In last month’s scintillating, best ever (at least until the next one) issue, I lamented having had to cut several wonderful pieces in the interest of keeping your newsletter to a “manageable” 25 pages. I worried I might either have to start rotating columnists on an every-other-month basis or cut less-popular features to clear up room. Towards the latter end, I promised a readership survey this month to determine which features qualified as “less-popular.”

There’s no survey this month. Changed my mind-- the prerogative of old men. editors, and old-men editors.

With the help of some marvelous feedback from two readers, and one in particular, I got back in touch with the reasons why I started this newsletter in the first place (and the driving force, along with needing to pay the bills, for my becoming a writing teacher so long ago), namely:

1. I see as one of my missions in life to nurture writers as well as entertaining and edifying readers. My self-chosen patron saint is Barnabas, “son of encouragement,” and I see myself as a cheerleader/coach on the sidelines exhorting the athletes to get the best possible performance out of themselves.

“Saving space” in cyberspace?
I also realize that there’s no reason to impose an arbitrary limit on the number of “pages.” It’s not as if I have to pay extra for paper, ink, and postage, right? I don’t want to burden you with too much to wade through-- I know you’re busy--but I also respect that you’re free to choose to read, skim, and skip as you please. If you don’t want to read something, you can vault right over it and get on to the next opportunity.

So, my new editorial policy is my old editorial policy: I’ll run the best stuff I can each month, to the limits of my time and energy. If I choose not to run something you’ve submitted, I’ll let you know why and offer suggestions for improvement if possible and if such suggestions are welcome.

That doesn’t mean I don’t want to hear from you with your comments about your newsletter. I read and take seriously every comment I get, and you help me make future decisions on content. If you like something, please tell me. If you hate something-- or simply find yourself skipping it each issue-- tell me that, too. If you’d like to see something in the newsletter that isn’t in it now, I’d love to hear about it.

You know where to find me, right?

and while I’ve got the floor...
Coming soon: our “October classic”

Since this is issue #58 of your newsletter, in two more issues, by my calculations, issue #60 should appear around October 1.

So what? you ask, as indeed you should.

Again resorting to lower math (60 issues divided by 12 issues per year = ), this will mark our Fifth Anniversary!

Who’s been on the team since issue one? I’d love to hear from you. Who goes back to the olden days (you know, paper and ink) of Creativity Connection? How far back? CC ran for 80 issues, which means, since it was a quarterly, that it lasted for--(hold on-- more math, four issues a year, four into 80 = -That can’t be right!)

I’d love to get your comments and perhaps even a question or two for a one-time only SAQs of the Editor-in-COACH column. Don’t worry if you don’t have any questions, I’ll just make some up (and re-title it NAQS of the Editor-in-COACH). Let me hear from you at the same old stand: mcook@des.wisc.edu.

Barnabas Cook
Editor-in-Coach
mcook@des.wisc.edu

So, what’s so special about August, 2014?

This August contains 5 Fridays (1, 8, 15, 22, 29), 5 Saturdays (2, 9, 16, 23, 30) and 5 Sundays (3, 10, 17, 24, 31). This happens only once every 823 years. The Chinese call it 'Silver pockets full'
I was tuned in one night to a Golden Oldies radio station when I heard some Doo-wop music from my past. The more I listened, the more I became interested in the history of the music, and, as a writer, in the lyrics, the group names, and the onomatopoeia of the nonsense syllables. If you're familiar with "16 Candles," "Earth Angel," "Why Do Fools Fall in Love," "Blue Moon," "Get a Job," and "In the Still of the Night," you've heard Doo-wop music.

The first wave of Doo-wop singers emerged from African-American communities in the late 1940s, their way paved by the slow songs and four part harmony of the Ink Spots and Mills Brothers. Young boys and men, some from church choirs or with a background of gospel music, harmonized a cappella on the street corners of the larger cities -- New York, Philly, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Detroit, and Los Angeles. They haunted record companies and entered amateur singing contests in their quest to be recognized and offered a recording contract to fame.

Their style of rhythm and blues had a steady beat, and the lyrics were simple and mostly about love. Each group consisted of three to six singers with the bass providing a strong underlying pulse of sound and syllables or a solo part between verses, the tenor singing the main melody, and the others echoing and blending.

With no money for instruments, the voices mimicked them with nonsense syllables such as: doo-wop-a-doo, ooo-we, yip yip yip, bom bom de bom, oh doh doh de doh, she-doo, doo-wop-a waddah doo.

The groups were constantly on the lookout for "echo chambers" where they could practice and enhance their sound: bathrooms, locker rooms, hallways, the subway, and under bridges.

Different waves of Doo-wop groups included the predominantly Italian-American singers (The Capris, The Classics, The Elegants, The Mystics); the Schoolboy groups with early teen singers and a high tenor lead (Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers, The Kodaks); and the Pop Doo-wop groups who sought a polished sound to appeal to a larger audience (The Duprees, The Echoes, The Fleetwoods, The Temptations). Novelty groups sang more humorous and uptempo songs (The Coasters, "Yakety,Yak") while The Tin Pan Alley Doo-wop groups included songs by schooled composers with expanded instrumentation (The Chiffons, The Tokens). Also on the scene were female groups (The Cookies, The Blue Bells) and the Pseudo Doo-wop singers who sang with the Doo-wop style but without the group format (Don and Juan), (Classifications by musicologist, Frank W. Hoffmann)

The young singers often were cheated by unscrupulous promoters who took advantage of their inexperience with phony contracts and bookings for which they were never paid. Yet, during the racially segregated '50s, the bitterest pill to swallow for all the Doo-wop groups was having their version of songs ignored but covered by white singers who received publicity and airtime to become hits.

Eventually, Doo-wop music evolved so much that the original elements gradually vanished. Solo singers became more popular and harmony moved to the background where strong bass and tenor voices were no longer needed. Nonsense syllables were not necessary with instrumentation. Melodies became more varied and complex. The distinctive a cappella groups no longer existed except as headliners at oldies revivals.

As a singer, the groups have always been alive to me because of their exquisite harmony. As a writer, I am as intrigued now by the nonsense sounds as I was when my mother long ago quacked and oinked and mooed her way through Old McDonald's Farm as she read to me. The vocal "shang-a-lang" guitar sounds and "doomph doomph" imitation of a plucked bass are creativity I have yet to explore as a writer. As a poet, the names of the groups and recording companies are on my list of wonderful sounds to trip through: --Story continues next page

**Songs are great teachers of rhythm and emotions to writers, and I know the Doo-wop songs provided me with a setting to dream into. The music moved me — more than I have even come close to describing here. The tempos didn't drag, but the ones I sang to myself were from the school gym, lights low, the beat pulsating through two bodies swaying and pressing slow-dance close.**

I wrote my own romantic endings to the songs as I lay my head against his shoulder, or pretended I was doing that. I played the 45 Doo-wop records over and over in my bedroom as I wrote in my diary, and I fast danced around the room, swaying and stepping until my mother called upstairs wanting to know what I was doing. I cried to the words when I felt forlorn. The singers told me what I felt before I knew myself. Young love: not so foolish nor silly, but sad and vibrant and happy and a story for me to hear and feel and tell.

But, my words here are a monotone; you have to listen to Doo-wop. Listen to The Five Satins sing “In the Still of the Night.” Listen to The Moonglows sing "The Ten Commandments of Love." Listen to The Skyliners, "Since I Don't Have You." Hear the Flamingos sing that "Lovers Never Say Goodbye." Feel the singer's hopes and your own, and listen to that beat.

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**But I Remember You**

You don't remember me, Gloria, Why Don't You Write Me, Little Darling, Let Me Show You Around My Heart, doo-wop ah doo, wop ah doo, oh, oh, The Heartbeats, Flamingos, Angels listened in, The Sheppards, Marcels, Pastels, Shirelles, a zoom The Cadillacs and Edsels, Fleetwoods, doo-wop ah doo, oh falsetto flying high. The Swallows, Larks, and Ravens, Crows, The Orioles, Oh baby, I Only Have Eyes for You, oh, dance with me to The Book of Love, ooh, ooh, ooh, doo-wop a doo, thumpa, thumpa, Pain in My Heart, Crazy for You, The Harptones, Sha-lang-da-lang, Ooo-we, Little Girl of Mine, You're So Fine, Rama Lama Ding Dong, Daddy's Home for The ABCs of Love, Fool Fool Fool, Be Mine, The Valentines, Oh, oh, Earth Angel, This I Swear, Little Anthony, I've Got Tears on My Pillow, oh, oh, Since I Can't Have You, In the Still of the Night, doh doh de dooby doh, I saw You Standing Alone, A Thousand Miles Away, A Kiss from Your Lips, Sh-Boom, Goodnight, Sweetheart, Blue Moon

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**The Five Satins**
In olden days, when a glimpse of stocking was looked on as something shocking, women hid their graphic novels and read them in privacy. At book club meetings they chose the classics for discussion. Today, their granddaughters might flaunt on social media having read the erotic *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

Did you know that children are reading graphic novels? I didn’t, but don’t be misled; this is quite different. On a two hour car trip to the wilds of West Virginia, I sat between two granddaughters who were reading instead of wanting to play road games with me, which I enjoy, but seeing them read is pleasurable, too.

Grace, age 11 (photo at left), was reading a graphic novel. This genre features stories told through pages that resemble a comic book, with pictures and dialogue divided into grids. The themes are the same as other books for children: growing up, responsibility, adventure, fantasy, science fiction, humor, the whole gamut. The goal of the format is to grab reluctant readers. Grace is not a reluctant reader and reads beyond grade level, but like any child, she appreciates something easy and quick.

The book she read that day, *Smile*, has 224 pages, but she finished it during our trip. The story is about a sixth grader who injures her two front teeth. She goes through a lengthy process of surgery, a retainer with fake teeth, awkward headgear, and finally, at the end, she smiles again. Lesson learned—you, too, will get through the ordeal of wearing braces.

Because Sarah, age 10 (photo at right), has Down syndrome she has mostly read “kid stuff,” short on text, long on illustrations. But her reading ability is now beyond that, and she was recently pleased to receive a chapter book.

These transitional books feature stories that are long enough to be divided into chapters but not as lengthy or complicated as a young adult novel. In addition, they look like an older child’s book, so Sarah feels as if she’s reading what other kids her age are reading. That day in the car she read *Nancy Clancy, Super Sleuth*. She now and then asked me what a particular word means.

Later, at the mall, Grace was waylaid on her errand for a cover for her new cell phone by a comic book kiosk. That was an eye-opener for me. These are not the comic books of my day. For one thing, they cost about four dollars each, while mine were a dime and purchased at Baxter’s Newsstand. These comic books are fancier, better quality paper, sleek and attractive, magazine size. What kid could resist? I think Mom felt a touch of nostalgia, too; she purchased several with proper content for her girls.

Back home, both girls spent quiet time reading comic books (when they’re often on their iPads instead).

By the way, if you’re interested in the comic book industry from the early days, the 1920s and beyond, you might enjoy Michael Chabon’s Pulitzer Prize novel, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*. 

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**MEANDERING WITH MADONNA**

**MADONNA DRIES CHRISTENSEN**

**Not your mother’s graphic novels**
What a difference a letter makes

Thanks to Steve Born

The Washington Post's Mensa Invitational once again invited readers to take any word from the dictionary, alter it by adding, subtracting, or changing one letter, and supply a new definition. Here are the winners:

1. Cashtration (n.): The act of buying a house, which renders the subject financially impotent for an indefinite period of time.

2. Ignoranus: A person who's both stupid and an asshole.

3. Bozone (n.): The substance surrounding stupid people that stops bright ideas from penetrating. The bozone layer shows little sign of breaking down in the near future.

4. Foreploy: Any misrepresentation about yourself for the purpose of getting laid.

5. Giraffiti: Vandalism spray-painted very, very high.

6. Sarchasm: The gulf between the author of sarcastic wit and the person who doesn't get it.

7. Inoculatte: To take coffee intravenously when you are running late.


9. Karmageddon: It's like, when everybody is sending off all these really bad vibes, right? And then, like, the Earth explodes and it's like, a serious bummer.

10. Decafalon (n): Going through a whole day consuming only things that are good for you.

11. Glibido: All talk and no action.

12. Dopeler Effect: The tendency of stupid ideas to seem smarter when they come at you rapidly.

13. Arachnoleptic Fit (n.): The frantic dance performed just after you've accidentally walked through a spider web.

14. Beelzebug (n.): Satan in the form of a mosquito, that gets into your bedroom at three in the morning and cannot be cast out.

15. Caterpallor (n.): The color you turn after finding half a worm in the fruit you're eating.
I make fast and firm judgments about celebrities—you know, those folks we all think we know even though we’ve never met them. Often those judgments are quite negative.

Take Robin Thicke. (Those of you waiting for the Henny Youngman punchline, “Please,” will have to look elsewhere. This is not that kind of column.)

You know Robin Thicke, don’t you, that nice Alan Thicke’s son, the one who was obviously born feeling entitled, the Son of a Star, a real jerk off the old block. He recently released (or did it escape) that salacious video/song “Blurred Lines.” (The title may have referred to the wavy censorship screens used to hide women’s otherwise bared private parts in the video).

When I heard that he was going to be the subject of the profile on the CBS Sunday Morning program I was watching, I reached for the channel changer. (Hmmm—local public affairs shows, reruns of Walker, Texas Ranger, the cooking channel, 16 and Pregnant, Hoarders...). Oh, heck, I’ll give Thicke a go. He’d just released a new album of 14 songs all based on trying to win back his estranged wife, Paula Patton, who apparently got fed up with his antics after he became a STAR. Maybe it would be entertaining watching him make a fool out of himself.

Besides I’d been working on a theory, and this would be a good test. I’ve been finding that when I take in one of these celebrity profiles, I generally like the people, despite my previous negative opinion. (Cue the Teddy Bears singing their hit, “To Know Him Is To Love Him”).

So I watched.

I encountered a personable, funny, self-effacing young man who seemed truly humbled by his recent indiscretions. I also discovered that he sang some mighty fine R&B and that he had bounced around, looking for that Big Hit, for a long time before striking it rich—and blowing up his life—with the aforementioned blurred video.

In short, I liked him.

Another extreme example, from the same wonderful CBS Sunday Morning show the previous week: Melissa McCarthy. Just from seeing previews of her television show and trailers for her movies, I was quite certain I loathed her. By the time the interview was over, I’d decided she’d be really neat to chat with—funny, self-effacing, and downright nice.

Happens every time with the quest stars on the amazingly good NPR “news quiz”/comedy show, Wait, Wait, Don’t Tell Me, with host Peter Sagal. I can’t get over how funny, charming, and generally appealing every guest turns out to be.

The theory isn’t foolproof, of course. (Nothing is. There’s always a better fool just around the next corner.) I’ve watched, listened to, or read some interviews, going in with “What a putz” expectations, and coming out thinking “What a putz!” I do not think I will EVER like Henry Kissinger, on TV, radio, in print, or, God forbid, in person. But he’s the exception that tries the rule.

And I’ve never endured an interview with even one Kardashian or the one and only Miley Cyrus, so perhaps I haven’t really given my theory a proper test.

But clearly I’ve learned a valuable lesson. Beware of first impressions. Get to know folks, and you’ll find most of them to be decent, intelligent, maybe even fascinating folk.

Naw. I still form negative first impressions all the time—entertainers, politicians, folks I meet briefly at social gatherings, you name it.

But I have learned not to trust those first impressions, and that’s progress.
FOR THE LOVE OF WORDS
ESTHER M. LEIPER–ESTABROOKS

The Provocative Palinode

A palinode refutes a position taken by an earlier poet, following the pattern the first writer chose. An early example comes circa 700 BC when Stechichorus (sounds like a dinosaur!) wrote a poem blaming Helen for the Trojan War, then an angry god blinded him for his alleged sacrilege. Stechichorus prudently recanted with a fresh poem and got his sight restored. Much more recently, Gellett Burgess became so notorious with his famed purple cow that his other poetry was ignored; thus he wrote this refutation:

I never saw a purple cow, / I hope I never see one.
But I can tell you anyhow / I’d rather see than be one.
Ah yes, I wrote the Purple Cow; / I’m sorry now I wrote it,
But I’ll tell you anyhow / I’ll kill you if you quote it.

Ogden Nash carried on:
I never saw a vitamin, / I never hope to see one,
But I can tell you anyhow / I’d rather C than B 1.

Next, Mark Burds, a.k.a. Rockin’ Red, returned to bovines:
With purple paint I sprayed a cow, / A shifty-eyed old mean one.
Were Burgess living here right now / He could say he’d seen one.

Besse Loo Hartskert, an Ohio poet-friend, wrote the first half of the following palinode, and I finished it.

BEACH SUMMER
One day I sought a private place; warm sand and sea alluring,
But after dozing on my towel, being alone proved boring.
I’d gained a tan, a Dapper Dan, all ready now for action.
But any clue what might ensue, I didn’t guess a fraction.
I hoped to score on this gold shore with beauties all exciting,
Who smiled at me so eagerly, but who knew sharks were biting?

BEACH BUMMER!
A swimming show-off, careless; I was sadder soon but wiser.
Now indeed I plead you heed; shun chomp of shark-incisor!
I’m smarter now, if lesser, since the beasts latched onto me
And by ignorance I proved, alas, most truly “Out to sea.”
One ate my arm and one my leg, but discretion says no more,
So I shun salt, no more gestalt, plus stranded here on shore!

With lyricism, but no humor, Elizabethan poet Edmund Bolten wrote dual sonnets titled simply

PALINODE
As withereth the primrose by the river,
As fadeth summer’s sun from gliding fountains,
As vanished the light-blown bubbles ever,
As melteth snow upon the mossy mountains,
So melts, so vanishes, so fades, so withers
The rose, the shine, the bubble and the snow
Of praise, pomp, glory, joy—which short life gathers--
Fair praise, vain pomp, sweet glory, brittle joy,’
The withered primrose by the mourning river,
The faded summer’s sun from weeping fountains,
The light-blown bubble, vanish-ed forever,

--Poem continues next page
The molten snow upon the naked mountains
Are emblems that the treasures we up-lay
Soon wither, vanish, fade, and melt away.
For as the snow, whose lawn did overspread
The ambitious hills, which giant-like did threat
To piece the heavens with each aspiring head
Naked and bare doth leave each craggy seat;
When-as the bubble, which did empty fly
The dalliance of the un-dis-cern-ed wind,
On whose calm, rolling waves it did rely,
Hath shipwreck made, where it did dalliance find;
And when the sunshine, which dissolved the snow,
Colored the bubbles with a pleasant vary
And made the rathe and pleasing primrose grow,
Swarth clouds withdrew (which longer time do tarry.)
Oh, what is praise, pomp, glory, joy, but so
As shine by fountains, bubbles, flowers of snow?

The language may be old-fashioned, but images are vivid, and keep me intrigued. The next verse I wrote before ever hearing the term Palinode. The four-line “Ways of seeing,” which also includes contrasting view-points, first appeared in ALIVE! for Young Teens.

“Air is only wind slowed down; clouds are merely water.”
So says my science teacher, but hasn’t looking taught her
Wind can be a thousand things plus clouds can form a picture?
She sees everything one way that to me is such a mixture!

Don’t be intimidated by the palinode—or any form. Experiment, have fun and surprise yourself!

ESTHER’S NEWS

Call of Abraham’s Kin, New and Selected Poems, by Barbara Hantman, with Esther’s illustrations, has gone to a Second Edition, and Barbara’s new release, Matzoh in the Metropolis, features more of Esther’s art.

Another view on negative reviews, criticism in general

“Social Q’s,” Philip Galanes, NY7, Sunday, July 6, 2014

Coach’s note: This column, along with the wonderful names in the wedding announcements, draw me to the Sunday Styles section every week. You already knew it wasn’t my finely honed sense of fashion, right?

A Poet in Training
My 16-year-old son is fanatical about poetry. Every moment not spent at his summer job of hanging out with friends is dedicated to writing verse. The trouble is, it’s not very good. As his father, do I have an obligation to tell him?

ANONYMOUS

Mr. Galanes responds:
Who died and made you Wallace Stevens? Your teenage son is not running with gangs or boozing it up. He has summer employment and a social life. And on top of all this, he applies himself diligently to his great passion. I’m ready to induct him into the Good Kid Hall of Fame. And your complaint is that his couplets aren’t good? Come on, Dad! The world is going to tell him (and you) soon enough about the quality of his verse. Find something supportive to say, even if it’s only to admire his hard work—which, incidentally, will stand him in good stead in all of his pursuits. (You might also steer him toward a poetry workshop to hone his native gifts.)
Rodney’s plea
Bill Spevacek

Good citizens are well informed,
We were taught in school.
Democracy thrives when voters know facts,
And dispute what’s in the news.
But respectful discussion today has vanished,
Civility’s a disappearing art.
In our polarized nation “You turkey!” is closest
Many come to showing some heart.

Hard as I try, I just can’t buy
The philosophy of Senator Cruz,
The chairmanship of Darrell Issa,
Or Paul Ryan’s economic views.
History will be unsympathetic to
George Bush and Richard Chaney;
When their life achievements are recorded,
Constructive results: not many.
The Koch brothers’ political purchasing power
Is subject to debate.
Some believe corporations are people,
Though soulless and without a state.
Palin and Limbaugh maintain a following,
And are still considered serious.
Birthers and deniers of global warming
Are as nutty as Wayne LaPierre is.

“Don’t shoot the messenger,” we are told.
And I can’t afford a new Dell,
But when I read what’s happening in the world,
I get madder than hell.
Many read the very same news,
And conclude my conclusions are wrong.
So let’s follow the plea of Rodney King:
“Can we all get along?”

Sounds and Silences
Norma J. Sundberg

Listen,
Can you hear the ambulance siren,
the moaning freight train,
Have you tuned out
the mower as it ebbs and flows,
past the apartment complex?
Do you look up for
the emergency helicopter’s
whirring blades,
The screaming jet’s drone
as it sharply banks, aiming
for the airport?
Are you desensitized to sounds that
drown your feelings? Can you be
awakened by the gentle
gurgling of a baby, the music of sweet
birdsong?
Or Startled in the midst of
Deadly silence?

Solace
Tom Crawford

If you’re lonely, say,
and nothing’s gone
as you’ve planned,
and all your mail
is screaming:
“Give us money,”
or threatening
to turn off your water,
turn to birds. Especially
in the backyard
or along an old,
frontage road
seldom traveled
you can pull over
just about anywhere.
The Red-wing
loves the barbwire fence
it whistles from,
or the green reeds
it bends down
when it lands.
You’re not giving up,
really, but finally,
giving in.
Man Behind the Mask
John Manesis

Moe Berg, born in 1902, a son of immigrants, studied at Princeton, obtained a Colombia law degree, spoke eight languages, went on to be a big leaguer from 1923-'39, a back up catcher most of the time with a rifle arm, a BB gun bat and a .243 lifetime average stat.

While on a baseball tour in Japan barnstorming in ’34 with the likes of Gehrig and Ruth, he took photos from a hotel roof which overlooked Tokyo bay, presented them to the OSS, the CIA precursor, and during WWII this agency assigned him to trouble spots in Yugoslavia, Italy and South America. Conversant in a variety of subjects, including philology and physics, he attended conferences, comfortable in the presence of intellectual notables and in 1939 answered posers with ease on the quiz show, Information, Please.

Casey Stengel, a long time manager and keen judge of zany characters, described him as eccentric but intelligent, “the strangest fella” he had ever met.

After the war, on several occasions the CIA turned down his applications, convinced he was unsuitable for any further investigative activity.

He considered an autobiography but nixed the plan in its infancy after learning the co-writer thought he was Moe Howard of The Three Stooges.

Once a handsome, natty dresser, he courted ladies but remained a bachelor and for years lived with his brother, Sam, a physician said to be a patient man who served Moe with eviction notices to get him to vacate the premises. He spent his final years in obscurity, a loner living with his sister, rent free.

After his death in 1972, she accepted on his behalf the award he had rejected in 1945, the Medal of Freedom, offered him by President Truman.

Was Moe Berg a sleuth, a patriot searching for the truth, an early version of Inspector Clouseau who didn’t know when it was time to go, a linguist in the wrong profession, another catcher in a long procession who couldn’t hit a curve or change of pace, an intellect who never found his place? Was it a simple either or, or all of these, and more?
The man who really stopped the stagecoach
Coach
for Yakima Canutt

Remember when the fearless rider came thundering out of
godknows where, heaven bent for leather, drawing even
with the runaway stagecoach, then the first span of
horses? Who leapt from one horse to another, who
straddled two horses, who--

didn’t our hearts stop?--

leaped to the second span and then to the lead horses and,
just as it seemed sure he would be able to stop the manic charge,
slipped away, between and under the horses, dangling for an awful eternity before
being swept under the monstrous hooves and expelled out the back of the coach, surely dead.

You never knew him, this silent hero (influenza had left him without a voice in childhood), born
“Enos Edward” but called “Yak,” raised on a ranch on Penewawa Creek in the Snake River
Hills of Washington State. He broke a bronc at 11 and was World’s Best Bronco Buster at 17
and learned to take a punch and perform the Crupper Mount and get shot from a horse and jump
from a cliff onto the back of a horse--

driving our hearts into our throats--

no strings, no wires, no computer simulations, just Yak.

Remember then how John Wayne, riding shotgun, while Andy Devine pulled vainly on the
reins, leapt onto the first span of horses, and then the second, and finally the lead horses, and
bydamn turned those runaways from destruction?
But wait. That was Yak, too, back from the dead!
He was John Wayne, stopping the runaways. He was Clark Gable, driving the buckboard while
Atlanta burned. He taught Charlie Heston how to drive a chariot. In Spartacus, and Ivanhoe, and
even Cat Ballou, Yak was there. And he never spoke a mumblin’ word.

When the sheriff shot the renegade Indian off his horse, Yak was the sheriff and the injun, No
man shot himself off of more horses than Yak.

Folks assumed he was a real Indian, but his people were Scotch Irish and German,
and that’s just the least little way Yak fooled us.
Babette
Annette Van Veen Gippe

When Mama said, "Go to your room!"
Babette was there to end my gloom.
When I was s'posed to go to bed,
    but wanted to read instead…
We'd tip toe to the bookshelf silently,
And into the closet to read quietly.
Outside my room, Daddy called, "Are you sleeping?"
We never replied. We just kept reading.
When we were sure he'd gone away…
We'd run to bed and begin to play.
Under the covers (with our teddy bear friends),
We'd be up in the woods camping again.
I had the measles and my temperature soared,
Past 98 to one hundred and four.
My room was a jungle with all sorts of creatures.
One of Babette's outstanding features…
Was that she was never afraid.
She just held my hand and we prayed.
Those days were very long ago.
But here is a secret that nobody knows.
Babette was left behind for a while.
I went out in the world "grown up" style.
But, I found out soon that could not be.
I needed my secret friend to comfort me.
Being grown up's not always fun.
There are certain times you need someone.
To listen to your side of the argument,
For all those things you should've said.
To share all of your secret dreams.
To help you plan devious schemes.
To strengthen you when your man's away.
To hold your hand and help you pray.
I know that you might think me ill…
    but, my friend Babette is with me still.

Keeper
Sandy Rafter

My head drooped over the keyboard,
fingertips a row of els and dees --
struggling awake, slumping to sleep.
I expected a wisp of cloud,
a trace of cobweb lace,
a soaring tip of eagle's wing.
But my ghost didn't float, nor fly.
nor was she fragile, nor divine.
She called from the living room,
my Mother, her humor sublime.
Ache, memory, wish, I glimpsed
her shape around the corner,
 fleeting as a high piano plink.
She'd shushed me to bed
so many times I knew the words.
I had assumed we'd meet in grander times.
Was she always near,
hovering through my life?
I blushed.
I lay in bed as though thirteen
and worried ills and hopes to flight
with fingered piles of blanket pills
I’d dream as fortress for the night.

The Writer's Poet
Craig W. Steele

Astroglyphs

Innumerable stars, blazing sequins stitched seemingly randomly on the fabric of space-time, enrich our nights with light while tracing constellations of symbolic art in which we claim to see meaning.
Constellations change, depending on our perspectives, but the meaning somehow doesn't— if only we understood the message encrypted by the pictographs stenciled within the darkness.
Going to Pot

Thanks to Perry Stone
Dedicated to Colorado and Washington State

Why is the roach clip called a roach clip?
Because pot holder was taken.

How do you get a one-armed stoner out of a tree?
Wave.

What do you get when you eat marijuana?
A pot belly.

What do you call a pot smoker with two spliffs?
Double jointed.

How do you know when you have smoked enough pot?
When you start looking around for the directions on how to use the lighter.

How do you know you’re a pothead?
You studied for days for a urine test

What do you call a pothead that doesn't inhale?
Mr. President.

How do fish party?
Seaweed.

Why did the pot head plant cheerios?
He thought they were donut seeds.
These little irritations I call pet peeves add up. Frustration escalates as it becomes very clear our medical community exhibits little understanding of, or interest in, applying common sense to patient's needs in some areas.

Take chairs. XXL, XXXL, AND XXXXL bottoms won't fit in these smaller buttock torture chambers called chairs placed in waiting rooms. Nor is there any sympathy for the trouble and embarrassment caused when we try to get free of one, if we manage to scrunch ourselves into one in the first place.

I haven't fit in office chairs with arms for a long time. Thus, it became a common practice for me to confiscate Dr. Butler's swivel stool and sit on it. She didn't mind; she would bring in a second stool from another room. Then she started putting me in a room with a comfy kitchen chair. Bless her heart. After two years the clinic replaced their furniture with 'comfortable for all' office furniture.

Dr. Butler said she hoped I appreciated it, because they spent over $600,000 to get that new furniture. Of course the total amount included her new office and lab built onto the end of the hospital in Cassville. It's three times bigger than the old office. It's also $600,000 more inconvenient parking wise and in distance from waiting to examining rooms. But they have nice chairs now to relax in-- after you get to the waiting room, before hiking back to be examined.

Parking merits second place on my 'peeves me' list. At the Wound Center in Springfield, Missouri, the only parking to be found was over a block away. I went home and called the center and told them if I could walk a block I wouldn't need a damn wound center and never went back.

To their credit: They proudly informed me there were little tram cars that came around every 30 minutes, waiting for the damn tram, which old cripples would find nearly impossible.

#3 on my list: Medical office entrances dealing with physically handicapped patients located no less than the farthest distance made possible by property lines. Again giving credit where it's due, one hospital I visited rented electric wheel chairs-- $15 dollars a day. (A day! I should have recognized that as a warning sign.)

They held your driver's license until you returned the chair. I was more than happy to leave my license. Fifteen dollars was well worth the usage, even for only an hour or so. The peeve popped up when I had to change chairs twice and wait a total of 45 minutes between chair changes-- while the chairs received electrical charges.

Last week there was a rare moment when I found parking close by, comfortable chairs to wait in and short distances to the exam rooms. But I first got to see a lot of the waiting room. Waiting doesn't really bother me, but I did heed the proclamation on the receptionist's window:

If you have to wait more than thirty minutes call it to reception's attention.

Mistakenly, I believed that calling an over-lengthy wait to the office manipulator’s attention would bring me priority service. Actually I was put off for an hour and a half after the suggested 30 minutes. Then I shuffled up and noted I had waited over two hours for my 10 o'clock appointment.

"We are so sorry, Mr. Stone!" the receptionist apologized sarcastically. Lifting my records from the rack, she scribbled something on a sticky note before filling out a new appointment card for the next day at 8:00 a.m.. "You should be the first one in tomorrow," she said with a smile.

And no doubt I would be, since the office didn't open until 8:30.

Peeved? Oh yeah, to say the least.

Bless you and yours, Coach,

Ferry
Vivy’s words

I have an eighteen-month-old granddaughter, Vivian Grace, who lives with her parents in Omaha, Nebraska. Distance dictates that we see her in the flesh about every six months. We supplement these visits with an hour Skype visit every two weeks.

Last month we spent four days in Omaha visiting with parents and Vivy. (I didn’t come up with the nickname, her parents did.) Our daughter-in-law, Sandy, had told us how she has taught Vivy sign language to help her communicate. A friend of the parents taught their children sign language and claimed it made a significant difference in their language, reading, and thinking skills.

I was skeptical.

When we arrived, Vivy was in a playful mood and, like any good grandparents, we joined her on the floor to play. Soon she was making these wild motions. Her Mom calmly told us she was signing that she wanted water. I gave Vivy a sippy cup; she smiled and took a long drink. I was dumbfounded. An eighteen-month-old was able to tell me what she wanted without verbal language. She understood thirst, water, and how to ask for the water.

Over the next few days the challenge was to get white bearded grandpa to complete a crash course in sign language, taught by my eighteen-month-old granddaughter.

Vivy can sign for: eat, milk, tired, thank you, please, cookie, all done, and book. These eight words accomplish a lot in the life of a toddler.

One morning Vivy woke very early because she was busy cutting her molar teeth. Her mom was exhausted from being up tending to Vivy during the night. I told Sandy she should return to bed, and I would feed and care for Vivy. I was able to “talk” with Vivy through sign language and understood what she wanted. She had a breakfast of fruit and oatmeal, milk, and water. She would ask for more cereal if hungry, and let me know when she was finished.

I’m no longer a skeptic. Vivy’s life and mine have been enriched by the magic of sign language. I can’t wait to learn what her first spoken sentence will be. My three-year-old grandson’s first complete sentence was: “I like trains you know.” He told me this as he brought me one of his many train books to read to him. Just proves – you never know.

JAN KENT is
THE WORD WHISPERER
‘Shoddy’ has a wooly lineage

The Chicago Tribune keeps providing me with grist for the Word Whisperer mill. It just informed me that “shoddy” was the term for wool rejected for textile manufacturing. It was later recovered and made into cloth that was not durable. That turned the noun into the adjective we know today.
My Edgewood High School class scheduled an off-year summer gathering at a local spot, which precipitated plans for a St. Bernard’s Grade School luncheon. Those dates set, a first cousin and I rustled up an overdue family reunion for my mother’s side. The combination became a 3-Dayathon, an Enduro.

I joined folks I’ve known a lifetime, predictable people you’d think, but more of them were pranksters than I envisioned.

The day of the first gathering an onslaught of Wisconsin mosquitos greeted me. My brother-in-law told me to stay inside as much as possible. “But it’s daytime,” I protested. He assured me that mosquitos were working overtime this summer; they scouted you out, descended on you in squadrons, and carried you off to one of their marshes near Madison.

The St. Bernard’s kids - we refer to ourselves as kids a half century later-- talked family and such. One kid led the discussion about a college stunt that put him in a tight spot when he asked candidate JFK, “What are Jackie’s measurements?” (The question was a fraternity pledge requirement.) JFK’s reply: “I don’t know; go ask her.” What a guy, this ordinary, everyday Harvard elitist. No wonder he became one of our revered presidents.

Next day’s Edgewood gathering was bound to be brats, beer, conversation, and that would do it. No such luck. With the subject of teenage drinking on the table, a few of us admitted that we had frequented a certain workingmen’s club, where we showed up, shut up, and drank up, steeled to show fake beer cards, if need be, handmade from blanks conveniently left on City Hall counters, combined with 25 cent Woolworth photos that made us 18 by our 16th birthday. Bad teenage behavior had been outed.

Other stories came out: One kid had taken the governor’s car for a joy ride around the neighborhood. My cousin’s brother had done pretty much the same - taken fellow seminarians for a ride in the bishop’s car. These stories never made the news.

I looked for an old buddy, who didn’t show. Could be he was still disappointed after all these years, over a prom gone wrong.

As the family began to gather for the next day’s reunion, my cousin showed up hobbled. She’d been clobbered by a tombstone that toppled into her when her sister leaned on it to steady herself on a steep cemetery slope. My cousin assured me she would be OK for the reunion, and she was, black and blue leg and all.

My favorite reunion photo: Izabel holding her 3 week-old brother Zander, my 1st cousin thrice removed.

Three reunions in three days reveal secrets

My major family reunion challenge was, as one cousin put it, “How the heck am I related to all these people?” Simple. Four of us were the first cousins, the rest were first cousins once removed, twice removed, or thrice removed. The rest, grownups, kids, and babies, were 2nd, 3rd and 4th cousins to each other from their POV, depending on the number of generations removed from us, the first cousins. Clear?

My memorable reunion moment, one I particularly enjoyed: a cousin wanted to know about her long passed away mother when she as a youngster. Her eyes lit up when I told her of baths we took in an old washtub, hay we jumped around on in the barn, and records we listened to after we wound the Victrola. We looked up the place on Google maps so that she could zoom in to look at her mother’s home.
ESSAYS ON IMAGES
DEN ADLER
Folk songs I remember

A few weeks ago, friend Vicki Link suggested I accompany her with guitar at the Shawano Folk Festival’s open mic the second weekend in August. “I want to do Larry Penn’s ‘On My Grandma’s Patchwork Quilt’,” she said.

It’s an easy song to learn, so I said yes, and then I decided to schedule myself for the open mic too, and now my fingers are raw from panicked practicing.

Shawano, Wisconsin, northwest of Green Bay, is familiar territory. My wife, Judy, and I started our married life there in 1966, and Eric was born there a year later. We left a year after that, but I learned of the Shawano Folk Festival in 2001, and it’s where I met Mark Dvorak, Larry Penn, Michael Peter Smith, the late Tom Dundee, and other talented singer-songwriters.

Kathy O’Hara and Diana Laffey appeared at the Festival in 2001, and their Old Shoes CD—that I bought and they autographed there—remains one of my favorites. (It’s playing as I write this.) The title song, by O’Hara, includes the lines:
As you get older you see what’s important...
In my weakest hour, feeling lost and alone,
I’ve been strengthened by the love of a friend...
Friendship is like an old pair of shoes.

The second song on the CD, which they sang several times by request at Shawano, is Joel Mabus’s “Ralph and Alice,” in which:
she’s a fool and he’s just a jerk. …
Alice likes the finest of cuisine;
Ralph likes his weenies cooked with beans. …
Everybody knows Alice and Ralph don’t fit …
Alice and Ralph are a split-up waiting to split….
Alice and Ralph, Ralph and Alice,
king and queen in their own little palace,
you pick your partner to suit yourself.
Hilarious, with a lesson.

But Shawano hasn’t seen O’Hara and Laffey since then, and a Google search today brought the news that they held two reunion concerts in Illinois last summer—the first time they had played together in 10 years. There’s a story there.

Folksinger Matt Watroba takes his turn at the mic during the "Goodbye Sing" late Sunday afternoon at the 2012 Shawano Folk Festival.

I’m sure, but it’s a sad one for their fans because O’Hara and Laffey were so great together.

This year’s Shawano Folk Festival will be bittersweet too. Larry Penn will be missing because of illness. He’s in his 80s now and has difficulty getting around.

Vicki and I hope to honor him with an acceptable rendition of “Quilt” in her session, and in mine she and I will sing “It’s Just a Rose”—my favorite Larry Penn song.

“Why do you like that one so much?” Larry growled one night when I requested he sing it.
“Because it’s so simple,” I said. “People keep trying to make something out of nothing, and this song gets away from that.” It’s about a tattoo that a woman is wearing, and a guy keeps suggesting different meanings for it.
‘It’s just a rose,’ she said,
‘it’s nothing more or less.
‘It’s just a thing you get.
‘It’s just a rose.’”

It’s my kind of song, but Larry recorded it only once, on his half of a double-disk set from a Labor Day performance with Utah Phillips at Milwaukee’s Pabst Theater.

I’m planning to do Bob Dylan’s “Girl From the North Country” (“For she once was a true love of mine”), which he sang with Johnny Cash on Dylan’s 1969 Nashville Skyline album, and the late Craig Johnson’s beautiful “Keweenaw Light” (“And if dreams could come true, I’d still be there with you”) that the Premo family’s string-band “White Water” from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula sang years ago at Shawano—
before their kids grew up and became professional musicians on their own.

I’ll probably start with Kris Kristofferson’s “Me and Bobby McGee” to wake people up and end with Steve Goodman’s “City of New Orleans” or Penn’s “Tuscan Red Rose” (a hobos drawing on a railroad car).

So … get your tickets for August 8, 9, and 10 at [www.shawanofestival.com](http://www.shawanofestival.com). You can tell your friends that you saw me back when I performed material I didn’t write.

Well, that’s not totally true. I wrote my introductions to the songs, and I changed some words, making “Sunday Morning Coming Down” a bit straighter than Kristofferson wrote it. His “I’d smoked my brain the night before on cigarettes and songs that I’d been picking” became my “I’d soothed my brain the night before with candle light and songs that I’d been picking.”

No smoking—anything—at my house.

In Memory

James Garner
1928-2014
**Bret Maverick**
**Jim Rockford**
**Lieutenant Robert Hendley**
**Murphy Jones**

**Hahnke Pahnke**
**Ed Pahnke**

It’s enough to curl your hair

“Everyone’s got one.”

Arlene Whymonds the CEO and President at Whymonds thumped on her desk for emphasis.

“Our sales need pepping up. We need a slogan that’ll wow the consumers and sell more curling irons. All you have to do is look at TV commercials to figure that out. So, why doesn’t the Whymonds Curling Iron Company have one? We’re as big as anybody. When are we getting one?” She glared at her assistant. “Call an ad agency, Clementine, now!”

Clementine was about to salute, but she thought better of it. “I’ll get right on it, Ms. Whymonds.”

Upon entering her office, Clementine raced to her desk and called the ad agency. She knew several people there, but one in particular always got fast results.

Taffy Lon, a smooth operator, answered the phone. Clementine explained the situation to Taffy, knowing that if anybody could work up a whiz-bang slogan quickly, it was Taffy.

And so it was that Taffy at Action Advertising got the assignment. She just happened to have naturally wavy hair, but she decided to try the product. No super slogan popped into her head. She began pacing back and forth in her office, thinking.

She took the problem home with her, wracking her brain for just the right slogan that would sell curling irons. Nothing. Taffy went to bed but didn’t sleep. She tossed and turned. At about two o’clock, she sat up.

“That’s it!”

Smiling she fell into a blissful sleep.

The next morning, Taffy phoned Clementine and sang out the slogan with gusto: “Whymonds are a curl’s best friend.”
August 11th will mark mine and my wife, Elizabeth's, two-year anniversary. So I figured for this month's article I'd write about a film that stars a band who wrote some of the all-time greatest love songs. In addition to that, last month marked the film's 50th anniversary.

The Beatles have been in my life since I was very young and remain my favorite band. My wife and I recently saw a screening of *A Hard Day's Night*, the same restored print that is on the new Criterion Collection Blu Ray. It looked and sounded fantastic on the big screen. We also saw Paul McCartney live last year, the best concert we have ever seen.

Shortly after The Beatles appeared on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, with Beatlemania in full bloom, director Richard Lester wanted to make a film with the band. They had only 16 weeks to shoot, and the film at first was made primarily so United Artists could get a soundtrack deal. They began filming in March and had to be in theaters by July.

With such a tight schedule, the film is quite an achievement and remains my favorite film musical. The film follows the Fab Four for a day during which they are to perform on television. We get a lot of them having fun, playing their songs, dealing with Paul's "clean" onscreen grandfather, played by the very entertaining Wilfrid Brambell, doing press interviews, running from mobs of fans, and other Beatle things.

The music is obviously superb, including songs such as "I Should Have Known Better," "Can't Buy Me Love," "If I Fell," "And I Love Her," "Tell Me Why," and "She Loves You." Some say this film created the music video, and it's easy to see why. Richard Lester pioneered a new style of filmmaking.

There's one shot during "And I Love Her" where the camera does a 360 degree pan around Paul McCartney and ends with a light shining into the camera with Paul's head silhouetted. It's a gorgeous shot, but when the film was screened for the studio, the executives thought it was a mistake. Richard Lester replied that they had spent the whole morning trying to get the light lined up the way they did.

The Beatles interact with each other and the rest of the cast so well and so smoothly, you forget that they had never acted before this film. Also they are really funny. The film is not only a great musical, but also a great comedy.

The scene where the band attends an interview is great satire. The Beatles don't answer the questions with typical answers and poke fun at the "mania" surrounding them. The iconic opening sequence has them running away from a mob of fans. If you look closely, you'll see that George Harrison trips and then Ringo Starr falls on him while John Lennon looks back and laughs. After the two Beatles fall over, you can spot a fan stopping the crowd, so that George and Ringo can recover. It's something like this that makes the film unique and not just another generic product of fame. This wasn't intentional, but Lester kept it in the film.

The Beatles helped shape popular rock music, and this groundbreaking film introduced a new style of filmmaking. I highly recommend picking up the Criterion Collection Blu Ray or DVD. It includes a lot of great extras and a new Mono audio track for the film that sounds great. If you are a Beatles fan, it's a must own and a must see for any film fan.
THE SWIFT REVIEW

JOHN SWIFT

The Goldfinch not worthy of a Pulitzer

I really hate to disclose my shallowness by slamming another Pulitzer Prize winner, but I’m starting to wonder if these judges have really ever read these books.

This book is not a fun read, or good to read, or life-changing (unless you want to become a drug addict) or any of those descriptors people use when they recommend a book. It has few uplifting moments, when ordinary people go out of their way to help their fellow man, and I wasn’t excited about the level of writing—quite ordinary. Not at all what I want to see in a Pulitzer Prize Winner.

Not to mention that the author directly addresses the reader late in the book about the meaning of art. Pulleeze!

There is actually a painting of a goldfinch called, I guess, “The Goldfinch.” In the book, a young man is taken by his mother to see this painting at a gallery. He becomes enthralled with a young lady escorted by an old man there for the same purpose. When a terrorist blows up the art gallery, the mother and the old man are killed, but before he dies he convinces the young man to steal the painting, which he does.

The young man attempts to hide the painting but is a great failure at this as well as at most things in life—of which we are treated to some 14 years and 700 pages of doing drugs and dealing with low-lifes, guns, and murder.

The central question might be, “Will the guy get the girl in the end?” That’s answered three quarters of the way through the book. So then the question might be, “What happens to the painting?” A book with two central questions should never be eligible for the Pulitzer Prize.

We can argue whether the central question all along had to do with the painting, but I claim that’s not why anyone writes a book, or reads a book, to see what might happen to a purloined painting. They read to see if the guy gets the girl.

I’m not going to bother you with any more plot points. Think painting, girl, drugs, and all that goes with drugs, like lowlifes, guns, and murder. That’s the book, along with the ordinary writing. Kind of like this review.

Check it out:

Kid’s Imagination Train

Randi Lynn Mrvos

For more than five years, the children’s magazine market has been shrinking. Stories for Children magazine and the educational website Viatouch recently closed their doors. It’s a shame because through Viatouch, children had access to outstanding nonfiction that covered a wide range of school subjects. Stories for Children offered fiction, nonfiction, poems and puzzles. Because kids had fewer choices to read online and writers had fewer places to publish, I decided to develop a children’s online magazine.

Kid’s Imagination Train debuted in 2013. It’s a free online magazine for ages 5 – 12. Here children can read stories, illustrate their favorite features, and have their pictures published online. Each month, the magazine publishes fiction, nonfiction, a book review, and a puzzle or a lesson plan and activity.

Running the magazine involves creating a cover design, reviewing and editing submissions, communicating with writers, formatting text and illustrations for the magazine pages, and doing a photo shoot with my finicky cat (but Ollie is such a great model!) The staff includes Donna Smith, an outstanding book reviewer and marketing director.

We invite you to take a look at KIT (http://www.kidsimaginationtrain.com). At this time, we are sponsoring our first writing contest for kids ages 7 - 12. There is no entry fee for participants. The theme is “Holiday Stories.” The winning story will be published in the 2014 issue. In addition, the winner will be able to select a book that has been reviewed on KIT. More details are on our homepage.

Donna and I are excited about promoting reading, learning, and creativity. We would love to have your ideas on how to generate funds so that we can keep up with production costs and continue to pay our authors. Send comments to: kidsimaginationtrainmag@gmail.com.
LETTER OF THE MONTH
NORMA SUNDBERG
I enjoyed the last Extra Innings, in particular Den Adler's article on keeping journals. I cringe when I read of people tearing up or burning journals and letters.

The works of Anne Morrow Lindbergh prompted me early on to keep a journal. She uses journal entries and letters to family and friends in the text as her life’s story unfolds. Many journals and books of letters about the westward journeys of women and the Mormon exodus West also inspired me.

I've kept diaries or journals since 1974, writing of the birth of my youngest child in 1975.

Last year my daughters gathered with friends, wracking their brains to find something to keep me busy while they planned a SURPRISE 80th Birthday Party for me. “Something to do with her writing,” they agreed.

They told me the program committee person at Janet's Church wanted me to do a class on “Keeping Journals.” Janet said they would make a display of my writings and achievements to take to the class. She worked right under my nose as I worked on the outline and handouts for the alleged class.

They even asked my friend to “get me to the church on time,” telling her that another woman asked that she bring some of her quilts toward doing another class at some point. I wondered why I saw no sign of quilts in her car.

My son-in-law, a sheriff's deputy, had to work that evening after the party so he already had his uniform on. It was raining so they asked us to come to the entrance where there was a roof to drive under. Adam met us and unlocked the door. He told us he was “doing nursery, keeping the kids tonight.” I didn't even question the pick-up truck that was behind us and drove through to park with two of my writer friends. I just figured that they'd been invited to the “class.”

We walked down the hallway and went right past the meeting room where it normally would have been held, I thought, and on to the cultural hall. I questioned why that room was empty. The Cultural Hall was dark, so I started to walk back. But son-in-law said there were too many people, so they would be having it in the Cultural Hall.

He opened the door and the lights came on with a huge “Surprise-- Happy Birthday!”

I finally did do the journals class a couple of weeks later.

MORE LETTERS
Hello Marshall,
Weather has cooled down, and I can come work in my computer room now!! I wanted to say that I really liked your poems, especially the one on praying. “Little Boy's Grace.”

I wanted to put my two cents in about the “F word.” “[TW: this column may upset you]” Don't cave, Coach. Skip the poem, and use “The Idea of Ancestry,” your favorite, instead. We are sometimes afraid of not appearing cool to younger generations. They flaunt the F word, abuse the F word, make it their word of choice.

The little clothes line of briefs was superior to anything to do with the F word, but you realized they weren't classy enough for Extra Innings, but they were a great pun! The F word is no pun, just foul language. Just saying..

There is always so much to read in Extra Innings, good stuff for sure. You get a great deal packed into those pages. Keep up the good work.
All Best,
Bonny Conway

I got six requests for Extra Innings from the May Days groups. Kristin Russo said: “Loved the article. [“May Days: it’s about time”] What a great publication.
And added that she would subscribe.

Madonna Dries Christensen

NEW FEATURE
YOUR RMA* OF IRONY

It used to be that the only guys who looked like this were geeky high school nerds still wearing clothes they’d outgrown in seventh grade. Now it’s the height of men’s fashion, and that too-small jacket probably costs at least $900.

*Recommended Monthly Allowance
Remember nine-year-old Spencer Collins, the youngster from Leawood, Kansas who was battling a city council edict that his Little Library “structure” (a box on a post) violated city building code and had to be removed (“Briefs,” last issue)?

**On July 7, the Leawood City Council unanimously approved a temporary moratorium exempting Little Libraries from the city ordinance that prohibits structures in front yards.**

As soon as the moratorium passed, Mayor Peggy Dunn called Spencer to the front of the room and gave him a book for his library.

This came after Spencer got some high-profile help from children’s book star “Lemony Snicket,” aka Daniel Handler, author of the “Series of Unfortunate Events” books. Snicket sent Spencer some of his books from his new series, “All the Wrong Questions” (in which, he notes, a librarian is the hero), an act that reaped even more publicity for Spencer’s fight.

Thousands of others voiced their support, and a Facebook page set up for the library garnered tens of thousands of “likes.”

Leawood has at least two other LL’s, but only Spencer’s drew fire after neighbors protested, wishing to maintain “the clean appearance of front yards.” Oh, brother!

The temporary moratorium expires October 20.

I’m relying on sharp-eyed E.I. reader Carrie Gruman-Trinkner to continue to monitor the situation for us.

**Could it happen in Madison?**

Here in Madtown, nobody has lodged a protest about the more than 100 Little Libraries (including mine) in the area, where the movement, now worldwide, got its start. Madison zoning administrator Matt Tucker was quoted in the local paper saying, “there are many more pressing issues that we need to address... [T]his is a very low priority for us. We basically treat these as beneath our notice at this time.”

Which is right where you want to be with government administrators, right?

**Kruk loves Little Library**

While Floridian Linda Kruk was visiting Madison, her brother-in-law took her to see the sights-- including the Little Library of Felton Place. She left a note and, not having a book to share, made a donation toward more books.

“We are from a small town in north central Florida, she wrote, “and do not have any such program-- for now. When I get home, my first call will be to our public library and then to our school board. I know they will love this idea as much as I do. Thank you so much for inspiring me and encouraging reading. I am taking this book to our 3-year-old grandson. Again, Thank you.”

Thank you, Linda. I’ll hope you’ll keep in touch and let us know how your crusade goes.

**‘Sandytize’ your copy**

When my friend Sandy Mickelson (you’ve read her stuff in these pages, including a sparkler in the July issue about writing clean copy) told me she was starting her own editing service, I encouraged her to toot her own horn so I could give her a proper plug in this column. She’s a superb editor -- as she has proved on my own manuscripts many times. Here’s the pitch:

**Clean copy**

-- more than hope in the night

Great manuscripts often fall into the bottom of an editor’s slush pile. If an editor must restart a paragraph to make sure he knows where it’s going, if he finds odd little mistakes in grammar or punctuation, if he can’t catch the rhythm of your writing, that’s when someone other than friends and family should have read your words first. **Clean copy. That’s what you want.**

I can’t promise to be 100 percent right all the time, but I can promise fast, effective editing that won’t change your voice, just your mistakes. A friend at the newspaper where I worked last called it “Sandytizing” her copy. Rates are negotiable, with editing from a quick read to offering ideas or blueine editing. (Really redline, since I use a red pen.) Give me a call at 515-570-6123 or send a note to mcsalt@frontiernet.net. I’ll be glad to work with you.

Sandy definitely bears the Coach Seal of Approval.
Michael Brown died recently at the age of 93.

He was a giant in an entertainment genre that gets very little attention-- the industrial musical.

Brown made his mark by singing the praises of vacuums and automobiles-- including the infamous Ford Edsel.

His work was usually commissioned by large corporations for performance at sales conferences and managerial meetings and were designed to both entertain and motivate the workforce.

Companies hired top talent, spending up to $3 million to mount a production that might only run once or twice.

That said, one of Brown’s musicals still holds the record for the most often-performed musical in theater history. He created a show called “Wonderful World of Chemistry” for the DuPont pavilion at the 1964 World’s Fair in New York. The show ran at least 40 times a day (eight different companies rotating performances) for months, mounting around 17,000 performances.

By comparison, “Phantom of the Opera,” Broadway’s longest-running musical, has staged about 11,000 performances to date.

If that weren’t enough, Brown also penned the immortal lyrics to “Fall River Hoedown,” aka “Lizzie Borden” (“Oh you can’t chop your mother up in Massachusetts/ Massachusetts is a far cry from New York...”) and “The John Birch Society” (“If your mommy is a commie/ then you gotta turn her in”), made famous by The Chad Mitchell Trio, the Limelighters, and others.

And who can forget this motivational masterpiece:
You gotta be a good greeter--
Sell the car!
You gotta turn on the heater--
Sell the car!
And when you get to St. Peter--
Sell the car!
Sell the Edsel for ’59!

But even all this isn’t the primary reason for Brown’s well-earned immortality in American letters. When a young woman from Alabama came to New York in 1956, hoping to make her mark as a novelist but instead winding up having to scrape together a living as an airlines reservation clerk, Brown and his wife, Joy Williams Brown, took her in and then gifted her with enough money to “take a year off and write whatever you please.”

She produced a manuscript, which became a book, which sold 30 million copies worldwide and spawned a movie.

The young writer was Nellie Harper Lee, and the book was To Kill a Mockingbird.

And now you know... the rest of the story.

Much of the information for this story came from the New York Times obituary on Brown, written by Margalit Fox, published June 30, 2014. The song lyrics for Lizzie Border and the John Birch Society come from Coach’s perverse memory.

Caption Contest a bust

After your unprecedented enthusiasm for our first caption contest (June issue), my second effort garnered zero (0) entries. Perhaps the difference is that I didn’t offer a prize the second time.

Okay, you mercenaries-- I can take a hint.

I’m going back to a photo I.D. contest this issue, and the winner(s) may choose from among three of my books:
* Twin Killing, a Mo Quinn mystery,
* Baseball’s Good Guys: the real heroes of the game, written with Jack Walsh, or
* The Year of the Buffalo, my first baseball novel.

All you have to do is identify this historical figure. Send answers by August 15th to mcook@dcs.wisc.edu.
Lily helps Gramellie celebrate her birthday at Madison’s famous Ella’s Deli. (Yes, that’s a giant banana in the background.)

Lily gives some lovin’ to her patient cat, Sammy.

Biker chick