By Gadi Bossin
Part 2 of 2 parts
If you missed Part One, go to www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing/extrainnings. Scroll down and click on the prompt for Issue #43 (May, 2013). Gadi’s piece begins on page five.

One afternoon Rabbi Katzberg said, "Kinder, everyone stand up." We hesitated. We didn't know what this was about. He repeated, "Kinder, stand up. Please, everyone." We stood. "Move into the aisles between your desks." We did as he said. "Now, listen to what I say and watch me. I want you to know what it was like."

I didn't know whether the other children knew what it was. I did. Intuitively, I knew he was going to reveal more about the puzzle he'd solved and the mystery he'd never solve: He knew how he survived. He knew what he did and what he didn't do and that he lived when his wife and children and millions of others didn't. He knew a combination of dumb luck and his determination to bear witness conspired to save him. What mystified him was why he survived.

"It was cold," he said. "We'd just marched back from work detail." And he raised his hands to the sides to shoulder height with palms outstretched and turned down. "Roll call was over. The camp guards pointed their rifles at us and the commandant shouted, 'Juden! Pigs! Hold your hands and arms to the sides, like this!' And he used the nearest prisoner to him to show us what he meant. He meant this, what I am doing now.

"He used the baton he always carried to lift the prisoner's arms and then he shouted, 'Now!' "We lifted our arms. And then he said, 'Whoever drops his arms will be shot.'" He didn't say how long we had to hold our arms this way. He began strutting around and held his pistol at the ready. He shot three prisoners that day. And he laughed each time he pulled the trigger."

Rabbi Katzberg stood at the front of the classroom and held his arms perfectly still and straight out at a ninety degree angle to his torso. "Now, children, hold your hands out like this. Let's see who would have survived."

For the next several minutes, he said not another word.

I was determined not to give in to the Nazi officer I imagined there in the classroom. I was determined to show my teacher I would have been a survivor. When classmates dropped their hands, Rabbi Katzberg nodded at them to sit down and blinked at them to let them know, without saying it in words, they would have been shot dead by the camp commandant.

I remained standing, arms to the sides. I heard the report of the pistol, felt my classmates crumble to the ground, knew I couldn't go to their assistance, knew my only chance to stay alive was to resist the pleading of my muscles to let go, to accept the end of suffering.

Soon it was just Rabbi Katzberg and me. All the others were dead in their seats.

"How does he do it?" I asked myself. "How?"

In later years, I grew to believe he'd hypnotized himself into a deep trance. Finally, I dropped my hands. Rabbi Katzberg nodded and blinked at me, and he continued to stand with outstretched arms for another minute or two, just to show us what it took to survive.

******

Story continues on next page
The last time I saw him was several years later, sometime in the early Sixties. My father and I were driving south on Dufferin Street headed to Exhibition Stadium at the lakefront to watch the Toronto Argonauts play a Canadian Football League game.

Whenever we took that route, I'd recall that Rabbi Katzberg would get out of our car at Dupont Street back when we drove him downtown, and I'd look for him. Until that day my efforts went unrewarded, but this time I saw him.

He was standing at the bus stop on the southwest side of the intersection. "Hey, there's Rabbi Katzberg!" I said.

"Did he see you?" my father asked.

"No. He was looking the other way, looking for the bus."

It must have been a night game. I remember the sun setting behind Rabbi Katzberg.

*******

A few months later, my father called me into the kitchen. He was reading the obituaries in *The Toronto Star*. He read them almost every day from the time he turned 45. Very often he would say, "So young. We used to play ball together." Or, "We worked together when we were teenagers."

This time, all he said was, "Your Rabbi Katzberg died. A good man. A mensch."

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**Extra Innings #44**

*Madison, Wisconsin June, 2013*

This month's All-Star lineup:
Features by Pat Goetz and Gadi Bossin conclude. Other features by Vic Johnson, Jan Bosman,
*ABECEDARIAN* Story by Andrea Schoenthal
*Columns* by Madonna Dries Christensen, Rex Owens, Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks, Den Adler, Paw Joe Stone, and Maureen Egan Mitchell

Film buff: Jake McLaughlin
Word Whisperer: Jan Kent
Dugout poet: John Manesis
Puns by Pahnke
Web Weaver: Kimberly Follett
Internetters: Steve Born, Sandy Mickelson, and Larry Tobin
The Writer's Poet: Craig W. Steele
Other poems by Sandy Rafter, John Manesis, and Bonny Conway
The Masked Man: Clayton Moore

Editor-in-Coach: Marshall J. Cook
The last word: Liliana Lenore Cook

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@dcs.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

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Back issues of E.I. available at: www.dcs.wisc.edu/lsa/writing/extrainnings

**Deadline for next issue:**

**Monday, June 24, 2013**
E.I. LETTER OF THE MONTH

What’s writing ever done for you?

Morning Marsh,

I hope your spring is shaping up better than that long, cold, lonely winter. I have one of those all purpose overly general questions: What can writing give the writer? What do you, personally, get from writing, even if no one reads it?

For myself, I'm thinking of my journal. Something I've done since I was a teenager, but I think, anyway, has great value, even though no one else has ever read a word of it.

Would love to get your thoughts on writing, in general. I still reread your rant on teaching, and I find it infinitely valuable.

Best,

Keith Bowman
Boston, MA 02110

Coach replies:

Such a question!

I, too, keep a (nearly) daily journal and have for decades, so I write a lot that no one (probably including myself) will ever read. Why? I might answer different ways on different days, but today I will say:

1) Writing is one of the few things I do during which I never think I ought to be doing something else.

2) The process gives me great joy.

3) It also literally helps me think. I get ideas/insights/images I wouldn't receive otherwise.

4) It seems to focus my subconscious, which then works the stuff over (except I think it calls it "play") and gives me surprises.

5) When I'm working on a project (just now a novel that shows no signs of ever ending), the universe seems to contrive to feed me great stuff that I need. I don't believe in coincidence; it might just be that I'm paying attention.

I could go on, but this will kick the conversation down the road. If it's okay, I'd like to propose this topic to all the newsletter readers next issue to see what we come up with.

Email your thoughts on the subject to me at mcook@dcs.wisc.edu.

Find more in COACH’S MAIL BAG starting on page 17.
FIRST PERSON SINGULAR
PAT GOETZ

The Bridge
Strawberry Crepes: Part II of II
The author has learned that her grandson, Matt, has the same fatal disease that killed her son years before.
If you missed Part One, go to www.dcs.wisc.edu/lse/writing/extrainnings. Scroll down and click on the prompt for Issue #43 (May, 2013). Pat’s piece begins on page three.

It was a gorgeous morning. The sun was shining, my gas tank full, snow not expected ‘til after nine, when I’d already be on my way. With only one to three inches forecast it was no big deal; nothing but a deluge would stop me now. I was on my way to meet Matt in Milwaukee, our traditional get-together for lunch and a movie, the first time since before his Mom called two months ago, when I wondered if I’d ever see him again.

The weatherman was right on target, with snow flurries beginning at 9:30 and increasing exponentially. With a little under an hour to go, I focused on staying ahead of semis so I could read the road signs. Just past Pilgrim Road, visibility was worse, but the 894 sign loomed large and high, with 94 shortly after. Finally, “Rawson Avenue 4 miles,” the one I was waiting for.

About 10 minutes after I pulled into the theater’s empty parking lot, Matt’s car came up the long entrance drive. Pulling in beside me, he climbed out of his car and into mine on the driver’s side, the engine running, heat still on. Our eyes connected and, leaning toward each other, we hugged. It was 10:30. I’d made good time in spite of the snow.

“Wanna head to the restaurant?” he asked, settling in.

“You bet!” I said. “I’m hungry!”

It was good sitting beside him, on the way to a place so familiar to us, our place for catching up, one-on-one. In January I wasn’t sure I’d ever have that chance, those first few weeks were so uncertain. Surgery? Hospitalization? Implant? No answers, not yet, but I wasn’t going to begin our time together with a barrage of questions. Right now, it was like it always was, comfortable; that was enough.

He pulled in front of the restaurant. “Be careful, Gramma. It’s slippery out here.” He remembered my slip last January when I wound up going to school for three months in a wheelchair.

Holding his arm as I got out, I looked up at him, thinking of what they used to say about his little uncle: “He looks so healthy you’d never know he was sick.” But lingering in my mind were the words Judy spoke to me that day, and I thought, “Don’t leave us, Matt. Stay with us.”

The new host greeted us at the door, older than the other, maybe his brother. “Two?” he asked. Matt nodded. “Booth or table?” “Booth,” Matt answered. He led us to the same booth they always gave us, by the window, and I saw the snow, still falling heavily.

Briefly I thought of my drive home, but for now that was irrelevant. I was here.

We slid into the booth, facing the same way we always did. The host handed us our huge menus, asked us what we’d like to drink, said our waitress would be right with us.

She was, in seconds. We both looked up at her. “We remember you,” I said.

“You do?”

“Yes. Do you know why we remember you?”

“My nails,” she said without hesitation.

“Right,” I said with a smile. They were deep red enamel, perfectly shaped, curving downward at least an inch past the end of her fingers; the longest I had ever seen. “But also because the last time we were here you got the cook to make my American Fries brown.”

“I remember.” A nice face; plain, with trustworthy eyes. The nails must have been her one wild venture to the other side.

She brought Matt’s water and my coffee with extra cream and asked us if we needed a minute. “Lots of minutes,” Matt said, and she said, “Just call me when you’re ready.”

We began seriously studying our options; this was important stuff. “Gonna get your skillet, Matt?”

“I always order that, don’t I? I think I’ll get something different today.”

“What are you in the mood for?”

“Mmmm, lots of stuff. The waffles look good, and pancakes. Mmmm, biscuits and gravy too. What looks good to you?”

“I’m kinda looking at the crepes. Remember how Don Jones loved crepes?”

“I do,” he said. “Strawberry was his favorite. I always think of Don when I eat crepes.”
“I remember the first time Don talked in church. Pastor asked if anybody wanted to introduce themselves and Don stood up. He was sitting right in front of me, and I was amazed at how tall he was. Loud and clear he said, ‘I remember when you first came to our house, Pastor. I was vacuuming in my shorts. And when I saw your car coming down the driveway I figured I better put some clothes on!’

“I figured this was an honest guy,” I said to Matt. “Any man that can stand up in church and say he was not only in his shorts, but vacuuming in them, hadda be an honest guy. He was on disability, and Laura worked, remember?” Matt nodded. We sat studied our menus.

“So what else looks good?” I asked, and then said suddenly, “Let’s order a bunch of stuff. We’ll have our own little smorgasbord.”

“Hmmm. I like that. What’ll we get?”

“Well, what you already said, but let’s get crepes too. With strawberries. For Don.”

“Good idea. Cheese too. Definitely cheese.”

With the lunch crowd not in yet, the waitress was watching for us and came when I waved. After we finished ordering, we settled in to talk, me sipping my hot coffee, Matt his water. He and his uncle both love their water. Eat healthy, drink water: their common mantra.

“So Matt, how’s school going?”

“Well, I told you I made the dean’s list, right?”

“You did,” I said, but he wanted to tell me again and I wanted to hear it again. This time I didn’t let out a joyful yell.

“You need a 3.5 to make it,” he said, “and I got a 3.53.”

“You just squeaked by,” I said, and he must have seen the quiet joy in my eyes. It was his first trimester in grad school.

He talked about the skiing trip to Vale he and three school buddies took only two weeks after Matt’s heart attack. About what a great time they had, how they got lost, the GPS taking them the wrong way. “I hate being lost!” he said.

“Hold that thought, Matt,” I said, as the waitress, carefully balancing a huge tray, headed for our table.

We stared as she laid platter after platter in front of us: eggs o/e with hash browns and crispy bacon strips on one, three fat crepes, bulging with strawberries and topped with whipped cream on another, then two baking powder biscuits split in half and drenched in sausage gravy, and last, a tiny plate of buttered wheat toast.

For a moment, all three of us stared at the magnificent array.

“Would you like more coffee?” she asked.

“I’d love it,” I said. She really was the perfect waitress.

After she filled my cup and left, I said to Matt, “Shall we?” and moving aside a platter, we gripped each other’s hands and bowed our heads.

Then, as surely as a fisherman enters another place the moment he pushes off from shore, so was I in another place for those few brief minutes while Matt prayed.

“Thank You, Lord, for us being together here today,” he began.

Breakfast was fun; filling our plates at random, we’d try one thing, then scoop up another. “Boy, Matt,” I said, “this could really catch on!”

As the food diminished, he resumed talking about his plans. There was a pause when he finished, and I said, “Speaking of health, Matt, how are you doing?”

Looking into each other’s eyes, I was completely focused on what he was about to say.

“I’m doing good, Gramma,” he said softly.

“No implant, huh?”

“Nope, no implant.” I saw no fear in his eyes.

“No treatment so far?”

“No treatment. I’m just eating right, exercise, get lots of sleep.” I heard confidence.

I waited, trying a bit more of the crepes.

“I knew, Gramma, when people ask me, I tell them it’s sad that we don’t really appreciate our life until we almost lose it, or somebody we love loses theirs.”

I nodded; watching, listening to his words, his tone.

“And I’m not afraid to die.” His eyes were calm and certain. “But I’m not going to lay down and wait to die. I want to live as much as I can.”

“That’s good, Matt.”
I told him then his Aunt Mary had said he had a 20% chance of dying instantly without warning. He nodded. “That’s what the doctor told me.” I told him that really threw me for a while, until his uncle said, “Mom, we all have a 20% chance of dying instantly without warning.” “It helped me to hear him say that,” I said. “Just not right away.”

We decided against a movie that day; snow still falling, and he had a four-hour drive ahead of him to Dubuque that afternoon.

We left our perfect waitress a great tip and drove back to the theatre parking lot.

“Let’s pray before you go, ok?”

“Of course.”

We held firmly to each other’s hands as Matt prayed. When he raised his head, he said, “We sure have good prayer when we’re together, don’t we?”

“We sure do.” And we hugged.

He got out, and as I walked around to the driver’s side, we reached out for each other and hugged again, holding on for an extra moment.

“Maybe I’ll see you soon,” he said, as we got ready to climb into our cars. “Our team is going to play in the area in the next few weeks.”

“You team?”

“Yeah. I joined a Rugby team.”

“What’s Rugby?”

“Football without the pads.”

“Oh.”

No protests. No wide eyes. If he wasn’t afraid, I wasn’t going to be afraid either. I was in this for the long haul. Or the short one. He would do what he must do, and I would be there in the wings as long as I could.

We threw each other a kiss as we got into our cars. I followed him out of the parking lot, down Rawson to the exit. He went South, I went North, and as we separated, we honked, like we always do.

The snow was still falling.

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**COACH’S BULLPEN BLURB**

**Booked for Murder dies. Long live Mystery to Me**

As previously reported, Sara Barnes was forced to put her marvelous Madison bookstore, Booked for Murder, up for sale when family called her back home to Minnesota. True to her deep commitment to readers and writers, she vowed to find a buyer who would keep a mystery bookstore in Madison.

She has kept that vow. Joanne Berg, an administrator at the nearby University of Wisconsin-Madison, has bought the inventory, lock, stock, and Sherlock Holmes’ cocaine pipe.

*Booked for Murder* officially closed on May 15, but its successor, *Mystery to Me*, is due to open June 15 on Madison’s Monroe Street, right across from Trader Joe’s.

“God bless independent bookstores,” Sara says, “God bless all of you, and please know that I will miss you more than I can say.”

“Just when you think you have life all figured out a door opens and a dream is made possible,” Joanne says. “That’s what happened to me when I heard Sara was selling *Booked for Murder*. “Ever since my older sister Marlene brought home a trunk load of books that a guy at work gave her, I wanted to own a bookstore. I loved those books and begged my mother to buy a bookshelf so that I could shelve and alphabetize them by author.”

Joanne pledges to do her best “to bring all of what you love about *Booked for Murder* to *Mystery to Me*. If she succeeds, she’ll keep a lot of folks in the Madison area happy.

“I have every intention of making this a destination bookstore for your favorite authors,” she adds, “and even some you haven't heard about yet.”

For more information, you can contact Madison’s new maven of mysteries at *Joanne.mystertome@gmail.com*. 
FOR THE LOVE OF WORDS  
ESTHER M. LEIPER-ESTABROOKS

A herd heard from

Saccharine sweet and gooily cute, MY LITTLE PONY is a series of toys, books, and films from Hasbro about talking equines. I read some of the books to daughter Hannah when she was small and was amused by the kitsch appeal. Though mildly intrigued, I didn’t realize the extent of the ponies’ empire till I did recent research. One website alone had 609 pages! Tots hoard the small pastel statuettes, and grownups spend big bucks—though bucking seems something these silly, frilly little cuties don’t do.

No, these beloved steeds aren’t realistic, My folks boarded, and I rode, horses—a variety of shapes, sizes, breeds, and temperaments—but none pink, blue, lavender, or with wings like Pegasus, seahorse fins, or unicorn horns! The Little Pony universe does include such, yet these ponies act like pre-teen girls, a fact (having run a Scout Troop) I’ll vouch for. The ponies love music and dance plus wear manes and tails in fetching ways. So do girls—save the latter lack tails on their pert rear-ends! Nonetheless, kazillions of pony figures are created for females—or “mane-ly”—along with bright-hued booklets plus ad-raddled, but rather addictive, cartoons.

Still, girls aren’t the only fans, The Canadian magazine MACLEAN’S ran an article titled “Men Who Love ‘My Little Pony’” declaring that the franchise holds an unlikely ambience in a curious sub-culture. Author Jaimie J. Weinman speculates on the intrigue: Fan males dub themselves Bronies and discuss the ponies on extensive websites like Equestria Daily. So are these fellows gay; yes, no, or who cares? They enjoy themselves, yet Weinman ponders:

...Why are grownups so fascinated with the southern accent of the cowboyhatted pony Applejack or lines like, “Are you sure about this, Scootaloow?” ...[I]t may help that the show has a bright visual appeal that lends itself to fan art.

The ponies are indeed colorful; butterflies couldn’t do better. Moreover, sharing feelings is healthy—whatever the objects of interest. Enthusiasts often draw pony-pix or pen pony-poetry. In fact the ponies have their share of doggerel, though that does seem the wrong name! Moreover, not all participants prove friendly. Here are anonymous samples with the first pair “neigh”-gative.

My little pony, skinny and bony,  
Shaped of plastic, looks like a spastic  
With tattered bridle of fantastic elastic.

When my pony went to the Circus  
She peed there, plus pooped on purpose.

Positive:

My little pony has beautiful hair;  
She runs in the field from here to there.  
Let’s ride on her back so don’t be blue;  
Jump aboard ‘cuz there’s room for two.

Endless pony figurines exist, far too many to keep straight, let alone possess. Some series were released overseas but never sold in the U.S., plus each year different issues appeared. Some (and perhaps all) ponies came with combs for their silky manes and tails. I can’t say for sure if each has a name provided, but naturally those featured in books do. If some monikers are clever like Harry Trotter or intriguing like Reflective Rock or Knit Knot, others seem bland, such as Kazooie or Fuzzy Slippers. But slippers would be a luxury for these crits, since the ponies’ legs end in shapeless lumps and lack hoofs or shoes.

I twitch in amusement at the ponies’ self-centered, self-importance (like real little girls) plus marvel at Hasbro’s eternally popular cash-cows—oops, equines. Their influence continues, and what’s more American than success?

--Continued on next page
Yet feeling ambivalence, I wrote:

NO HORSE-PLAY, GIRLS

Should we cheer MY LITTLE PONY;
So kitschy-koo each clever phony;
--Quite sentimental, “in,” and “neat”? --
Such nags don’t nag; are icky-sweet!
There’s Applejack plus Scootaloo,
Tolaroola and Sweet Song too,
Plus Sky-Wishes and Sunny Daze
Whose names can lend a mawkish haze.
--Have I forgotten little Fluttershy
Or Twilight-Sparkle and Pinkie-Pie?
Minty’s green-- Tolaroola purple;
The whole lot cloy like Maple Syrple!
You say, “That’s no rhyme!” So true,
But still fact should be plain to you
These ponies’ realm is overblown
With a saturated, cutsey tone.

Still, sometimes fillies squeal and bite;
Kick at their traces, pick a fight,
Thus act more as real-life horses do
With teapot-tempests plus bitchy too:
--True equines never come in pink,
Green, blue, or lavender, I think!
The authors of each new pony book
Might pause awhile and take a look!

Aw, I’m kidding. These adolescent (addle-
essenced) steeds endear and endure. They make me laugh remembering my very-own horse-crazy years, and in a dark world, who’d truly choose to slam sweetness and light?

Esther’s news: I’m pleased to announce that I just won First Prize in the yearly Memorial Contest: John Damian Di Bella Poetry Award, for a blank verse narrative; mine titled KEEPING THE BOUNDARIES. The competition is sponsored (through this poet’s widow) via the New York Poetry Forum, and—incidentally—I won First Prize in the same competition in 2011 for a rhymed blank verse titled DESERT TALE. That poem previously placed Fourth in the Grand Prize category of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies—the best I’d ever done in that category, which heads the 49 other categories.

A Class Act
(“Fire-starters or Fish-wrap?”)
by Norma J. Sundberg

Fire-starters, perhaps,
Wrapped or twisted for best results
Matched for effect;
Burst of flame
Streaming under wood splinters--
Fireplace coziness.
But fish-wrap?
Very small fish, I presume--
8 1/2 by 11 in length
Pages needing pasted together
To be stretched over
Salmon or pike,
Or bass,
Nothing golden may apply
Too small, bite-sized,
Better pet-fare,
Life in a fish bowl.
But read
The fine print,
wrapper impregnated
On scales...
From one to ten...
To Give it “Class.”

Norma’s notes: I was asked to instruct a poetry/creative writing class for a program called Creative Connections at Kent State U. Ashtabula, Ohio Campus for gifted sophomore and junior high school students through the Ohio Governor’s office. The coordinator sent me with an envelope of info and a note that read: “Perhaps this is only good for fire-starters or fish-wrap”? What poet could pass up a line like that!
ANOTHER WORD LOVER
Vic Johnson

Where does inspiration come from?

I have not been very interested in writing poems, but on occasion something, a line or two, comes to mind. For example, I was walking into the grocery store when this man brushed past me, looking much as I describe him in the poem (I think that’s what this is) below. By the time I reached the check-out most of the poem was running through my mind. I didn’t have the last three words. My next stop was the post office. As I got out of the car, I looked down, and right at my feet I saw this little ad for a musical group, King of Hearts, lying in the street. Does it make sense to end the poem with those words? I don’t know, but it seemed to fit at the time. What does it mean? Is he the King of Hearts? Is he looking for the King of Hearts? I don’t know, unless in some obscure corner of my mind it stirs the unlikely ghost of the King of Hearts in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. That is a book I read when I was nine, and it has captivated me ever since.

King of Hearts
Old man in muscle shirt, and kaki shorts sagging jowl, scowling face, stalking the street in flip flops. Gray haired thatch, eagle eye, determined step, looking for something he’ll never find - King of Hearts.

A year or so ago I had another inspiration. I wrote “Genesis Decoded” over a period of a week.

Genesis Decoded
When you and I
Were in the paradise
Of our mother’s womb,
No thoughts of death
Or dreams of terror,
Ruled the darkness.
Neither god nor demon
Was our master, yet
Some loving power held us,
Fed us, cradled us in a
Tropic sea so gently.
Without speech or sight,
With no thought of day
Or night, or time,
We grew in an endless,
So it seemed, moment
Of suspended weightless
Flight. We turned like drifting leaves on dark moon nights,
Not knowing we were to fall someday to earth.
And on that day was Innocence betrayed
By spite of Angels or Demigods, who envy
Images graven that mock Their proud heavenly grace.
Then so decreed, cast we from That beloved paradise Into the land of Cain.
Even mortal death is not So cruelly benevolent.
How They Got the Greek’s Goat

They call me Murphy, the billy goat who belongs to Mr. Bill Sianis. In 1934, I fell off a truck in front of his Chicago bar and he took care of me, like I was family.

He said I’d bring good luck, grew a nice goatee like mine, changed the name of the place to the Billy Goat Tavern and told the regulars to call him Billy, not Bill.

They give me lots to eat, like peanuts, popcorn, pretzels, and all the cheeseburgers I want. I learned to drink bottle beer—my favorite is Blatz—

I mix with customers who have fun with me and joke, take my picture and don’t complain about the way I smell.

The Cubs got in the World Series against the Detroit Tigers in 1945. We were ahead two games to one when Mr. Bill decided to take me to the fourth game at Wrigley Field. He bought two tickets for $7.20, showed me off in the outfield when the teams were warming up and had me wear a sign that said, “Give the Tigers the goat.”

Before the first pitch, we went and sat in the stands but pretty soon an usher came and told us that we had to go because some fans close by complained and said I stunk.

Mr. Bill, who has a temper, yelled, “I paid for us, this is my friend!” and started swearing in Greek but they wouldn’t let us stay.

On the way out of the park, he put a curse on the team and said the Cubs will never win another World Series. They lost that game and the next two and haven’t been back since then.

He let everybody know, “I fixed ‘em real good—they’re vlachas—idiots—we call them in Greece.”

Once in a while I get depressed and think he keeps me around just for the publicity and sometimes I miss the fields, the weeds and grass, the fresh air and all the nannies that I had but then I remember billy goats who didn’t fall off the truck and wound up in the stockyard or ones who lost their private parts—

the professor who comes here all the time says that they are “wethers”—I’d rather be dead than have someone call me a name like that.

And what would I do if I had no place to go and hung around our kitchen door, waiting for bones and scraps, like the stray dogs and cats?

When I think of stuff like that, I get thirsty, rub my horns against the barmaid’s leg and she brings another Blatz.

John Manesis

You can check out more of John’s poetry at: http://www.jmanesispoetry.com
ABECEDARIAN Story
By Andrea Schoenthal

Author's preface: I was greatly impressed with the ABECEDARIAN poetry written by Esther M. Leiper-Estabrook, especially since I have written a prose piece using the formula of going down through the alphabet for the first letter of each of 26 sentences. It helped that I have a degree in Medical Technology and have worked in a hospital laboratory.

Alexandra walked into the hospital lab. Barry was already there. Connie was late as usual. Darn her, Alexandra thought. For once in her life, can’t she be on time? George Derks, the lab director, gave them all the day’s assignments. Hospital policy dictated the fasting samples had to be done by eight o’clock so the patients could be fed their breakfasts.

“I want Barry to do ICU, Alexandra on Maternity and Connie…”

“Just got in,” Alexandra lied. “Kind of late, isn’t she?” George asked. “Let her know, when you see her, I want her doing outpatients.” Mondays were busy outpatient days. Nobody wanted that duty. Only George would put Connie out there with assorted patients. People came in work clothes right before work for fasting tests. Quite a few children would be there today, receiving their leukemia blood tests.

Really rough duty was outpatients, Alexandra thought. Some of the children got very scared or fought the tech. Thank goodness she wasn’t George’s “enemy” today.

Usually it was Connie. Very often he gave her the most difficult jobs. Was he hoping she’d quit and he could hire someone else, Alexandra wondered.

X-ray techs, lab techs, physical therapy, none of these received the respect they deserved, Alexandra thought, as she took the elevator up to Maternity.

Young mothers, who had just undergone the pains of childbirth, fussed when she did a simple finger prick. Zero tolerance was what Alexandra had for those mothers or for anyone carrying on about a little needle poke.

Jan Kent is
The Word Whisperer
Don’t let these words cabobble you
Words, words, words – enough to make a Whisperer's head spin.

Forgotten, old words: flarting, which means mocking or jeering; cabobble, which means to mystify, puzzle or confuse; quanked, which means overpowered by fatigue.

Foreign words: cavatina, which is Italian for a short song, or piste, which is French for animal track.

Cutting-edge words, the latest; bling for jewelry, rice rockets for compact Japanese cars, up talking for ending all sentences as if they were questions.

What's an English major to do?

"What an astonishing thing a book is. It is a flat object made from a tree with flexible parts, on which are imprinted lots of funny dark squiggles. But one glance at it and you're inside the mind of another person. ... Writing is perhaps the greatest of human inventions, binding together people who never knew each other, citizens of distant epochs. Books break the shackles of time. Books are proof that humans are capable of working magic."

Carl Sagan
Let’s march

Found money was scarce during my 1940s childhood. When I happened to have a nickel burning a hole in my pocket, there were many choices on how to spend it. Plus, there was that nagging option—the voice of conscience—saying: Give to those less fortunate. That voice emanated from the nun teachers who displayed posters showing starving pagan babies in Africa.

The March of Dimes also wanted our money, specifically dimes, which fit into the slot on the collection cards handed out at school. The March of Dimes was a new concept in fund raising; it was aimed at kids, at children helping children.

The money helped stamp out infantile paralysis, commonly called polio. A school newspaper, My Weekly Reader, featured photos of children with polio who were trapped in a scary device called an Iron Lung.

Sister Elizabeth Kenny, an Australian nurse, advocated a controversial approach to treating polio. Rather than immobilizing patients in Iron Lungs or casts and braces, she promoted exercising the affected limbs. Although this contradicted medical wisdom, her principles became the foundation for rehabilitation through physical therapy. We also learned that our current president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, had contracted polio at age 21 and that his legs were paralyzed. But he always maintained that he was getting better with treatment and never used a wheelchair in public.

In 1938, Roosevelt had founded the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFIP). The task of the organization was to handle poliomyelitis outbreaks and to fund research on cause and prevention. Despite the Depression and limited funds, people embraced the March of Dimes because polio was the most feared childhood disease of that era. Folks were already familiar with crippled children through the use of Easter Seals affixed to letters. The March of Dimes heightened concern.

Anxious parents warned their children against drinking from public fountains and sharing drinks and food and deprived them of movies and swimming pools. One summer, when my younger brother showed symptoms (sore throat, fever, muscle aches), he was hustled off to the University of Iowa Medical Center. He was cleared; doctors reasoned that it was either flu or the abortive type of polio. But fear lingered in our neighborhood and garnered for this 10-year-old a certain status. Our family had come within a whisper of the crippling monster.

President Roosevelt died in 1945, and a year later the Roosevelt dime was coined in his honor. Designed by John R. Sinnock, it was the first dime depicting someone other than Lady Liberty.

In 1955, Dr. Jonas Salk, working under a March of Dimes grant, announced that he had developed a vaccine, an injection of inactivated poliovirus that he described as safe, effective, and potent. The vaccine had been tested on 1.8 million school children, who became known as Polio Pioneers. In 1957, Dr. Albert Sabin introduced oral vaccine. The two vaccines virtually eliminated polio around the world.

The March of Dimes continued; this year marks its 75th year, with the focus now on preventing birth defects in premature babies. Fund raising is different these days. Several times a year, the organization sends me a Roosevelt dime and a strip of address labels. They ask that I return the dime, along with a check.

With hundreds of charities pleading their cause, one must decide which call to answer. I sometimes choose the March of Dimes (atonement for all the dimes I once spent on ice cream instead of slipping them into the collection folder). As for the African babies, I cover that with donations to a mission my niece founded to support Tanzanian orphans with AIDS, and to another niece who participates in medical missions to Ethiopia.
In March, 2012 I wrote an article for *Extra Innings* titled “Caveat Scriptor,” relating the story of how I had submitted and published two articles in *Small Farm Today* one in February, 2011 and another in January, 2012, and had gotten stiffed for both. I know you’re thinking: why did you submit another article after not getting paid for the first one? I don’t have a good answer for that, I just did. Being a freelancer doesn’t automatically bless a person with common sense, at least in my case.

Technically, I need to retract that article. I finally got paid. Finally.

In December 2012 I received an e-mail from the publisher explaining the owner had suffered chronic health problems, apologized for not making payment, asked for another article submission and promised to pay up. To receive payment I had to supply information: title of the piece, month and year the piece was published, and word count. Why the publisher didn’t have all this information remains a mystery.

Following standard business practice I prepared an invoice, attached it to an e-mail, and sent it off several days after the request. In my response I explained I wouldn’t submit another article until I had been paid for the previous two articles.

The next day I received a terse e-mail that my attachment couldn’t be opened and please read the instructions carefully: they wouldn’t accept attachments. I found this curious because I had previously submitted articles as Word document attachments. It angered me to be chastised for not following instructions.

I embedded the invoice in an e-mail and told them to re-read their own instructions because they said nothing regarding attachments. I also asked when I could expect payment; this was December 18, 2012. I waited a month and in January, 2013 sent an e-mail again asking when I could expect payment: no response. I waited another month and sent an e-mail in February and-- guess what?-- no response again.

On March 12, 2013 I received a large envelope in the mail from *Small Farm Today* containing a copy of the magazine with my article from January, 2012, a copy of the invoice I had sent, and a check for $147.40. The next day I went to our bank and cashed the check, just to make sure it didn’t bounce.

From beginning to end it took 25 months to get paid this meager amount.

For all freelancers my advice remains, Caveat Scriptor.

**WHAT WE’RE RE-READING**

Replying to your query, I sometimes do re-read. Here are a few that come to mind.

*To Kill A Mockingbird* (several times)
*A Confederacy Of Dunces*
*The Book Thief*
*The Grapes Of Wrath*
*One Writer's Beginning* (Eudora Welty)

All of Henry Mitchell’s collections of gardening essays
All of Bill Bryson's books
Capote's *A Christmas Memory* (every Christmas)
Most of Anne Tyler's novels

Without a doubt, I've benefitted from rereading *To Kill A Mockingbird*. I've read it three times: once at UW Madison in the '50s-required; once in the fall of 2008 when my oldest grandson was studying it as a freshman in high school; finally, in my retired people's book group in 2011 as our token classic.

Harper Lee and her characters never disappoint. I've grown to appreciate the continued relevance of the subject matter, the sterling character of Atticus, the menace of hearsay, and my sadness over the predictability of Tom's fate.

Jan Bosman
Mind-writing never stops and is never lost

Mental writing is a spontaneous process I seldom contemplate. It’s understood the brain works 24/7. That’s natural and, therefore, disregarded. Desk, chair and computer fall short of being necessities for writing. While scheduling writing time, along with keeping pens and pad at hand, are rituals of the trade, they aren’t pertinent to triggering an incipient narrative.

**Mind-writing keeps right on happening, regardless.**

My awe of mind-writing has intensified lately. All senses lend themselves to a writing effort in some way. Smell, taste, touch, hearing and sight never sleep, not really. Besides that, being an incarnation of unconscious creativity, sleep often contributes the perfect elucidation. Wit will refuse to lay dormant just because writers are away from the work place. And all this is normal.

Old writers, those who wake at the darkest hour uncertain whether it is a.m. or p.m., as I do at times, are most apt to question what difference getting out of bed makes. No doctor schedules an appointment in the dark hours, right? No visitors are knocking, are they?

Pain, Pressure, Balance and Motion, these senses strive to end an old writer’s day before it starts. Motion causes pain. Unsteadiness makes it seem a mistake to even try to rise. Resignation reigns; might just as well stay in bed..

**But resignation is overruled when writing comes fluently to mind. Chapter, page, and paragraph, every line is lucidly engraved on cerebral pages. Protagonists leap into action. Voice finds telepathic connections between character and creator.**

Imprinted pages hang by threads of memory as neatly as bits stored in a computer. These pages can be reviewed, redone, replaced, and re-hung while sheltered in their mental storage closet. More to the point, during those moments when life is saddled with uncertainties, the novels are never lost to absentmindedness, nor is there ever a failure to summon up any part of the mental draft.

Eventually all will be entered into computer documents, even though days pass before harnessing fingers with keys can happen.

Mind-writing is indelible. Any thought can be brought forward. Sometimes phrases are stored in limbo, and yet the narrative isn’t lost ‘never to be found’ when needed. As if by cerebral clipboard/cut and paste phenomenon, the thought will be inserted in the proper place at the proper time.

**Mental-writing is spontaneous.** On the worst days, when occupied with other things, story still takes priority over all else. Bless you and yours, Coach

Paw Joe

**SHORT TAKE**

**JAN BOSMAN**

**The difference between 18 and 73**

He can’t drive for three months.

Those two speeding tickets in Wisconsin within a year finally caught up with him in Illinois. To avoid his spending 30 days in jail and paying a $10,000 fine, if the authorities were to stop him again for a violation, his mother confiscated his keys. Now he needs alternative transportation to attend McHenry County College for classes, to return home, to get to his work and his workouts. This morning was my first day as chauffeur.

This grandson whose diapers I changed some years ago asked me to arrive at his house at 7:40 a.m. I arrived around 7:30. We both knew his math class began at 8 a.m. He hopped in the car about 7:45. I was already biting my nails because I knew he was going to be late, even if I made every signal from Robert Street to Building A.

I clutched the steering wheel and drove slightly over the speed limit, remembering those ugly red “t for tardy” marks I was required to place in my grade book over a 32-year teaching career. I could see a similar mark inching its way toward Trey’s name in some professor’s electronic device.

Meanwhile, this 18-year-old young adult, whom I love more than I have ever loved myself, leaned back in the passenger’s seat and sang along to his favorite country song about a truck, a beer, and a girl in a red sundress.
What’s so funny about getting old?

I very quietly confided to my best friend that I was having an affair. She turned to me and asked, “Are you having it catered?” And that, my friend, is the sad definition of 'OLD'!

Just before the funeral services, the undertaker came up to the very elderly widow and asked, “How old was your husband?”
   “98,” she replied. “Two years older than me.”
   “So you're 96,” the undertaker commented.
   She responded, “Hardly worth going home, is it?”

Reporters interviewing a 104-year-old woman: “And what do you think is the best thing about being 104?”
   Her reply: “No peer pressure.”

I've had two bypass surgeries, a hip replacement, new knees, fought prostate cancer and diabetes, I'm half blind, can't hear anything quieter than a jet engine, take 40 different medications that make me dizzy, winded, and subject to blackouts. Have bouts with dementia. Have poor circulation; hardly feel my hands and feet anymore. Can't remember if I'm 85 or 92. Have lost all my friends.
   I just thank God I still have my driver's license.

My body had gotten totally out of shape, so I got my doctor's permission to join a fitness club and start exercising. I decided to take an aerobics class for seniors. I bent, twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But by the time I got my leotards on, the class was over.

An elderly woman decided to prepare her will and told her preacher she had two final requests. First, she wanted to be cremated, and second, she wanted her ashes scattered over Wal-Mart.
   “Then I'll be sure my daughters visit me twice a week!”

It's scary when you start making the same noises as your coffee maker.

These days about half the stuff in my shopping cart says, 'For fast relief.'

THE SENILITY PRAYER:
Grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway, the good fortune to run into the ones I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference.

Now you should share these funnies with your friends-- if you can remember who they are.
As a mature-aged student of the female variety, I began my journey of re-educating myself with the Victorian Certificate of Education back in 1990. I figured if I was going to be entering my “mature years,” I might as well be a well-informed, knowledgeable, and interesting mature person with something to add to a conversation rather than having nothing to contribute. Of course, there have been ups and downs on this journey, one of the downs being when I ended up in tears over mathematical assignments. But wait up; there are plenty of other interesting subjects, like Australian history, for example.

I then tried my hand at a degree in social sciences but completed only five units. There was nobody nearby studying these subjects, and I ended up with a huge telephone bill. I was fortunate to attain credits in the subjects I took. Because I had worked for eight years in welfare as a family support worker, I decided to try for the diploma of welfare studies at Horsham TAFE, in which I covered another seven subjects.

Having come this far, I have some tips for anyone considering a similar later-in-life academic journey.

1) Learn how to leave the bigger jobs around the house, like window cleaning, until school holidays.
2) Let the answering machine catch all your phone calls while doing homework.
3) Close the door of the room where you’re studying so other members of the household know that you don’t want to be disturbed. That’s a must.
4) If a family member wants to discuss anything, simply reply, “See you at lunch. We’ll talk then.”

I’ve gained a lot on my journey. I’ve somewhat slaked my thirst for knowledge, found that I like doing research, gotten involved in what’s going on around me, and been stimulated by other students’ ideas, opinions, and beliefs. I’ve learned to have more tolerance for others, and I’ve got a lot more to talk about with my partner, children, friends, and associates.

I’ve come alive. I’m enthusiastic.
Friends say my eyes sparkle. I’m keen to learn more.
If you feel inclined toward study, regardless of your age, go for it. You only have one life to live.

Hare today, gone tomorrow
/Jest For Pun/
Ed Pahnke

“And now ladies and gentlemen,” the master of ceremonies said, “a big round of applause, please, for that renowned magician, Professor Foo!”

The master of ceremonies trotted off the stage. Polite applause.

A small Japanese man wearing a black tux appeared on stage along with a young Japanese woman wearing a tight-fitting black costume. She tugged and he pushed a huge multicolored rabbit, made of metal, and positioned it on the right side of the stage.

Smiling, Professor Foo performed a series of baffling tricks, entertaining the audience. His female assistant added allure to the performance as her strenuous gyrations strained the material of her dainty costume.

The metal rabbit remained off to the side, unused, until…

Professor Foo and his assistant walked to where the huge lagomorph mammal stood, the spotlight following them. The young woman swung open a door in the giant beast’s breast.

With a flourish, Foo held the woman’s hand while she stepped inside the compartment. “Now, for my final illusion of the evening…”

He closed the door, said a magic incantation, and opened the door with a grand gesture.

The young woman had disappeared without a trace.

“Wow,” an onlooker exclaimed, “she vanished into tin hare.”
“The most disgusting thing I have ever read”--my place in literature?

I had wanted to become a priest since 1950 when I was six, and seven years later I entered the seminary high school in Milwaukee. In many ways, I loved it, but my grades weren’t near what they’d been in grade school. One priest-teacher, who I had for Latin and English classes several times over the four years, said, “Adler, you should be on the honor roll. You’re sloughing off too much.” We had other battles, too. When he gave me demerits, I argued with loopholes I found in the seminary rules. “You should become a lawyer,” he said.

He had a master’s degree in English from Marquette, and he read a lot. He often told us, during literature classes, that our text reminded him of something, but then said he couldn’t tell us about it. It drove us nuts.

When he ordered us to write a “narrative,” we asked, as adolescents do, “What shall we write about?”

“Anything,” he said. “You can write about anything, as long as it isn’t pornographic.” That question, and his answer, were repeated many times, and I decided to take him at his word.

In my story I used several classmates’ names, but switched half from male to female—Ken became Kay and Clarence Clara—and plunked a dozen of them down at the Sam Houston Institute of Technology (a frequent high-school joke was based on that fictional school’s acronym), where they had a variety of tasteless adventures from passing gum during kissing sessions (something I’d never experienced) and getting splattered trying to push a car out of a mudhole. It was terribly tame by today’s standards, but when I read it to my classmates in 1960, they couldn’t believe I planned to hand it in.

“Is it pornographic?” I asked.

“Well, no, but …,” someone said.

“Didn’t he say a hundred times it could be about anything as long as it wasn’t pornographic?”

“Well, yeah, but …”

“Okay then. I have enough words, it’s a story, and it’s not pornographic, right?”

“But you can’t hand that in!” several insisted.

I did hand it in, however, and then afterwards I felt embarrassed by what I wrote.

A few days later my teacher stopped me on my way to the dorm. “Adler,” he said, “that is the most disgusting thing I have ever read. Why did you write that?”

Facing him, my reason no longer seemed adequate, and I don’t recall what I told him.

“You need counseling,” he said, “and I’m going to give this paper to Father D.”

In modern terms, it was an OMG moment. Father D was not only the seminary spiritual director, he was my own personal director. I ran to his room, told him my teacher was bringing him a story I wrote, and confessed that the story was pretty bad, something no seminarian should have written.

Father D said he’d read it and then we’d discuss it, but he doubted anything terrible would happen. He insisted I shouldn’t worry, but I did
worry because he was pretty conservative and hadn’t yet seen how disgusting my story was. To take my mind off my troubles I trudged to the gym to watch an intramural basketball game. My English teacher was there, and he called me over. “Don’t worry,” he said, “I’m not going to give your story to Father D.” I had a “Now he tells me” reaction. But he asked once more why I wrote it.

Again, my reason seemed lame, and I stared at the floor. “I’ll write you a different one, Father.”

“You don’t have to write a different one. The satire is excellent! I gave you an A.”

I didn’t know what satire was, and I repeated, “I’ll write a different one.”

“You got an A,” he seemed to shout. “What more do you want?”

I wanted the taste of my foolishness out of my mind—and out of his. I did write another story, a very good one, I think, about people at the bus stop in front of the seminary, and I took it to his room.

“I told you,” he said, “you got an A. This won’t give you a better grade, and I’m not going to read it. Do you want the other one back?”

“No. You can toss it.” And I must have tossed the bus-stop story too because I don’t recall ever using it for an assignment.

That teacher and I still exchange Christmas cards every year. Eventually I told him in a letter why I wrote that story, but he never responded to it. He reads two novels a week, and sometimes I wonder if my story about the Sam Houston Institute of Technology is still the most disgusting thing he has ever read.

**COACH’S BULLPEN DICTIONARY**

Inapptitude

*in-APP-tuh-tood*

n. The inability to understand all the fancy downloads you get for your smart phone.

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**COACH’S BULLPEN BLOVIATION**

Would you die for a word?

Since you read this newsletter (or at least skim it on your way to the monthly baby pinup), I assume you respect, perhaps even love, words-- reading them, writing them, maybe even just grazing on them in a good dictionary.

But would you risk your life to string a few words together in an attempt to communicate your thoughts and feelings to people you haven’t even met? Air Force First Lieutenant John Borling did.

For seven hellish years Borling was a prisoner of war, captured by the Vietcong, tortured, deprived of food and sleep, and isolated in the infamous Hoa Lo prison, which the GI’s referred to as the “Hanoi Hilton.”

While suffering brutal heat, pain, and loneliness in his dark cell, Borling tapped the single word “hot” on his cell wall, using a simple grid code the POW’s had devised and passed along by word of mouth when possible. Another prisoner tapped the word “dying.” Another tapped “Pray for rain.”

Hardly Shakespearean sonnets, but life-giving contact among human beings-- and also a violation of rules that could have cost the GI’s their lives had they been caught at it.

Borling had always loved literature, and now he composed verses in his head and tapped them on the walls, “in order to stay human,” he later told writer Dawn Raffel, “in order to stay sane.”

He ‘wrote’ poems about flying. He wrote about holidays. He wrote about darkness and despair. It was, he said, “a way to make time an ally” and to reopen a heart that had been shut up by brutality and grief.

On February 12, 1973, Borland was finally released and walked away from the Hanoi Hilton a free man, still sane, still whole, still human and capable of love.

Words had saved him.

Raffel’s story about Borland ran in the May, 2013 *Reader’s Digest*. The Pritzker Military Library has published a collection of his poems (including some beautiful sonnets), entitled *Taps on the Walls: Poems from the Hanoi Hilton*.

Are words worth dying for? As Borland illustrates, they’re certainly worth living for.
The summer movie season started off with a bang with the highly entertaining *Iron Man 3,* but I'll be surprised if there is a more enjoyable film this year than *Star Trek Into Darkness.* I have not had this much fun at the movies since *The Avengers.*

The 2009 *Star Trek* got me into Trek. It was one of the best sci fi films I had seen in years, reintroducing the characters perfectly. It was something familiar for Trek fans as well as being its own film that new fans could start with. I think it's very clever that these films take place in an alternate timeline, so everything in the original Trek universe still happened. It's a smart way to keep that universe intact, so that hardcore fans won't get upset.

If you are new to the Trek universe, the 2009 film is a good place to start, but I highly recommend the original television series as well. It still holds up great.

I at first worried that *Star Trek Into Darkness* would perhaps be too dark and lack the humor that makes Trek so accessible. Thankfully that is not the case. It is just as lighthearted and enjoyable as the last film. There are many great moments of humor in this film.

The cast members bring something new to their characters while still paying tribute to the original actors. Chris Pine and Zachary Quinto are fantastic as Kirk and Spock. Pine really convinces you that he is the younger version of the iconic Starfleet captain, and Quinto is still perfect as Spock. Karl Urban shines as Bones once again. His mannerisms and the way he says his lines do justice to DeForest Kelley's original performance. Simon Pegg provides great moments of humor as Scotty, and Zoe Saldana is well cast as Uhura. The one performance that stands out, though, is Benedict Cumberbatch as John Harrison. He is the best villain I have seen in a movie since Heath Ledger as the Joker in *the Dark Knight.* I tensed up a lot during Cumberbatch's scenes because he is so menacing and ruthless. His plot is quite smart, and the revenge aspect of the film is so well done thanks to him.

The film has many great action set pieces. The scale is pretty big in this film, but the action never overpowers the plot. I saw the film in IMAX, and it looked quite impressive. The scenes on the bridge of the USS Enterprise felt like I was right there with the crew. It was also in 3D, which I am not a fan of, but it looked good in some scenes.

*Star Trek Into Darkness* is everything you could want in a sequel and more. It's fast paced, fun and very exciting. JJ Abrams brought new life into *Star Trek* in 2009, and he continues to bring something new to this universe while still remaining familiar to the hardcore Trek fans. I'm sure there is plenty for cynical internet shut-ins to nitpick at, but to me this is one of the year's best films and probably the most fun I will have at the movies this year. It's a great, intelligent summer blockbuster, which is rare these days, and it gets my highest recommendation.

**MORE COACH’S BULLPEN BLURB**

**Burris serves up more good chicken soup**

Among the “101 motivational stories for writers--budding or bestselling-- from books to blogs” offered in the newest collection from the good folks at the Chicken Soup for the Soul franchise, this one targeting “inspiration for writers,” you’ll find a wonderful piece by Barbara Burris in the “Mentors Who Mattered” section. (I liked the piece even before I got to the part where she was kind enough to mention me.)


Barbara sent along two more helpings of chicken soup, the one on “Food and Love” and the one on “Parenthood,” both of which also feature her great essays, and asks that I place them in my Little Free Library when I’m finished reading them.

Way to go, Barbara!
Write what you know? Not this guy.
A new novel set in the deep South, Southern Cross the Dog, opens with The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and tangles with race, poverty, the blues, and voodoo. The narrative follows a young African-American, Robert Chatham, as the flood propels him on an odyssey on which he encounters grifters, whores, and the KKK.

“I was highly suspicious of this book when I first started it,” Richard Howorth, owner of Square Books in Oxford, Mississippi, William Faulkner’s old home grounds, told Julie Bosman of the New York Times. But Howorth, an authority on Southern literature, says he was quickly “won over.”

Why the initial suspicion?
The book is the debut novel of Bill Cheng, a 29-year-old Chinese-American from Queens who has never even been to Mississippi.

Good writers have lots of ways of knowing, it would seem, and perhaps the best way combines curiosity, research, and a lively imagination.

MORE FROM COACH’S MAIL BAG
Coach’s reflection on brother’s death prompts thoughtful response
Coach –
I have been thinking about the article you wrote regarding your brother’s death and the differences you two had regarding death/religion/immortality/whanyamacallit.

I usually decline to discuss politics, religion, and sexual preference. It really is nobody’s business. I believe that we continue on in life if we can demonstrate that we deserve to. When I look at my 9 year old (it’s her birthday today), I really am in heaven. I think you might agree with that. And I have four other children and four (almost) grandchildren, too. This is where it is at because I made it that way. My choice; my reward. Sometimes, my hell!...

[D]eath and where we go have absolutely nothing to do with what we think and where we are at. We shouldn’t think about it; it is simply beyond our comprehension. We’re not THAT smart!

Stick to what you know. Enjoy each day for what it is and for what it is not.
Best regards always,
Randy Skoog

Debate over what constitutes being an “author” continues
to your "author" article (“When does a writer become a true author,” Den Adler, last issue):
I’ve taken a lot of heat for using and promoting and insisting on the traditional-only route for my books. Honestly, my intentions are honorable. I’ve seen too many people self-publish long before they were ready, first or second draft, just for the honor of calling themselves authors.

For someone who’s gone the 30 year writing route and still will not self-publish, I have to be excused if I call these people ‘doofisses.’ Especially since I don’t know how to spell the word.

We like to think that there are tons of people out there just waiting for our great writing. ... But there is so much competition these days, and if someone self-publishes something similar to your great idea, and it sucks, are those readers going to take a chance on you, even if you published with a small press?

So forgive me if I believe you have to be professional to be an author. That you have to edit and edit and edit again, and gather rejections and advice and readers and more rejections, maybe from some who say you’re getting close, because then maybe you are, and then maybe, maybe, after all of that, if you’ve exhausted every single market that might possibly take a chance on you, then, and only then, should you consider self-publishing.

And I won’t blame you. Maybe.

Monette Bebow-Reinhard
More responses to the May Day issue

I enjoyed the piece about Rabbi Katzburg and look forward to Part 2. [Front page, this issue: Coach] Bossin's writing is a good example of using the active rather than passive voice.

**Madonna Dries Christensen**

Enjoyed the pictures of Lily in this issue of EI. I must admit that now I open the file and go directly to the last page to see the latest Lily installment, then I go back and read the rest. It was good, too. :-)

**Lisa Krenz**

*Oh, I suspect almost everybody does that. It's like the supermarket putting the milk and bread way at the back of the store-- so you have to walk past all the other stuff to get to what you really want/need: Coach*

Dear Coach,

I am thrilled to see my poem in Extra Innings, and what a dynamite issue. Thank you so much.

My Best,

**Sandy Rafter**

*Look for more of Sandy's fine poetry next issue: Coach*

Marsh,

I was among the readers who believed you were pulling a prank on us. So sorry to hear you're really damaged! I hope you didn't lie out there for very long before that lady came by. ... *E.I. was great once again this month. Paw Joe and Porter's column had me laughing out loud. Thanks again also for last month's mention of my writing. You are ever so kind to give mention of it.*

*Hang in there with rehab. I know what a royal pain it is.*

**Barbara Burris**

Dear Marshall,

just a note to tell you about the fine *Extra Innings* #43! Such nice "stuff" you wrote about. I really enjoyed every word. I liked hearing about when you were young, 11, and had that bout with Rheumatic fever and all, and your 11-year-old chum, Craig, came each day. I love how you fit him in as a character in your book, *TWIN KILLINGS*. How cool of you. (Can we still say cool when we're old!!!! ) That is the book of yours I have; we traded that time, mine for yours! I think I will read it again and check Craig out! I want to thank you so much for printing my spring poem. Well, you are the best. be safe. Love,

**Bonny Conway**

LOVABLE LILY

Once a young lady named Lily
Decided to be rather silly.
She smiled and she grinned
As with Grandpa she chinned;
A charmer for sure, willy-nilly!

**Esther M. Leipoer-Estabrooks**

And now, go to next page for your springtime...
Moments with Lily