When William Elliott (Tying Clouds to Rocks, A Place at the Table, Falling into the Face of God) was 20 years old, he decided he wanted to die. His parents had died when he was very young, and he had gradually fallen into deep depression. He didn’t want to kill himself. He just didn’t want to keep living in such pain.

First he tried to sever all mental ties to his body. Then he cut himself off from his emotions. Finally he removed himself from his thoughts, that constant buzzing in his head. When he did, he says, he was overwhelmed by a sense of unconditional love.

"Life was 3D again," he says. He had gradually painted over his life with blackness, but now he saw the vibrant colors again.

He had no other words for the experience but “the presence of God,” and he embarked on an odyssey that would take him around the world, trying to understand the meaning of life by asking all the smartest people he could think of.

A lot of those smart people wouldn’t talk to him. Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens) declined his request for an interview. So did Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. The top pop-guru of the day, Leo Buscaglia, said “no”-- three times. Even “Dear Abby” politely declined.

He was, after all, a “20-year-old nobody living in a trailer” and working nights taking care of elderly schizophrenics for $5 an hour.

But amazingly, many said yes.

Norman Vincent Peale (The Power of Positive Thinking) was very positive and encouraging (“You’re a good interviewer!”), answering his questions about the purpose of life and the meaning of suffering in the world.

“There is a reason in back of my birth,” Peale said. “We’re all here for a reason.”

An Oregon cop had a simple answer: “The purpose of life is to survive it.”

Ram Dass told him to calm his mind, open his heart, and find his destiny.

Elizabeth Kubler Ross advised him to learn to be like a child, adding, “When you’re dying, you get rid of the baloney.”

“Whatever you do, just do it for God,” Mother Teresa said.

“A wise person doesn’t stop suffering,” the Fourteenth Dalai Lama advised. “A wise person suffers with the grain.”

Elliott later wrote a poem to the Dalai Lama, noting that “Your laugh is what I came to hear.”

He went out into the desert of Israel, spending 41 days (one more than Jesus) with nothing but the shade of an overhanging rock, water, a mosquito net, and his thoughts.

“I learned that you have to let the heat go through you,” he says. “You can’t resist it.”

He was sweaty and miserable, and there was nothing he could do about it, no relief. What then? “You get on with it,” he says. His body acclimated. As he sat in his little cave, looking out at the Dead Sea in the distance, he realized that “nothing lies to you in the desert. Everything is just what it is.” And so he began to learn not to lie to himself.

Your heart collects disappointments and gets numb, he notes, becoming finally, literally, disheartened. But in the silence of the desert, his heart could relax. He could feel the joy of being alive-- and also all the pain.
That’s when a group of adventurers happened upon him and invited him to go repelling down the cliffs with them.
He did NOT want to!
They persuaded him.
His first time going down the rope, he “turtled,” curling up and freezing in place. With his new friends shouting encouragement, he focused on his breathing and, staring at the rope, finally inched his way down.
He still had two more cliffs to go!
The second time was pretty much the same, breathing and staring.
But by the third cliff, he could actually look around a little bit and appreciate the incredible view from high in the air over the desert.
Now, he says, when he sees someone whose heart is paralyzed with fear, he thinks, “Oh, this must be your first cliff.”
“May you be happy,” he wishes them. “May you be kind.”
“I became really awake again,” he says. “I could feel everything.” We’re all born “naturally awake,” he says, but we can’t handle all the pain and disappointment and shut ourselves off.
The goal is to become really awake again.

Little known language nuggets- 1
"Stewardesses" is the longest word typed with only the left hand, and "lollipop" is the longest word typed with only the right hand.

Extra Innings #41
Madison, Wisconsin March, 2013
This month’s All-Star lineup:
Madonna Dries Christensen, Rex Owens, Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks, Ron Hevey, and Vic Johnson
Film buff: Jake McLaughlin
Word Whisperer: Jan Kent
Puns by Pahnke
Web Weaver: Kyle Henderson
Internetters: Steve Born, Sandy Mickelson, and Larry Tobin
The Writer’s Poet: Craig W. Steele
Sonnets by Spevacek
and a poem by Norma Sundberg
The Masked Man: Clayton Moore
Editor-in-Coach: Marshall J. Cook
World’s cutest baby: Liliana Lenore Cook
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Back issues of E.I. available at:
www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing/extrainnings
Deadline for next issue:
Monday, March 25, 2013
Murphy’s other, lesser-known laws

• Law of Mechanical Repair - After your hands become coated with grease, your nose will begin to itch and you'll have to pee.

• Law of Gravity - Any tool, nut, bolt, screw, when dropped, will roll to the least accessible place in the universe.

• Law of Probability - The probability of being watched is directly proportional to the stupidity of your act.

• Law of Random Numbers - If you dial a wrong number, you never get a busy signal; someone always answers.

• Variation Law - If you change lines (or traffic lanes), the one you were in will always move faster than the one you are in now.

• Law of the Bath - When the body is fully immersed in water, the telephone rings.

• Law of Close Encounters - The probability of meeting someone you know increases dramatically when you are with someone you don't want to be seen with.

• Law of the Result - When you try to prove to someone that a machine won't work, IT WILL!!!

• Law of Biomechanics - The severity of the itch is inversely proportional to the reach.

• Law of the Theater & Sports Arena - At any event, the people whose seats are furthest from the aisle always arrive last. They will leave their seats several times to go for food, beer, or the toilet and leave before the end of the performance or game. The folks in the aisle seats come early, never move, have long gangly legs or big bellies and stay to the bitter end. The aisle people are very surly folk.

• The Coffee Law - As soon as you sit down to a cup of hot coffee, your boss will ask you to do something which will last until the coffee is cold.

• Murphy's Law of Lockers - If there are only 2 people in a locker room, they will have adjacent lockers.

• Law of Physical Surfaces - The chances of an open-faced jelly sandwich landing face down on a floor, are directly correlated to the newness and cost of the carpet or rug.

• Brown's Law of Physical Appearance - If the clothes fit, they're ugly.

• Oliver's Law of Public Speaking -- A closed mouth gathers no feet.

• Wilson's Law of Commercial Marketing Strategy - As soon as you find a product that you really like, they will stop making it, OR the store will stop selling it.

• Doctors' Law - If you don't feel well, make an appointment to go to the doctor; by the time you get there you'll feel better. If you don't make the appointment, you'll stay sick.
My ten-year-old granddaughter, Grace, showed me her Fourth Grade writing notebook with drafts of stories, fiction and nonfiction. She used the word *genre* to explain the difference. I didn’t know that word as a child.

She read aloud a story as originally written, and then with revisions, and asked what differences I noticed. She had moved important information from the middle of the story to the first paragraph, added or deleted words for clarity, and rearranged sentences to avoid repetition. Good revisions.

The next day, using a computer, the students typed their stories into a document. Grace didn’t finish, so when she came home she logged into the school’s website on Mom’s computer. She types better than I did in high school. When spellcheck red-lined a word, she clicked on that option and made the change. When finished, she e-mailed the document to her teacher.

Electronic homework.

*The story, The New Baby, featured* Emily, a teenager, and her parents, Lily and Rob. They were all delighted that Lily was expecting a baby. The baby, Katie, was born with a hole in her heart and autism. The family was heartbroken.

Grace has a younger sister with Down syndrome, born with a hole in her heart, and a younger brother with autism. Grace loves her siblings but struggles to cope with the attention their special needs require. She’s beginning to understand disabilities, and I believe she revealed that (through Emily) when her story continues.

Katie’s heart is successfully repaired (as was Grace’s sister’s). Emily loves Katie and helps her with the challenges of autism. Emily goes away to college and misses Katie.

After complimenting the story, I mentioned that when a baby is born doctors don’t know it has autism. They would know if a child has Down syndrome, but autism isn’t diagnosed until age two or three or older.

“But this is fiction,” Grace said.

I couldn’t argue with that. She wanted to explore both autism and the heart defect common in DS. She combined that in Katie.

Throughout the year, the students in First through Fifth Grade write stories. At the end of the year, they choose which story will go into a book. When the books arrive, the class enjoys a publishing party.

In Third Grade, rather than a compilation, each student wrote a complete book. Grace’s book is *What If I Had A Pet Gator? and Other Stories.*

**WHAT IF I HAD A PET GATOR?**

When I was a smart 13 year old, I was the toughest girl in my school class and my whole neighborhood. I was tough because my huge pet was a reptile. He had sharp teeth as big as a knife. His eyes were boiling red. He loved dead mice, fish, ducks, and his favorite food was a male elk! When I tell him to do something that only I say, he must do it or else I will not give him any food for a whole week. I might give him a couple of alive snakes. He likes playing catch the fish. You try to catch the fish in your mouth (even I have to catch it in my mouth and he throws it hard!). My pet’s name is Strong-bone. My neighbor has a pet cat, and Strong-bone almost ate her. But he didn’t. (That is great!)

I am glad that I had a pet gator, it was awesome.

Of course, this is fiction, but the author does see gators by the pond when she visits Granny and Grandfather. *Boiling red eyes* is an image I’d never have conjured—even as an adult. I might ask to borrow it.
Our world is in flux and knowing we die sharpens the savor of time. Perhaps we are not important to the universe, though we place ourselves twixt devils and angels, and write endless verse exploring our relationship with God.

Poetry tries to encompass infinity, attempts taking a bite out of puzzlement by offering, said Robert Frost, “a momentary stay against confusion.” If we can’t swallow a wheat field, we can at least taste bread. At times we feel mellow, that the world is right and so are we. Such an upbeat mood concludes Brooks Roddan’s poem from Yankee Magazine titled “Songs of Thanksgiving.”

In the quiet before dinner someone says grace and laughs toward the end. We eat; the table leans in everyone’s direction.

Ideally, life should lean toward all. What joins us, kindles hearts? A simple yet profound pleasure is that of fellowship following harvest. Yet being alone with nature also offers comfort along with insight, as here in the first verse of Karle Baker’s “Good Company.”

Today I have grown taller
From walking with the trees,
The seven sister-poplars
That go softly in a line;
And I think my heart is whiter
For a parlay with a star
That trembled out at nightfall
And hung above the pine.

Ruskin, genius author, critic, and social reformer declared: “When men are rightly occupied their amusement grows out of their work as the color-petals of a fruitful flower.” The pop expression is “Bloom where planted.” A poem starting in downcast mode may indeed end with optimism. Don Blanding provides an example from his book of linked narratives:

**Vagabond House**
There are times when only a dog will do
For a friend....when you’re beaten sick and blue
And the world’s all wrong, for he won’t care
If you break and cry, or grouch and swear,
Plus he’ll let you know as he licks your hands
That he’s downright sorry --- and understands.

Glibness has its uses, and Blanding is consistently entertaining. However, a more cynical outlook shows in three of my epigrams. The first two ask, and then answer, rhetorical questions:

**You Say—I Nay**
Opinions have pinions
But how high can they fly?
Most fall like birds clipped
When bird-shot whirrs by.

**Moving Up**
---To really hitch our wagon to a flaming star?
Smart as we deem ourselves, dumber we are!

When problems beset, try enjoying “ham on wry.” This sandwich contains no calories and frankly, though we deplore ill fortune, we may also distrust good luck, so I advise:

**Inner and Outer Landscapes**
At times life seems disorganized
Plus the outer world stays wild:
Though keeping wary--on my toes --
I never feel quite reconciled
To pleasure, cash, or lazy ease,
Fearing sudden strikes of lightning:
If fortune smiles with pretty wiles,
Still my creeping dread is frightening!

Tightrope walkers must be one hundred percent focused, and so must jugglers. The poet, too, walks a thin line to keep words, like balls, spinning in the air. Timing merged with skill is all-important. Indeed, though it’s an overworked expression, perhaps you can “laugh as you cry.” The concept is paradoxical, but nothing is wholly either /or. Put another way, you may need digging deep in order to come out on top. For example, consider a marble-size acorn. Insignificant? Not at all, seed yourself with words to see what grows!
SO GOD MADE A FARMER

Coach's note: In the midst of the mostly inane and obscenely expensive ads during this year's Super Bowl, I was moved by a beautiful rendering of Paul Harvey's iconic paean-- moved enough that I wanted to include it here.

And on the 8th day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, "I need a caretaker." So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper and then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board." So God made a farmer.

"I need somebody with arms strong enough to rustle a calf and yet gentle enough to deliver his own grandchild. Somebody to call hogs, tame cantankerous machinery, come home hungry, have to wait lunch until his wife's done feeding visiting ladies and tell the ladies to be sure and come back real soon -- and mean it." So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody willing to sit up all night with a newborn colt. And watch it die. Then dry his eyes and say, 'Maybe next year.' I need somebody who can shape an ax handle from a persimmon sprout, shoe a horse with a hunk of car tire, who can make harness out of haywire, feed sacks and shoe scraps. And who, planting time and harvest season, will finish his forty-hour week by Tuesday noon, then, pain'n from 'tractor back,' put in another seventy-two hours." So God made a farmer.

God had to have somebody willing to ride the ruts at double speed to get the hay in ahead of the rain clouds and yet stop in mid-field and race to help when he sees the first smoke from a neighbor's place. So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody strong enough to clear trees and heave bails, yet gentle enough to tame lambs and wean pigs and tend the pink-combed pullets, who will stop his mower for an hour to splint the broken leg of a meadow lark. It had to be somebody who'd plow deep and straight and not cut corners. Somebody to seed, weed, feed, breed and rake and disc and plow and plant and tie the fleece and strain the milk and replenish the self-feeder and finish a hard week's work with a five-mile drive to church.

"Somebody who'd bale a family together with the soft strong bonds of sharing, who would laugh and then sigh, and then reply, with smiling eyes, when his son says he wants to spend his life 'doing what dad does.'" So God made a farmer.

-- Paul Harvey
My 1950s Saturdays were taken up trucking down to Madison Newspaper’s headquarters off the Square to pay my weekly bill. Participation was mandatory.

Newspaper boys came to the Square from the city’s four corners to pay Madison Newspapers about 30 bucks each. Our take was around 3 bucks each! (For math and finance majors: both *The Wisconsin State Journal* and *Capital Times* were priced at 45 cents/week; paperboys earned 5 cents of the 45 cents, which, at 65-70 customers generated around $3.00/week.)

Often the math did not work. Some customers paid late and a few didn’t pay at all, which left a newspaper boy hung out until non-payers were cut off. Managing money became easier when we persuaded customers to pay ahead. Then we had enough to pay up on Saturday.

We had until noon. I didn’t want to find out what happened if I came late.

Having paid up, I had a whopping $3 to play with. Obviously, you can’t drive downtown today for $3, let alone park and have coffee at Starbucks; you can’t do much of anything with $3 these days. In 1953, $3 was huge for this kid.

Going downtown and paying bills was new as a 12 year-old. I’d inherited a paper route, thankfully near my house, from a teen who found a job where he made a lot more than $3, hey, maybe $10 a week.

Looking back, going downtown every week was a defining moment. The bonds of the old neighborhood broken, I was no longer confined to the mile or so near the house.

I made my break by bike, the same way I pedaled papers. (Buses came in handy when it snowed.) Bike riding was common with newspaper boys before modern-day Madison became a biking Mecca. We rode mostly heavy-duty Schwinn’s from the bike man, Frank Haack. He later introduced many of us to English roadsters, making us multi-bike young men.

My scenic route along Lake Monona, up Lakeland Avenue, over the Yahara River, along Fauerbach Brewery and the train station, and uphill again ended at a gaggle of bikes from all over the city parked outside Madison Newspapers.

Paying my bill took minutes, unless the boss needed to remind me to place newspapers on the porch, not in the bushes.

**While there I peered out windows overlooking massive printing presses with their nip rollers spewing out piles of papers at warp speed. (I had heard horror stories about what nip rollers do to intruders.)**

Next stop was Woolworths for chocolate cake. I’d sit at the counter in front of one whole chocolate cake thick with frosting. My mouth watered while the counterperson cut a piece, hopefully a big one. Chocolate cake was 10 cents, barely a dent in $3.

Woolworths was the place to buy new rock and roll records in 1954: *Rock Around the Clock* with Bill Haley and Comets, a Buddy Holley tune or a Pat Boone hit. Remember two-hit wonders like *Patience and Prudence?* Or songs about ‘a white sport coats and a pink carnation’ and being ‘all dressed up for the dance?’ All I needed was a cheap turntable to listen to the latest. Records cost less than a buck.

Another Woolworths attraction was the 25 cent photo booth. Girls flocked to the booth for wallet shots with friends. Wasn’t a guy thing. Many a male teen did, however, become interested in ID photos at 16 when they wanted do-it-yourself ID cards that said they were 18.

A few years into my teens meant looking to the future. Around the Square at the corner of State Street, Wolff, Kubly and Hirsig, Madison’s largest hardware store, was worth a stop. We are talking upscale hardware, more than nuts, bolts and screwdrivers, all three floors of the neat place. Wolff, Kubly and Hirsig featured machinery for grown boys, machinery with motors that moved around your property, men’s toys like tractors.

After my newspaper boy days were over and after I’d gone through school and had property of my own, I would have one of those tractors. They cost a lot more than 3 bucks even then.
It was one of those chill, dreary fall afternoons, with a ghostly sun trying to burn a hole through a hazy deck of gray cloud. My wife and I had been grocery shopping and by three o’clock decided to stop at the local McDonald's for coffee. We sat facing each other in a booth. From my seat I could see the entrance.

This McDonald's has truly a most mixed group of patrons – Blacks, Hispanics, Whites from all social ranks, Saturday morning coffee klatches of retired seniors, street people, tradesman, students, all mingling in this crossroads and gathering place for local residents and transients — but I never expected to see an even more exotic order of patron.

During lulls in our conversation, I idly watched the comers and goers. I saw some familiar regulars enter and leave – a man who apparently carried around all his belongings in a backpack and a large shopping bag; another man who dressed casually and always brought his laptop (I figured him for a day trader); two workmen taking a break from their labor; a young woman who always dressed in tights, short skirt and provocative sweater; a very tall black man wearing a Chicago Bears jacket and cap; and two stylishly dressed elderly ladies, chatting and laughing at some private joke.

Then I saw someone who immediately focused all my attention.

“What?” my wife asked, and turned to look back over her shoulder.

I didn’t answer, only watched as he walked in our direction. For an instant our eyes met, and from the expression that flashed across his face, it was as if he said, “Bugger it! You’re on to me.”

Ruddy cheeks framed by a steel wool beard; Victorian coachman’s coat, that had a short cape over the shoulders; an Aussie World War II Slouch Hat, brim turned up and pinned on the left side; and corduroy pants just covering the top of a pair of jodhpur boots. From all appearances, an apparition from another time and place.

In passing he gave me a sideways glance.

“Someone you know?” asked my wife.

“No. What’s he doing?”

“Nothing. Just sitting in that last booth.”

“He didn’t buy anything. Did you notice?”

“Well, maybe he’s waiting for someone,” said the voice of reason.

It was time to leave. We gathered up the empty cups, and as I stood, I turned to take one last look at this oddly intriguing character. My glance was met with a sheepish grin and a salute from the brim of his hat with two fingers.

“Are we leaving, or what?” my wife said.

“Okay, sure,” I replied.

Then I noticed that some people at tables and surrounding booths were looking our way. These were more than casual glances. This was a cautious, deliberate convergence of concern.

Wow! What is this? I thought. Could these people all be as strange as that fellow back there?

While driving home I kept turning the situation over in my mind, but came up with nothing that made sense, except that this outlander had a peculiar taste in clothes.

Then early one morning, while half-asleep in a lucid dreaming state, it came to me. Is this some kind of cosmic revelation? I thought. Time travelers and teleporters! That’s who they are — of course! Not only is this McDonald’s a crossroads for all the sundry members of the local community, but also a quantum crossroads for time travelers and teleportation junkies.

I know it sounds fantastic, this conclusion for which I have no verifiable evidence. However, when I now stop for coffee I very carefully avoid any inquiring glances at the oddly dressed persons of eccentric manner, and those who are awkward in ordering, or those who find it a challenge to pay the required amount because of a seeming unfamiliarity with coins and paper money. It is evident to me they might truly be from another time or an alien place. And who can say that I’m wrong?
Wonderful factoids, some possibly even true
Our eyes are always the same size from birth, but our nose and ears never stop growing.

A cat has 32 muscles in each ear.
A goldfish has a memory span of three seconds.
A "jiffy" is an actual unit of time, 1/100th of a second.
A shark is the only fish that can blink with both eyes.
A snail can sleep for three years.
Almonds are a member of the peach family.
An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.
(We all know people like that)
Babies are born without kneecaps. They don't appear until the child reaches 2 to 6 years of age.

February, 1865 is the only month in recorded history not to have a full moon.
In the last 4,000 years, no new animals have been domesticated.
If the population of China walked past you, 8 abreast, the line would never end because of the rate of reproduction.
(assuming, of course, that Chinese CAN reproduce while walking a breast)
Leonardo Da Vinci invented the scissors.
Peanuts are one of the ingredients of dynamite!
Rubber bands last longer when refrigerated.
The winter of 1932 was so cold that Niagara Falls froze completely solid.
There are more chickens than people in the world.
Winston Churchill was born in a ladies' room during a dance.
Women blink nearly twice as much as men.
All the ants in Africa weigh more than ALL the Elephants!!
IN THE PROJECTION BOOTH
JACOB McLAUGHLIN

Why movies mean so much to me

Since I was a child, I've always found comfort in watching a movie. Going to a theater and sitting in a dark room with a big screen or watching a movie at home has given me more joy than conversing with people at social events, school or work.

When I was in middle school, I was diagnosed with Asperger's, a social disorder. I can't pick up tones well, and social interaction is very difficult for me sometimes. In school, I was hardly ever able to have a conversation with someone who wasn't a close friend. It was a nightmare to talk to girls. Luckily I had my movies. Almost every day, I'd walk down hallways imagining myself as a character from a movie, a gunslinger of the old West or a superhero.

In high school a friend would confront me on asking why I didn't go out on Friday nights instead of staying home. Well, I was happy, and I would go out on Friday nights if there was a film I wanted to see in the theaters. He meant parties with friends, but I usually hate parties unless I can stay close to the people I came with.

My friend convinced me to go to the homecoming dance during our senior year in high school, the only dance I ever went to. I hated almost every second of it and was furious with my friend. I didn't want to be in the high school gym full of people that I didn't know or that didn't want to talk with me. I wanted to be back in that theater, watching films with my best friend Carl or at home watching films in my bedroom.

I don't have to socially interact with movies. I don't have to impress them, I don't have to be pressured to strike up a conversation with them. I can just sit back, relax, and go to another world.

I've been told multiple times that there is more to life than movies. That's true, but there have been so many times in life when I didn't want there to be more than that. Not when I was made fun of a lot in school. Not when I was kicked down by people who just wanted to see me hurt.

I hate bullies and bullying. They have no idea how much damage they can do to someone's self esteem. Movies don't do that. They make me happy. They make me feel good about myself, and they do wonders for the multiple mental disorders that I have. Along with Asperger's, I have ADD and depression. The depression isn't too severe, but it's certainly unpleasant when it occurs. The ADD isn't as bad as it used to be when I was in school, but it still distracts me every so often.

Now, of course I have been to a doctor and have taken medication for these things, but movies are a great back-up for me. A pill can only do so much, and you have to find other things to help yourself.

Luckily life has had more positives than negatives for me. I am so grateful to have such a supportive family, friends, and an incredible wife. She understands me more than anyone I have ever known. As much as I love movies, she brings me a joy that is unlike anything I have ever felt. She understands what these disorders do to me and why movies are such a big passion of mine. She is the woman I never thought I would meet, but I did, and that is something I will always be grateful for.

I just wanted to get all of these thoughts written out and for those reading to know what I've gone through. I am so happy to be able to write about movies for this newsletter, and I am so glad that people read them. If you would like to see me write more articles like this, I would be glad to know. Next month, I'll probably be writing another movie review, but I do have more stories to share if you're interested-- not just the ones about me having social anxiety, but other moments with movies as well. Thank you all for reading what I have to say.
This is a story about a preyer and pretender. Last year my publisher said the target publication for my historical thriller, Murphy’s Troubles, would be spring 2012, which became winter 2012. In late November I received an e-mail telling me that, while originally planned for publication in 2012, my book wouldn’t be published until early 2013.

The 2nd week of January I wrote my publisher an e-mail asking when my novel would be scheduled for publication since I submitted edits to the galley August 1, 2012. I received a terse e-mail response that the publisher hadn’t received the galley back from the editor. I was not allowed to have contact with the editor; the publisher claimed it was their policy to retain the independence of the editor. The publisher refused to offer a publication date, stating: “when a book is ready to be published it tells us.” The publisher also informed me that more money has been spent on my novel than any other title in their catalog and I needed to be patient.

My journey with this micro publisher in California had begun in December, 2010, and my patience was spent. On January 28th I sent the publisher a registered letter terminating the contract. I slammed that door shut. Now it’s time to open a new door.

I would never consider using a vanity press but do want to explore self-publishing with either Create Space or Ingram. Recently I learned that I can use Create Space for publication, distribution and marketing and still submit the book to Ingram for distribution because I retain the rights.

For 2 ½ years I was hell bent on traditional publishing. To have a publisher accept a manuscript from a first time author was my proof of validation – I have what it takes to be an author. I believe my name will be added to the next edition of the New Collegiate Dictionary for the word “naïve.

So, I am embarking on the self-publication journey. When you take on a task such as this you find out who your friends are right away. One friend has agreed to be my editor and another has agreed to design a new book cover. I’ve done my research and can design my own Facebook author page because one of the first things the publisher did after notice of termination was to blow the Facebook page they created for me to smithereens.

What do I feel about terminating a contract with a traditional publisher and venturing on the self-publication path?

Relief. I am now totally responsible for all aspects of bringing my historical novel to the world. I am up to the task and energized.

My target – a September release of Murphy’s Troubles. Join me on the journey. Give me your comments, suggestions, thoughts, what to avoid and what not to avoid.

Little known language nuggets- 2

Can you think of a word in the English language that rhymes with month, orange, silver, or purple? I can’t either.

But Roger Miller made one up in his great song, “Dang me.”

Roses are red.
Violets are purple.
Sugars sweet
and so’s maple syrple.
And I’m the seven of seven sons.
My daddy was a pistol I’m a son of a gun.
"Dreamt" is the only English word that ends in the letters "mt".

The sentence: "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" uses every letter of the alphabet, which is why it’s a good exercise in typing class.
E.I. TRAVEL TIPS

How to speak Southern

Well, butter my butt and call me a biscuit.

She fell out of the ugly tree and hit every branch on the way down.

She's so stuck up she'd drown in a rainstorm.

It's so dry, the trees are bribing the dogs.

He's as country as cornflakes.

This is gooder'n grits.

If things get any better, I may have to hire someone to help me enjoy it.

Remember: Y'all is singular. All y'all is plural. All y'all's is plural possessive.

You can ask Southerners for directions, but unless you already know the positions of key hills, trees and rocks, you're better off trying to find it yourself.

Get used to hearing, "You ain't from around here, are you?"

If you hear a Southerner exclaim, "Hey, y'all, watch this!" get out of his way. These are likely the last words he will ever say, or worse still, that you will ever hear.

If it can't be fried in bacon grease, it ain't worth cooking, let alone eating.

If there is the prediction of the slightest chance of even the most minuscule accumulation of snow, your presence is required at the local grocery store. It does not matter if you need anything from the store. It is just something you're supposed to do.

One last warning but probably the most important one to remember: Be advised that in the South, "He needed killin'" is a valid defense.

PAHNKE’S PARADE OF PUNS

ED PAHNKE

That’s wife

"Show him in, Stella."

The lawyer, Terry Cason, stood behind his massive cherry-wood desk, waiting for his prospective client to enter.

A prematurely white-haired beanpole of a man marched into the office following svelte Stella Fleet. He said, “My name is Peter Tuttle.”

The attorney stuck out his hand and said, “A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Tuttle.”

“Please call me Peter.”

The lawyer motioned Peter to be seated on a leather chair.

“How can I help you, assuming I agree to handle your case?”

“You must.” He got down on his knees, his hands clasped as though in prayer. “It’s my wife, Belinda. I’m being driven to the poorhouse in a BMW, which I don’t own. I’m in debt up to my eyebrows. She’s a shop-until-she-drops-aholic. What more can I say?”

Cason walked around his desk. After patting Peter on his back, the attorney helped him to a plush sofa. “Yes, Peter, I’ll take your case,” he said. “We’ll map out a strategy and get wheels in motion to win you your freedom.”

Two hours later, Peter left the office, a weak smile on his face.

Ms. Fleet turned to Cason. “Without hesitation, I’d say this is a matter of wife or debt,” she said, summing up the gravity of the case.
A Poet’s Paean

My inspiration’s moody, fickle muse has picked the rusty lock and robbed Fort Knox of molded lumps of golden building blocks that I’m allowed to hold, caress, peruse. My barren muse-bank empty eons long, I’m pleased the filthy rich at last have lost some Shakespeare, Shelley, Dickinson and Frost—a tiny fraction of their hoarded throng. And yet, I suffer still: Each written stroke abrades my battered, ink-worn heart and soul; my thoughts might gurgle down a neural hole and disappear, thus leaving me dead broke. What sacrifice will soothe my muse, lest she re-lock the lock and cast away the key?

Ed’s note: The poet says he offered this poem in response to Esther’s column in Extra Innings #39, where she exhorts us not to let sonnets scare us. “I admit the sonnet is not one of my “go to” forms,” he writes. “‘A Poet’s Paean’ is one of only two I’ve ever written.”

Age Exposed

by Norma J. Sundberg

My daughter offered me a metal flamingo, pink and rattly, “Put it on your doorstep,” she said I put my hands up palms toward her, “No thanks,” That’s a Southern thing— It’s an ‘old person’ thing, Who wants to be stereotyped like the elderly ladies whose only passion is their monthly pot-luck dinner or playing BINGO I admit, I can bake a mean casserole, or dabble in crafts now and then. I’m aging, but I’M NOT OLD I don’t do flamingo’s and I DON’T DO BINGO, Thank You very much…..
We aren’t what we don’t eat

rBGH, Blue 1 and xanthan gum
Titanium dioxide and potassium sorbate--
When you shop for groceries take a chemist along.
Ingredient labels make me hesitate,
As I fill my cart with lettuce and cereals and meat:
Am I dining on pesticides and herbicides?
What besides grass is in these steaks we eat?
What are the colors and additives we buy?
At the end of the aisle my spirits lift to see
The organic department, a few cents more per pound,
But labeled nutritious, salubrious, chemical free.
Through breakfast, lunch and dinner my menu’s sound.
From farmers’ markets, I delight in the purity
Of veggies grown locally using only manurity.

Carbon fantasy

Some claim that global warming is God’s Plan;
The Age of Enlightenment is history.
While others blame the sun, but never man,
For creating all these weather mysteries.
They scoff at experts, evidence and Gore.
With Coal and Big Oil’s purse, their spin’s perverse.
More drought and famine, floods and other horrors,
It may be too late for nature to reverse.
So level the mountains, frack on anyone’s lands,
Free carbon from Devonian-Permian jail.
Drill deep in the Gulf and wring Alberta’s sands.
Those lobbies with deepest pockets will prevail.
And while we dither, CO2 and stuff accumulate. When is enough enough?
This is sad news indeed for mystery lovers and writers. Madison’s independent bookstore gem, Booked for Murder, is for sale.

Owner/operator/resident blithe spirit Sara Barnes is moving back to Minnesota to be near and minister to family, necessitating the sale. She is hoping to sell to someone interested in keeping the bookstore alive, and the rest of the Madison writing community hopes so, too!

Regardless of what transpires with the store, I’ll miss Sara’s warmth and humor and her amazing, generous heart. Here are a few of the gems she’s shared with us in her marvelous online newsletter. Sara, take it away.

My fellow Mysterians

Among the things I’ll miss sharing with you are actual DVD titles that made me smile/cringe but which I wouldn’t have stocked, such as:
- Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death
- Bloodsucking Babes From Burbank
- Easter Bunny, Kill! Kill! (Obviously a total rip-off of that classic, Faster Pussycat . . . Kill! Kill! I’m shocked.)
- Radar Men From The Moon
- George: A Zombie Intervention
- Surf Nazis Must Die!
- Female Demon Ohyaku (from The Pinky Violence Collection)

and, of course, Hell Comes To Frogtown

And here are plot summaries of books actually scheduled for February release which, ditto on the not planning to stock:
* An ER doc who always resented her mom’s demented dragon ramblings is irritated when a patient spontaneously combusts.
* One of the least likely zombie apocalypse survivors is a high-school social studies teacher. (Actually, I think this one sounds kinda fun.)
* The team scrambles when a series of grisly murders take place in Raccoon City.
* A young man, rebelling against his father’s rigid plans, enlists in the Prussian cavalry. (Ladies and Gentlemen, I think we’ve found our new poster child for poor decision-making skills.)
* Actual blurb from a paranormal romance -- “Whenever she saw him, a flame ignited in the pit of her stomach and she found it impossible to think.” (We feel your pain, sister.)

Gadi Bossin has e-published his fine first novel, Annie’s Prophecy, which we sampled in a recent issue. “Interested in Israel, the struggle for freedom in Iran, contemporary Jewish life?” he writes. “Then you will enjoy Annie's Prophecy. And BTW, any of you who have ever wondered what happened to a long-ago lover, this Romeo-and-Juliet tale with a twist is for you.”

Sylvia Bright-Green sold two angel stories to Chicken Soup for the Soul: Angels Among Us and should by now have had a signing at her local bookstore. She has now been published in 14 anthologies.

Elizabeth King has a poetry chapbook coming out from Green Fuse Press in April. It’s entitled On Wings of Words: A Woman’s Life in Verse.

How to write a bestseller
an ongoing investigative series

The book Solid Wood: All About Chopping, Drying and Stacking Wood-- and the Soul of Wood-Burning was on the Norwegian best-seller list for more than a year.


JAN KENT IS

THE WORD WHISPERER

How many candles on your wabi sabi cake?

Two words to be whispered this month. Maybe you already know them: wabi sabi. They describe a particular Japanese approach to beauty.

The beauty of wabi sabi comes from nature, from slight imperfection, from being ephemeral: the drop of rain on the petal of a tulip, a dragonfly resting on a tall blade of grass, bird tracks in fresh snow.

It’s wondrous and serious to find beauty in such simple things. But not so serious that you can’t also observe that wabi sabi can be sung to the tune of Happy Birthday.

Wabi sabi to you.
**COACH’S MAIL BAG**

**Dance till you drop?**

Sure enjoyed this packed edition of *EI*. Something for all. The picture of Lily with Great Gramma Goldie was so adorable. When we were kids they took "generation" pictures. You could do one and have a four generation thing going on!

The best thing about this issue, even better than Lily's picture this time, was your declaration of loving Ellen since she was Sweet Sixteen! That is so wonderful. We are married 50 years now. I am your brother's age! you young thing you! Our daughter thinks it is so remarkable that she praises us and tells everybody about us. So if nothing else, we have that going for us! No way could I leave on those grounds alone! There is a dance for couples who have been married 50 years, A Golden Anniversary dance.---I was thinking how quaint and cool is that! Then I saw the sponsor was the local funeral parlor! Something just turned me off! Maybe they were thinking of drumming up business, or someone would keel over at the dance and they would have calling cards ready! So I won't go! Call me nutty, but you know that!!!!

Bonny Conway

**Credit where credit is due**

I love your publication! I really liked the explanation of what determines whether or not one is considered an "author."

I'm wondering how you obtained that neat photo of Vern [Arendt] to accompany my tribute [last issue]. Love that photo.

Sue Mroz

*Coach’s note: Google image is wonderful.*

**Art, Sandy, Red, and Lily**

I loved the latest issue with the touching tribute by Sue Mroz. Your article took me down memory lane, with Art Linkletter, Red Skelton, Sandy Koufax, and two great movies. And then of course, there’s Lilly, the star of *Extra Innings*. What a lucky grandpa!

Randi Lynn Mrvos

**Memory failing?**

**Invoke the 24-hour rule**

I was very sorry to hear of the death of your brother, Dale. My sister Linda is six years older than me and her health has been precarious these past several years, so I know I could be in your situation at any time. I understand what a loss it must be to you as Linda is also my last link to my past. I often rely on her to fill in the gaps for my stories or other memories of our childhood. as you must have with Dale.

Your blessings/curse of aging piece was of particular interest to me as I also remember those television shows. I very much enjoyed reading it. My memory is beginning to stall more than slip. That is, I remember happenings but it sometimes takes extra time to retrieve details like names.

I now invoke what I call The 24 Hour Rule instead of getting too upset about my sluggish brain. I know that within 24 hours my internal sorting mechanism will find the correct file and I’ll once again have the information I’m seeking.

The internet helps, but it doesn’t know things like the name of the neighborhood boy I chased from the yard with a pitchfork at the age of five for peeing on my mom’s bushes. (His name is Craig Roth.)

As for the body rot we’re enduring,I never was physically active, so I don’t notice any serious decline in my abilities. Oh, I walk my dog and work out at the Y three times a week, but I never was an athlete. Asthma that kept me severely restricted as a kid (lucky for Craig). I consider it a good day if I can walk my dog a couple of miles without needing my inhaler. You can’t miss what you never had, right?

How Kids See Their Grandparents gave me several opportunities to laugh out loud, always a plus.

And Rex Owens’ piece on critique groups brought back a hard lesson I learned in one such group when I began writing. I found out that not everyone writes with the goals of improving or being published. There are many people who are happy to simply discuss writing and publishing without ever doing any of it.

Once again, I am so sorry for the loss of your brother. I sincerely hope you are able to meet in heaven one day and share a good hearty laugh over his surprise.

Barbara Burris
Fearing that she may have missed a crucial bit of foreshadowing, Lily turns back a page, trying to solve the mystery of why the Hippopotamus won’t join the other animals in their adventures. *But Not the Hippopotamus*, by Sandra Boynton

Photo by Gramellen