knowing of my love for the mountains that stood sentinel over my childhood, sent this picture, taken from in front of his home in Pasadena, California. I grew up a little north of there, in Altadena, right up by the “my” mountains.