I wrote a poem last night.

I almost didn't write it. I became a dervish of doubt clashing into myself: will the reference to the Nagasaki bombing mean anything now; who will want to read it; are the thoughts and emotions too dark; will I be able to capture deep feelings others can relate to, and who am I to try?

I wrote it anyway. I couldn't stop myself. I felt compelled. I dreamed about it and woke in the night with no pen and pencil near and lay reciting lines over and over so I wouldn't forget them. I was sure when I awoke in the morning that the lines I remembered would be gibberish.

I've written 15 lines and hate most of them. At first, the image was so clear, but now I can't find the right words. Even the idea of the poem is gone from my head. I think to give it up, yet, the poem seems to want to live.

I turn on my computer and seek John Denver singing, "Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream," a song about everyone in the world laying down arms and signing a pact for peace. The words soothe me. At the same time, I feel so sad. A song and a poem may go to places beyond us where we haven't yet been. I feel that way as a poet now. I feel the terrible pull to go there. I scrawl drab words with my pen.

A book of Ted Kooser's poetry lays half buried under the papers on my desk. His precision is what I need to hear. I start reading his poems aloud. He estimates he has received over a thousand rejection notices. I am astounded by that number -- Ted Kooser, Pulitzer Prize poet, U.S. Poet Laureate. It seems so improbable. Still, if he meant to give comfort to struggling writers with his words, they are having little effect on me. I've turned into a lazy writer content to seek diversions, but not to write.

I've looked at an article about the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. I didn't know that the B-29 that dropped the Hiroshima atomic bomb, the Enola Gay, was named after the pilot's mother. I shudder -- an honor or a cross? I hope some of the words I'm reading help me to feel the emotions again. I know what I think and believe, but I've lost the gut feeling of the poetry.

Damn, I've read my own words over and over. They're not right. I don't have a bit of quickening in my spirit about the writing. The poem is flat, dull, heavy, and it's very difficult to get the right tone without sounding like a crusader. I wonder should I even try to finish it. Important themes need important writers.

I have a small notebook where I have copied lines of poetry I like and quotes about poetry. I am aware I am still not settled down to the writing enough, but I leaf through the pages. Emily Dickinson wrote: "If I read a book and it makes my body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry."

I sit for a few minutes. I think: stop thinking. Soar, lines. Get away from me. Soar: touch our bleeding wounds, our frailties, our laughter, our embraces, our hours, our deaths. I almost hear the words as they seek escape from my captivity. I am laughing to myself. Poets are strange people.

When I finally step back to the poem -- that is, when I write on a piece of paper instead of my mind -- I still have not discovered the crucial spiritual, mystical, transcendent -- call it what you will -- essence of the poem which connects me with others. I know I haven't yet freed the poem.
Poet Adrian Mitchell said: "Most people ignore most poetry because poetry ignores most people." I try to remember that even as I'm seeking to write words about those places most dare not go and words we might not even think to say. When I say I ache for this as a poet, I sound pretentious even to myself, but it's the truth.

The throbbing in my head and chewed-on pen tell me I am at a turning point. I am tired of my own thoughts and even feel I might do better writing labels for jars. Even the completed lines I like nag at me and at my sleep. I take a Tylenol. I will finish the poem. I have to. For this moment, I conclude the poem needs more to be the world's.

I wonder why I put myself through such torment. I want to write, but the anxiety and fear of failure and the search for the lost words can be so grueling. I suppose all writers put themselves at the jeopardy of their pasts when the self-doubts first emerged and then built through the years; now, the doubts seem to follow us like ravenous birds eating Hansel and Gretel's crumbs.

Still, I do seem to survive these thoughts and feelings. Eventually, a completed poem is my salvation, but the triumph is incomplete and the celebration short. What has always been, remains -- a traitorous companion letting me be inside myself but also shivering me with shards of despair. The hollow, grievous loneliness of being a writer casts a shadow on my soul.

We spy the Nagasaki birds strung across the sky, endlessly beating their flaming wings. Molten tips scatter cinders below, and boys jostle with baseball gloves to catch the prize. Bare feet spread sparks and ashes with their toes. The birds have not flown this path before. Newspapers print the sighting times so we may gather with lawn chairs and grills to watch them scorch the sky. We joke and wonder at the sight, not knowing how these ancients fly. The twisted bodies near. Coal eyes search the trees. We cover our ears as the flapping quickens into screams like pain and the fiery burst is over us. We shield our eyes, stare wordlessly, unsure of what to say. "Ghosts," the children cry. We are glad to see the birds move away.

Extra Innings #48
"Semper ubi sub ubi"

Madison, Wisconsin October, 2013

This month's All-Star features by:
Sandra Rafter, David Krival, Madonna Dries Christensen, Rex Owens, Den Adler, Jan Kent, Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks, Ron Hevey, Jake McLaughlin, Ed Pahnke, John Swift, and Keith Bowman

Poetry from:
Craig W. Steele, Norma Sundburg, and John Manesis

Doggerel by Dick Mallard
and the adventures of Liliana Lenore Cook
Web Weaver: Kimberly Follett
Internetter: Steve Born
The Masked Man: Brace Beemer
Editor-in-Coach: Marshall J. Cook

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Deadline for November:
Wednesday, October 23, 2013
Two hundred years back, it was possible to earn a living from poetry. Not every poet achieved wealth; there were strugglers then as now. But if you did hit big—whooppee! Today’s versifiers find buyers scarce. Contributor’s copies may be considered glory enough.

If poetry seems culture’s backward child, that wasn’t always so. Irishman Thomas Moore, 1779-1852, received riches for his verse romance *Lalla Rookh*, which contains fictional narrative with lavish allure. (Happily, verse novels have now made a comeback.)

Moore developed the idea for his exotic tale in 1812, and his agent negotiated a sweet deal with publisher Messers Longman. Indeed, Moore boasted, “There has seldom…. occurred any transaction in which Trade and Poesy have shone out so advantageously in each other’s eyes.”

The contract gave Moore three thousand guineas for the unwritten manuscript guaranteed, Moore confided, “Without condition for previous perusal of the new work, thus sight unseen! Guineas, at the time were coins valued at up to 28 shillings each, and what their buying power was we can only imagine.

But Messers Longman knew Moore would deliver. His first volume, *The Anacreon*, 1800, (a Greek word for songs of love and drink) was successful, while his next, *Poetical Works of Thomas Little*, was more so, due to “spice” which made Victorian H.A. Beers sniff, “It’s disgraced by a vein of licentiousness Moore lived to regret.” But that statement sounds like sour grapes from spite rather than spice.

Moore’s traveler’s tale runs over 300 pages, including extensive notes. He explains, “The length of time I employed in writing…will appear….much greater than necessary…but I have been at all times… slow and painstaking.”

Here’s a sample, including his spelling:

> Between the porphyry pillars that uphold
> The rich Moresque work on the roof of gold,
> Along the haram’s curtained galleries rise,
> There thro’ the silken network, glancing eyes
> From time to time show sudden gleams that
> glow
> Thro’ autumn clouds, shine o’er the pomp
> below.

On publication, *Lalla Rookh* surged to 20 editions translated into many languages and was produced as a play, masque, tableau, opera, and “divertissement.” If “the greens of yesteryear” richly lined his pockets, Moore earned success through due diligence.

Indeed, by following others’ grit and determination, we can improve our own creative climate. Consider wordsmiths like Bob Dylan and Rod McKuen, or popular rappers. Fifty years ago, critics called McKuen’s poetry weak. Still, it sold and sold. Dylan’s detractors lambasted his “betrayal” of switching from folk to rock. Yet bad press deflected neither one; rap, too, continues vibrant, despite gangsta attitude. If you throw your star “over the rainbow,” it may hook on!

Returning to Moore, his opus includes many short pieces, witty yet sentimental, while if *Lalla Rookh* seems “over the top” melodrama, recall there were no TV specials or travelogues in his day. Ordinary folk hungered to explore far lands but lacked means. Moore’s winged imagination built grand plots and palaces via a mere 26 alphabet letters.
Yet Moore lived no charmed life. He tried law, but that didn’t suit. A low-born Irish-Catholic who attended college in Protestant England, he began at deep disadvantage, including both religious prejudice and lack of funds. When he had money, he spent freely, but in mid-life he was cheated of six thousand pounds by a business associate. Whatever the facts, a resulting lawsuit went against him.

Still, Moore’s marriage was happy, plus he was befriended by the Prince of Wales and (finally) accepted by society. Yet he lost all five children within his lifetime, the oldest boy a mere 19 at passing. Despite vicissitudes, Moore’s short verse remains tender, as shown by a toddler seeking Mother Venus:

**CUPID STUNG**
Thus he spoke, and she the while
Heard him with a soothing smile
Then said, “My infant, if so much
Thou feel the little bee’s touch,
How much the hurt, ah, Cupid! be
The hapless heart that’s stung by thee!”

Over a century and a half on, Moore’s memory remains lush and fervent as Ireland, He scaled a sharply striated society. His father was a Gaelic speaking grocer-- humble background to launch a bard! Be that said, his Da was a green grocer; so-- it’s most fitting that Moore’s fame stays green, and as Moore himself penned: if time chains us at last, it takes time for the message to register:

> When first our scanty years are told,
> It seems like pastime to grow old!

**Esther’s News:**
WMUR TV, Channel 9, featured novelist and screenwriter Greg Norris, who heads the Berlin, NH Writers’ Club, along with Esther and other members on its program “New Hampshire Chronicle.”

Our club held a September show of writing and art sponsored by Tea Birds’ restaurant in the Berlin Shopping Mall, with Esther featured among participants, with special thanks to Scott Gregory, restaurant plus mall owner.

**JAN KENT /S**
**THE WORD WHISPERER**

Silent letters are everywhere. We scarcely notice them or think about them – knee, debt, gnarly.

But here’s a passage from *Islands in the Stream*, by fellow Oak Park native Ernest Hemingway, that puts a new spin on silent letters for me. A couple is speaking about memories of their old love affair.

> “I know,” she said. “I'm sorry. But I don't know how to put it any other way and mean the same thing. It's started to get numb already.”
> “It will get number,” he said. “Numb is as bad as at the start. But it will get number.”

Ah gee, Ernest.

**THE E.I. PHOTO QUIZ**
**Who is it?**

Send answers to Coach by October 23

Mary Ramey, Diane Reinke, and Sandra Rafter all correctly identified the two figures in our last photo quiz as young Christopher Robin Milne (son of A.A. Milne) with his teddy bear, Winnie-the-Pooh.

Other (perhaps less than serious) guesses included Boo-Boo, Smokey, Care, Ted, and Snuggle.
When Peekaneesus got the sneezes
it started with a choo!
From this choo! There soon came two
and two brought two choos! more.
When Peekaneesus got the sneezes
his wealthy dowageeser said,
“That can’t be causing all those sneezes
plaguing my young Peekaneesus. Surely Dr. Wheezes teases.
It must be quite some rare disease.”

Then Dr. Wheezes reaches up and seizes
down a book on maladies
caused by pollinating trees,
making Pekineses sneeze.

“It’s as you wish,” said Dr. Wheezes,
“he suffers from a rare disease,
known as Chronic Rhinokleenaseezes
...and here are several analgeeses,”
which should cure these dreaded sneezes.
Give him one-a-day and simply,
keep him from those shedding trees,
...that’s twenty dollars, if you please.

Then home she went with Peekaneesus
counting fewer fits and sneezes.
Vaunting her dear pet’s effeteness
And his Chronic Rhinokleenaseezes.

Longing for those days of sneezes.
Free to chase the blowing leaves.
Free of doors and locks and keys.
Free to lift his leg on trees.

Doggerel by Richard Mallard, who reports
that his favorite book is The Golden Trashery of Ogden Nashery.
My friend Keith Bowman and I have been carrying on a long-distance e-conversation about writing and teaching. Recently, Keith sent the following question: Can you tell me a little bit about your philosophy towards teaching? Your ideas, attitudes toward it?

Now that’s a knee-buckling question.

My response follows.

My attitude is that I love it.

I started teaching in the late 60s, having had zero training. I did have the beginnings of an understanding that, more than anything else, my good teachers (and I can still name them, picture them, hear them, revere them) told stories, and they taught me about themselves and what it means to be a good human being.

It was such an exciting time to be a new teacher-- and war resistor, too, btw, which is how I lost my first teaching job. A book by Jerry Farber called The Student As Nigger passed around our little group of young, idealistic teachers, and we were sure we were on the cutting edge of a teaching revolution. We talked about teaching constantly (driving our spouses insane). We tried everything in the classroom. (I once came in, sat at the back of the room, and refused to speak. Ah, the hippie dippy days of youth.)

The common thread for me in all the teaching I’ve done, in many different venues and formats, is that it’s all about the student. Where are they? What are they bringing to the encounter? What do they want and need to know? More importantly, how might they open up and grow as a result of our encounter?

From early on, if a student asked if it was "okay" to miss the next class because of (insert reason here), I’d say some variant of, "I don’t take roll, but I can guarantee, something will happen in class that isn’t in the book, and you’ll miss it.” You can teach the same material (poem, story, grammar lesson, anything) to 100 different classes, and it’s 100 different experiences. The collective ‘We’ is so much wiser than the sum of all of us individually. When you discuss things, stuff happens. I tried to learn to direct, focus, rein in, but not stifle the conversation.

The other thing I’m pretty sure of is that you have to over-prepare. Yeah, you know the stuff, but do you know it well enough to stand up in front of a group (or sit in a circle, but they’re still watching you) and react in appropriate ways (let alone try to answer the question that may be well beyond any answer you can give)?

And it really does come down to this: if you love the student, if the student is ready, and you’re enthusiastic about the subject, you really will not, cannot fail, no matter what "method" you use.

Good teachers are story-tellers, because story is at our very core. We read them, watch them, listen to them, tell them, write them, are awash in them. Vin Scully is my favorite baseball announcer, and he not only tells stories; he makes a narrative out of the game. Jesus is for me the great Teacher, and he taught with stories.

On the next page, I’ll turn the podium over to Keith, who wrote this story about one of his teachers.

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In real estate, it’s "Location, location, location!" In speaking, it’s “Locution, Locution, Locution”

Norma Sundberg
First Person Singular
Keith Bowman

Joe DeRoche never stopped teaching

"A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."

-Joseph Campbell

There is a common misperception in teaching, where many believe the teacher bestows his greatness upon the student, and if the student is lucky, he will accept this greatness. But Joe DeRoche knew better. He often quoted the Latin etymology of education (educare), which means to lead or draw out. This is how he taught. This is how he lived. Like Campbell's Hero, Joe traveled the path before. He knew the dangers and the pitfalls. He returned as the guide and led others with a sensitivity, erudition, and passion that I have rarely if ever seen matched.

Whatever he was teaching you felt the force of his love for the work and his compassion for the student. His connection to that work and the student made him such a unique individual. Like one his own intellectual mentors Walt Whitman, he didn't give lectures, he gave of himself.

I, like him, lived on the North Shore, and we often took the train home together. DeRoche was always DeRoche. He never really stopped teaching. So on one of these long rides back, the last night of class, I asked him a question that I honestly didn't expect him to answer. It was about his first love, poetry. I asked, "What is the function of poetry? Why would someone write it?" He could see on my face that I wasn't being facetious or obtuse and that the question was sincere. So as we pulled into Orient Heights, his stop, he looked at me, stepped out and right before the doors closed, he answered me.

"To Matter."

God Speed Chiron.

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

-Howard Thurman

Just for the Fun of It
Ed (Hanky) Pahnke

For the birds

The phone rang in Bob O’Link’s office at the Nature First Preserve. A motto, “Give ‘em the Bird,” was etched into a plaque, which hung on the wall behind Bob’s desk. It said much about the muscular, good natured ornithologist.

Bob scrambled to pick up the phone.

“Bob?” He recognized the voice of his crony, Ol’ Doc Tor. “I got this strange bird flitting around in my backyard garden. I never saw the likes of it. Can you come on over for a look-see?”

Never one to miss a chance to see a strange bird, Bob O’Link said, “I’ll be right over, Doc.” He grabbed his binocular-camera and dashed out, ready for a birding expedition.

Ushering Bob into his home, Doc said, “Hurry.” Several years older and a few pounds heavier than Bob, Doc led Bob through a maze of rooms to a window overlooking the expansive yard.

Doc pointed, and Bob zoomed in on the bird. “Yes. That bird is rare in our locale. It’s a purple crested, wide-billed seed sucker.” Bob snapped a picture. Then he continued, “That little bird sucks up seeds with its wide bill.”

Doc quipped, “So the bird’s a suck-up.”

The two old friends chuckled.

“Gotta go,” Bob said. “Keep me posted on the wide-billed seed sucker’s activity.”

Hard at work in his office the next day, Bob O’Link looked up when his phone rang. He summoned up a friendly greeting, but before he could say a word, Ol’ Doc Tor said, “The bird didn’t return today. I wonder why?”

Bob again dropped what he’d been doing to assist his friend.

Nosing around in the back yard garden, Bob explained, “No more of the special seeds to feed on. The wide-billed seed sucker is particular. It took off for greener pastures.”

Crestfallen at the turn of events, Doc Tor said, “I get how that bird thinks: If at first you don’t suck seed, fly, fly again.”
All houses wherein men have lived and died are haunted houses. Through the open doors the harmless phantoms on their errands glide, with feet that make no sound upon the floors.

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Florida’s misty swampland, lush hammocks, and lofty trees curtained with Spanish moss provide ideal hiding places for ghosts. If, indeed, they want to hide. Some make quite a spectacle of themselves. These apparitions might be frightening, but rarely do ghosts harm anyone. They are usually benign, even benevolent; some are pranksters who enjoy making folks jittery.

Some say that Micanopy, Florida’s population of 800 includes at least one ghost, Inez Herlong Miller, dwelling at Herlong Mansion Bed and Breakfast.

In about 1910, Inez’s mother, Natalie, inherited her family’s homestead. Because Mr. Herlong’s South Carolina business was failing anyway, the family moved to Micanopy.

Unaccustomed to humble accommodations, Herlong enclosed the little house inside a mansion. Natalie retained title to the property, and when she died in 1950, it went to her six adult children with the stipulation that their father could live there until his death.

When he died 10 years later, the mansion was in serious disrepair. All the children wanted the home, but only Inez, whose husband had died and left her with money, could afford to buy the mansion. After an extended battle, Inez bought her siblings’ shares, but there was so much bitterness that none of them ever spoke to Inez again. Not long after her victory, she was doing repairs on the second floor when she died from a heart attack. She never spent a night in the home she had claimed as her own.

Or, is she still there? The current owner, Sonny Howard, believes she is. “If she’s happy here, I’m happy.”

He might tell the story he heard from the Evanses, the people from whom he bought the house. They hired a restoration crew and gave them permission to sleep in the house. For three nights the workers were awakened by doors opening and closing and footsteps in the upstairs hall. The crew decided the house was haunted and moved to a hotel.

The Evanses, eager to put the ghost story to rest, spent a night there. They locked their bedroom door and slept soundly, but in the morning their bedroom door was open. Howard tells this story only after guests have had breakfast. When he asks how everyone slept, he says most of those who report an “experience” were lodged in the room in which Inez died. But he doesn’t say which room that is. One guest reported an apparition floating across the room, seen only in the mirror, not in the room itself. It appeared to be a woman wearing a red shawl or hood over her head. When the guest spoke aloud, the image disappeared.

Ghosts are sometimes explained as the wandering spirits of people who died untimely or violent deaths, leaving unfinished business. They may be seeking attention, wanting to be seen or heard. Perfectly sane folks claim to have had contact with something they call a ghost. Are ghostly images figments of imagination, or is there truly an active spirit world surrounding us?

“I almost believe we are all ghosts! It is not only what we have inherited from our father and mother that haunts us. It is all sorts of old, dead ideas, all kinds of old, dead beliefs, and so forth. They have no life, yet they cleave to us, and we cannot shake ourselves free from them.”

— Henrik Ibsen, author of Ghosts
Mark Twain’s 20 Quotes on Writing: Part One

1. “[I] haven’t any right to criticize books, and I don’t except when I hate them. I often want to criticize Jane Austen, but her books madden me so that I can’t conceal my frenzy from the reader; and therefore I have to stop every time I begin. Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice* I want to dig her up and beat her over the skull with her own shin-bone.”

2. “A successful book is not made of what is in it, but what is left out of it.”

3. “One should never use exclamation points in writing. It is like laughing at your own joke.”

4. “The test of any good fiction is that you should care something for the characters; the good to succeed, the bad to fail. The trouble with most fiction is that you want them all to land in hell together, as quickly as possible.”

5. “To get the right word in the right place is a rare achievement. To condense the diffused light of a page of thought into the luminous flash of a single sentence, is worthy to rank as a prize composition just by itself... Anybody can have ideas—the difficulty is to express them without squandering a quire of paper on an idea that ought to be reduced to one glittering paragraph.”

6. “There was no crime in unconscious plagiarism; that I committed it everyday, that he committed it everyday, that every man alive on earth who writes or speaks commits it every day and not merely once or twice but every time he opens his mouth... there is nothing of our own in it except some slight change born of our temperament, character, environment, teachings and associations”

7. “I conceive that the right way to write a story for boys is to write so that it will not only interest boys but strongly interest any man who has ever been a boy. That immensely enlarges the audience.”

8. “There are some books that refuse to be written. They stand their ground year after year and will not be persuaded. It isn’t because the book is not there and worth being written — it is only because the right form of the story does not present itself. There is only one right form for a story, and if you fail to find that form, the story will not tell itself.”

9. “Write without pay until someone offers pay. If nobody offers within three years, the candidate may look upon this as a sign that sawing wood is what he was intended for.”

10. “Write what you know.”

To be continued...
I asked Mario Andretti’s crewman as he prepped the 2-seater IndyCar at Pocono Raceway, “How fast are we gonna go?”

“Averages around 170,” he said. Faster on the straights and slower in the corners, I figured. Didn’t matter. Anywhere in the neighborhood was faster than I had ever gone.

My Diane worked the camera: Pic with Mario, Pic suited up, Pic next to the IndyCar. My sweetie had given me an IndyCar gift that I would not have given myself. We kidded about having her hold my wallet.

Ride with Mario Andretti? Why not? Formula One champion and winner of both the Daytona 500 and the Indianapolis 500. Mentioned to him that I was a year younger and willing to drive. He smiled.

Threaded into the tight cockpit with my helmet snapped and 5-point harness buckled, and we were off and rumbling down the track. Race car sensations were immediate, loud and harsh: engine, tires and wind pulsed, pushed and pulled on me. Acceleration was so smooth, yet we were near ‘at speed’ as we approached Turn 1.

Down to the apex we went, the G forces throwing my head against the surround. The tires were on a rail, as they say, with total grip, not one bit of drift, the car glued to the track. My body was experiencing more than the 1G of a Ferrari or Lamborghini supercar. I wanted to keep my neck straight, yet I had to force myself to lean on the surround because that’s where my neck would end up. High banked at 14 degrees and circling back on itself, Turn 1 was taking forever.

As we exited onto the back Long Pond straight, OMG, I was thinking, is this ever an ‘out of body’ experience. Speeds built and built. I pushed my glasses down to capture distance as I looked down the track and took in the world rushing by. All that stuff in the TV ads with Mario focusing in slow motion on a windblown dandelion and a beautiful woman is bull. We were close to the outside wall and all of a sudden downshifting 1-2-3 gears as we entered Tunnel Turn 2, a 90 degree quickie and not so banked.

Surprise, surprise, just when my head got used to being flung to the right, Mario drifted that direction to set the car for Turn 3, which flipped my head to the left and then back to the right like a ping pong ball.

Wham, wham, wham, the upshifts were that brutal as the car accelerated toward Start/Finish, flat out as we reached our highest speed on the main straight, 185 mph, Mario later said. We were traveling faster than NASCAR’s track record of 179 mph. I wanted to wave to Diane, who was taking pictures, but that would not have been smart. You don’t stick your arm out of a moving race car.

Here we were at Turn 1 again. That was quick, a two-and-a-half mile lap in less than a minute. I was ready this time; still the turn took long. Entering the back straight again, Mario was pushing the IndyCar to its limit. One time Mario said that, unless he was careful, the car spun out and crashed. I didn’t want to think about the possibility.

Already we were back on the front straight and I was glad and sad. I shouldn’t have been glad - I was good for at least one more lap. IndyCar drivers endure a race of 160 laps at 50 miles per hour faster than we were going. Oh, well, hooray for youth.

Ready or not just past the Start/Finish Mario applied massive brakes with stupendous stopping power – another surprise - to slow us as we entered the pits.

We were back. I could breathe again. They wanted me out for the next guy. A camera man shot pictures of me standing next to the car with immense joy written all over my face. I felt like I had just won the Indy 500. I could climb fences and wave. Go ahead, pour milk all over my body. Thank you, thank you, Diane.
Shaun of the Dead and Hot Fuzz are two of the five films tied for my favorite movie ever made. The World's End has joined those movies. It's a magnificent film, a fitting conclusion to Edgar Wright's Cornetto Trilogy as well as a great standalone film.

Edgar Wright, Simon Pegg, and Nick Frost have made three films together, their Cornetto Trilogy. A Cornetto is an ice cream treat in the UK. It's kind of like a Drumstick here. In each film a Cornetto is referenced. Shaun of the Dead has a strawberry Cornetto to represent blood as in the zombies of the film. Hot Fuzz has the original Cornetto, which has a blue wrapper. It represents the police in the film. The World's End' features a mint Cornetto to represent aliens and sci-fi elements.

In The World's End five friends go back to their hometown to complete the Golden Mile, a pub crawl with 12 pubs, from The First Post to the World's End, that they failed to finish when they were teenagers. As the night progresses, the friends find that not everything is as it seems in the town, and they must fight and drink their way through it.

Simon Pegg plays Gary King, a 40-something screw-up who is still stuck in his teen years. He's a jerk who lies to his friends just to get them to join him in the pub crawl. But as the film progresses, he becomes very sympathetic. He's desperate to complete the failed pub crawl, because he still declares it as the greatest night of his life. Unlike his friends, he hasn't moved on.

Nick Frost plays Andy, the more serious character that Pegg usually plays; Frost does it just as convincingly. Martin Freeman, Paddy Considine, and Eddie Marsan play the other three friends in this ensemble piece, and they are just as great as Pegg and Frost. Each of the five friends is a well-developed character, which makes it easy to sympathize and root for them.

Edgar Wright again proves that he is a master of his craft. Each shot is set up wonderfully, and the film looks fantastic. The action scenes are the best I've seen all year. The choreography is beautifully executed.

The humor is very clever and comes off flawlessly. Like Shaun and Fuzz, The World's End is full of intricate details; you most likely won't catch all of them upon first viewing. The script, written again by Wright and Pegg, is packed. There are some nice and subtle references to the other two films, clever foreshadowing, and a few cameos from the other two films and the television series, Spaced, which was the first project Wright, Pegg, and Frost did together.

The film never becomes cliché or predictable. Each of the 12 pubs' names has to do with something that happens in them, but the film keeps it subtle and doesn't give anything away until the events inside are happening.

Even if you aren't as familiar with Wright, Pegg, and Frost's work, there's something that everyone can appreciate in this film. While it may be the end to this trilogy, it's pretty much guaranteed that the three guys will work together again, and I'm eager to see where they go next. These are three of the finest people working in film, and I highly recommend you seek out their work if you haven't already.

Sign of the coming apocalypse #547

According to a recent “60 Minutes/Vanity Fair” poll, seven percent of Americans think that Lee Harvey Oswald shot Abraham Lincoln.
Mark Twain’s 20 Quotes on Writing: Part Two

11. “A man who is not born with the novel-writing gift has a troublesome time of it when he tries to build a novel. I know this from experience. He has no clear idea of his story; in fact he has no story. He merely has some people in his mind, and an incident or two, also a locality, and he trusts he can plunge those people into those incidents with interesting results. So he goes to work. To write a novel? No—that is a thought which comes later; in the beginning he is only proposing to tell a little tale, a very little tale, a six-page tale. But as it is a tale which he is not acquainted with, and can only find out what it is by listening as it goes along telling itself, it is more than apt to go on and on and on till it spreads itself into a book. I know about this, because it has happened to me so many times.”

12. “Don’t say the old lady screamed. Bring her on and let her scream.”

13. “I notice that you use plain, simple language, short words and brief sentences. That is the way to write English—it is the modern way and the best way. Stick to it; don’t let fluff and flowers and verbosity creep in. When you catch an adjective, kill it. No, I don’t mean utterly, but kill most of them—then the rest will be valuable. They weaken when they are close together. They give strength when they are wide apart. An adjective habit, or a wordy, diffuse, flowery habit, once fastened upon a person, is as hard to get rid of as any other vice.”

14. “It takes a heap of sense to write good nonsense”

15. “The time to begin writing an article is when you have finished it to your satisfaction. By that time you begin to clearly and logically perceive what it is you really want to say.”

16. “Writing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words.”

17. “My books are water; those of the great geniuses is wine. Everybody drinks water.”

18. “I didn’t have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.”

19. “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”

20. “Substitute ‘damn’ every time you’re inclined to write ‘very’; your editor will delete it, and the writing will be just as it should be.”
I like the way it's going, where it's leading. Dramatic tension: I feel it. I want to work toward resolution, but I refuse to hurry the process. This man I'm creating, he has to make sense; he has to be consistent and all the little facts of his life have to fit together.

I've never done this before. I recognize it as a big step up, from the low Bushes toward the Bigs. This is what I have trained myself to be able to do, but I've never done it. I think I can do it, but I won't know until I have.

I can't cheat the process, can't cut corners. All the empty spaces must be shaded in with the right colors. Winston Churchill, savior of Western Civilization, my father's flawed hero and now my own, talked about painting in these terms. Now I understand.

This book will take 3 months to write, maybe a bit less, maybe more, perhaps a lot more, if I am willing to commit myself to the full development of several other characters. Right now, there are only four who matter, whose motives and histories must be clear. Maybe that's not enough to make a world. The more that I become aware of as necessary to the novel, the more I'm going to become willing to do.

Distraction of any kind would be fatal to this process. Maybe if I knew what I was doing, it wouldn't matter so much, but I don't. I only recognize that there are no limits to the commitment. You can't go too far; you can't be too painstaking. Every new awareness of the complexity of other human beings must find its place.

I want anyone who reads my book to say, "Yeah. The world is like that. People are like that. That's how the world works and how people think. That's why they do the things they do." Unless I urge myself out of my self-obsession, every day, this will never happen.

When I think about George Eliot, Shakespeare and Henry Miller, to whom this subtlety of comprehension and expression seemed to come naturally, I am in awe. Next to the masters, I will always be a Jewish kid from Wisconsin, who likes baseball, wears white socks and likes exercise until he's soaked with sweat. And that's all right.

There's no almost. Gotta give myself time and room. I know some things: about people, life, sex, the ocean, Africa. But I don't know everything about anything. Is what I know enough? Am I just showing off?

I don't know yet. Maybe I have to keep my eyes and ears open, look and listen for truth and doubt, hope that it adds up to something. It is so humbling. Am I an ignorant fool? Or am I honest? Technique is just the start. Does this stuff inside my head and heart mean anything? And if it doesn't, is that still all right?

I've got nothing better to do, so it's not a waste of time.

David

Beans

Beans cause such terrible scenes. It's almost obscene to offer a bean to someone who's going to Church, or to School. But, just as a rule, when perched on a stool, sitting in school, or resting at Mass, look around with a frown, after just passing gas.

Richard Mallard
The Circle Closed

Along the eighty mile flyway
between Kearney and Grand Island
this cool and cloudy April afternoon,
to the birdwatchers’ delight,

flock after flock of sand hill cranes
are taking flight as they rise
from the Platte River and wetlands
just south of this I 80 corridor

where they sojourned for a month
after spending the winter in Mexico,
Cuba, and the southern United States.
Refueled on this waterway

and in the nearby fields,
they’ve fed on grass and wasted corn,
alfalfa, insects, invertebrates.
Thousands of these hardy navigators

are setting out today on wings
with spans of six to seven feet,
long necks straightened
and legs trailing behind them,

on their way to nesting grounds
in Canada, Alaska, and Siberia,
as they have done ten million years,
the seasons joined, the circle closed.

John Manesis

Please check my poetry web site:
http://www.jmanesispoetry.com
ESSAYS ON IMAGES
DEN ADLER

The Fox

For four months in 1973, seven men wearing voyageur-period clothes re-enacted the Joliet-Marquette expedition of 1673, paddling two custom-made canoes 3,000 miles in four months. From St. Ignace, Michigan, they paddled down the Fox and the Wisconsin Rivers, entering the Mississippi on June 17, then pausing at Prairie du Chien for the dedication of a Wisconsin state historical marker commemorating the original expedition. My wife, Judy, son, Eric, and I drove there to see the re-enactors.

I recall a sunny, breezy day with the voyageurs arriving late after rowing hard against the current, waves, and wind.

The leader, Elgin, Illinois French teacher Reid Lewis as Louis Joliet, and Jesuit priest Charles McEnery as Father Jacques Marquette, stood out. The others I identified only later as I rushed to photograph all seven before they climbed into their canoes and resumed their trip down the Mississippi.

The attached photo is of Jim Phillips, who, as voyageur Pierre Porteret, served as the expedition’s environmentalist and as a rudderman for one of the canoes. Phillips had cut his foot on a portage with the canoes near Appleton, Wisconsin, and it became infected by raw sewage in the river near Bellevue, Iowa, a day or two after these photos were taken. Yet during the expedition Phillips gave more than 180 environment-related performances in towns along the route.

The voyageurs, with the river as a backdrop, spoke to the Prairie du Chien crowd and watched the unveiling of the new marker. Then they posed for pictures and signed autographs on “parchment” maps of their route.

Also in the crowd was Gary Gordon, 23, an intern for the Green Bay Press-Gazette, whom Reid Lewis invited to become part of the expedition’s support and press crew. Gordon learned that Jim Phillips was The Fox.

The man known as “The Fox” dumped U.S. Steel’s own sludge onto its Chicago office’s new shag carpeting. He made midnight raids via canoe to clog offending factory drainpipes with concrete. It became known as Ecotage, sabotage against industries that polluted the air and water. Phillips’s protests, which never physically hurt anyone, began in the late 1960s, before Earth Day and the environmental movement.

Phillips had been a high school teacher and an inspector for the Kane County Environmental Protection Agency. After he retired he wrote his memoirs, Raising Kane, under the name Ray Fox.

He was the oldest of the seven re-enactors, but he told Gordon he did not find the expedition itself a challenge. “The challenge,” Phillips said, “will come afterward through fulfilling commitments made by myself and persons all along our route, as to whether or not they’re willing to get together and work on the problems.”

Along the voyageur’s return trip north, Phillips, as Porteret, spoke in Starved Rock, Illinois, to a banquet room full of unsuspecting state officials. Gordon called it one of the high points of the trip and an effective use of guerilla theater. He quotes Phillips as saying:

“Three hundred years ago, I came down these rivers with the rest of these men…. I breathed the air that was as clean and as pure as the morning breeze, and now my eyes water as I travel past your civilized cities. Why do you do this to yourselves? … I see some good things. I see the little children; they are so strong and happy. But what are you going to give them if you continue to do these things to your air and your water? … I will paddle 3,000 miles to ask these questions, and when my paddling is done, I will come back to you and ask these questions again.”

Jim Phillips, The Fox, died October 3, 2001, in Aurora, Illinois. On the following Earth Day, April 20, 2002, he and folksinger Pete Seeger were scheduled to receive the Living Treasures of North America Heritage Award from the Prairyerth Fellowship of Hinsdale, Illinois.
Payers, Preyers and Pretenders
Rex A. Owens

Ode to a superb editor: Christine Keleny

This column was born during lunch with Marshall over a year ago. We came up with the title “Payers, Preyers and Pretenders.” There are those that are honest and pay for your work, those who prey on novices like me, and those who pretend to help you but have ulterior motives.

I don’t want this column to an endless lament about the struggles and challenges of my journey to publication. I’ve attempted to include positive stories about my experience. This month I would like to share my experience with copyeditor/proofreader Christine Keleny.

I met Christine in April at a presentation by three self-published authors at A Room of One’s Own bookstore in Madison. She has independently published a three-book series and a short story. Christine also has a certificate in copy editing. She created her own company, CKBookPublishing, as her own imprint and offers wanna-be independent authors services to assist in publication. (www.ckbookpublishing.com)

I contacted Christine for proofreading services. She asked for a copy of the first chapter in order to make a proposal. Of all the people I contacted for these services, only two requested a chapter to read before making a proposal. Within two days Christine responded and asked if I’d had a copy editor review my manuscript. I blushed in my e-mail response that I hadn’t, and it must have been obvious.

In her website Christine explains that copy editing is at the sentence level for grammar, spelling and punctuation. In addition, copy editing checks for consistency and accuracy in the story. Her proposal was detailed and very reasonably priced, and she said she could complete the project in 10 days.

Of course I said yes and was surprised she didn’t require a contract; it was an e-mail handshake, an agreement between professionals. While she was editing she wrote me e-mails with questions and re-formatted the manuscript.

Christine returned two pages of specific notes and a hard copy of the manuscript with line editing. As I review the edited manuscript, she has encouraged me to ask questions, and we’ve had a great dialogue.

In editing my manuscript I learned something about myself: I am consistent. When I make a mistake, I make it over and over again. To be honest, the comma baffles me. I must have some deep seated fear of them, because I don’t use very many of them, and Christine had to add a lot of them for me. I also get tangled up in word order from time to time, and Christine repaired the damage again.

In addition to the grammar and punctuation corrections that were desperately needed, Christine found glitches in the story plot and details. These pop up when you’ve been working on a manuscript for years, as I have. Sometimes as authors our perspective is clouded and we develop a “forest for the trees” problem. It popped up in my manuscript at least half a dozen times, and Christine pointed out each occurrence. Again, having a detailed reader, I was able to fix them.

Finding the copyeditor that fits is critical. I’m fortunate that I found Christine here in Dane County. If you need further information contact me at: rexowens00@gmail.com.

Autumn Recipe
Silver blade severs
dew-kissed crisp green flesh,
tiny specks bubbling
in a cache of deep
red pottage;
Spices bagged, floating,
bobbing,
cheesecloth encasing pungent
scents. Onion eyes
weeping freely,
Huge utensil stirs
semi-circles within
the cauldron
to prevent
carbon residue.
Clear containers,
crimson and emerald contents
prism the sunlight, creating
semblance of stained glass
as they sit on the kitchen cupboard
Ready for pantry packing,
Grandma’s
Chili Sauce,
Norma J. Sundberg
Don’t book passage on this cruise

Katherine Anne Porter, who received the Pulitzer in 1966 for *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter*, began writing her only novel, *Ship of Fools*, in 1932 and finished it in only 30 years, whereupon it became a best seller and made her millions, although it received little critical acclaim.

This book has been aging quietly on my shelves for about as long as its original gestation, but now I’ve opened its cover, “loosing upon the world” if not mere anarchy, the point of view of a woman who took four losing trips to the altar, then gave up on men and began writing about themes of betrayal, death, the origin of evil, and the unforgiving nature of mankind.

A summary view of her marriages sheds some light: The first husband threw her down a flight of stairs, breaking her ankle; the second gave her VD; she married the third and promptly left him, running off to Europe during the years she claimed to have married Hart Crane just before his suicide, then lied about her age to marry the fourth, who four years later divorced her upon discovering her lie and realizing that he was twenty years younger than her.

The “Ship” is a second rate cargo/passenger steamer traveling from Veracruz to Bremerhaven in 1932 with a few intermediate stops along the African coast and points north. First Class has an assortment of misfits, and the 876 displaced sugar field workers in steerage are being returned to their native lands in the Canary Islands following the failure of the Cuban sugar market. This ship can stand for the people in our lives and the journey, life itself-- although we may well argue that our circle of friends does not include anyone apparently on the *Ship of Fools*.

Porter appears to have been determined to fill her book with hateful, deceitful, evil characters, even a cat that hates the parrot that hates the monkey that hates the dog that hates the beggar in the village square. We’re left rooting for a few racist bigoted couples that have problems of their own.

Such is the *Ship of Fools*, where even racist bigots are yearning for someone to love them; but it’ll always be about them.

The ship has a community bulletin board designed to provide shipping news and alerts of upcoming social activities but which is used as a belittlement board by the passengers to post anonymous insults of other passengers, ridiculing those in wheel chairs, possessing deformities of one kind or another, and those with special needs.

Superficially, there seems to be one major hypothesis at work here: The total depravity of mankind. We might expect the author in such a work of fiction to hand us the superficial hypothesis and then tease out her own position by the little and larger decisions these characters make. In this book, it is the hope in the heart of the worst that someone might love them, despite all their shortcomings. Each character has hope.

Two six-year old twins race uncontrollably about the ship raising hell in general and doing real damage occasionally for laughs. They throw things into the sea: an expensive keepsake embroidered pillow; a beloved dog near death who happens to walk out of its cabin when the door is left open (the man who jumps in and saves him is drowned); a string of pearls they were trying to steal but threw into the sea when they were caught. There is some evidence that in their spare time they were committing or trying to discover how to commit some form of incest.

The father is a thief and a pimp, the mother a thief and a prostitute. And these are the good people.

The evening of the denouement approaches at a farcical party, and nearly every one of the characters, faced with momentous decision, is already dead drunk, incapable of any thoughtful decision. We get little drunken moments and attempts at love or mayhem, and the participants are left to face their hangovers and the reality of life. The question is: Does redemption and the road to “living happily ever after” really lie at the bottom of a bottle? Has Porter captured life’s roadmap or only her distorted version? Where is the higher truth here?
MAIL CALL IN THE BULLPEN
The Lone Ranger still rides
First, let me say I loved what you wrote about early morning walks with your son and about Lily. So true!
Second, I was going to apologize for not warning you about the Lone Ranger movie but heartened to see you also found the lighter side. Bruce was devastated and ranted all the way home about how they’d desecrated the image of his hero. I found it to be way too long and gory, but I guess I share Johnny Depp's twisted sense of humor, so there were a few really good giggles in there for me. He does funny crazy better than anyone I've ever seen. Jack Nicholson still holds the prize for the other kind.
Third, I wish that publishers liked my writing as well as you do and published it as often!
Thanks again for the entertainment.
**Barbara Burris**

*Obviously, other publishers aren't as smart and discerning as I am.*

Another “New at the U” memory
Ron Hevey's "Being new at the U" in last month's *EI* brought back memories. A different university (Valparaiso in Indiana), but some of the same old traditions. At Valpo in 1955, freshman women became coeds when we were kissed on Student Bridge which spanned the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks. And this had to happen when a train was passing beneath the bridge. It was an earth-shaking experience.

**Jan Kent**

Rafter’s struggle with self-doubt strikes a painful chord
*Coach’s note: Sandy Rafter sent a copy of her article (page one this issue) to Gloria Wheeler prior to its publication. With permission from both, I am printing part of her comments here.*

I sat on the edge of my seat, racing from word to word, in hopes that somewhere the dark cloud would lift and the end of the tunnel be in sight. But sentence after sentence you drug me on, fearful of what might be experienced next. I was overwhelmed with self-doubt! Even as I read your words, I could not overcome it.

How could that be? I am only reading your words, how can it be that the emotions I felt were so real, so frustratingly painful? *How could it be?*

You inserted bits and pieces of hope that lifted me above crashing waves of negative emotion only to have the rug pulled from beneath me. Frantically I tried to hang on to hope, but you flung me without pity back into the midst of the horror of self-doubt.

I struggled with you as you wrote your poem. I felt the agony and waste of war. I longed for the signing of a paper putting it to an end, knowing that it will never be as long as greed rules our priorities. And then, after reading the last word, I sat quietly. I welcomed that last word; it put an end to my agony.

Exhausted from the emotional trauma of self-doubt, I sat and reflected on what I had just experienced. Once again I felt emotion stirring within my soul.

The trip was painful, yet I am thankful I took it. Even today as I send this note your way, I feel the bruises and am somewhat emotionally drained from the experience. I felt your vulnerability and as a reader, experienced it! *The experience was intense!*

That’s my point, Sandy. I felt your vulnerability. It was intense and frightening! You didn't tell us about self-doubt, you made the reader experience it! ... Sandy, I found myself near tears of frustration at the reading of your essay. It is that good.

**Gloria Wheeler**
COACH’S BULLPEN BRIEFS

DeSmet serves up first fudge mystery

Christine DeSmet has launched her new “Fudge Shop Mystery” series with a winner, First-Degree Fudge. She read from her tasty cozy and fielded questions from a large and enthusiastic crowd at the new Mystery to Me Bookstore in Madison.

Chris is already an award-winning romance and screenplay writer and continues to head up one of the finest adult-ed writing programs in the country through the Division of Continuing Studies at the UW-Madison.

Okay, we love her. Big deal, right?

Hey, the Washington Post loves her-- and that is a big deal!

Here’s their review, by Kathy Blumenstock:

First-Degree Fudge, by Christine DeSmet (Obsidian; paperback, $7.99), will tingle your sweet tooth at the first mention of Cinderella Pink Fudge, even if this pastel treat may be a murder weapon. Ava Oosterling, sharing counter space in her grandfather’s live-bait store, envisions her confection in Hollywood swag bags if a visiting former movie star gives it her blessing at a local gala. Instead, Rainetta Johnson becomes “a fudge fatality.” Suspects: Ava, her former fiance, and a young assistant. But Ava is baffled by an ingredient added to that fatal bite: a stolen diamond. Another victim surfaces, along with Ava’s pink candy garnished by another hot rock. Is this a flavor to die for? DeSmet includes the recipe for Ava’s creation, but go easy on the edible glitter.

Holland’s book can change your life

Deb Holland joyfully announces the publication of her first book-- the product of her lifetime of experience and education-- Make Your Destiny Your Reality.

We’ll have a lot more to say about it when we get a copy. Meanwhile, check out her fine website, which includes her destiny blog: www.debhollandphd.com/

Big score for Little Free Library

Author Peter Gilmour visited recently, always a happy event. He sweetened the deal by bringing a bagful of great books-- 14 of ’em-- to donate to the Little Free Library of Felton Place. This is the largest donation in our history.

In other LFL news, a rash of thefts in the Madison area (someone cleaning out the whole library and selling the books to used bookstores) has prompted us to put this label in each book:

This book is a gift to the Little Free Library of Felton Place. You may keep it, pass it along, or return it as you wish. NOT FOR RESALE.

Bookstore owners, please DO NOT BUY THIS BOOK.

THE WRITER’S POET

Writing 101

At last I’ve learned a Writer’s Rule they didn’t teach in writing school:

Be sure to make the present tense (which, I agree, makes lots of sense),

with twisting plot until the verdict.

But make the ending future perfect.

Craig W. Steele
And now, at long last...

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF LILIANA LENORE COOK

This month’s episode:

Lily goes to the zoo

Photo by Jake McLaughlin
Ms. Cook’s dress courtesy of Molly Daudelin