Easter Egg Hunt

photo by Gram Ellie
Gram Ellie to Lily: “You’re gorgeous.”
Lily: “No, I’m not!”
Grampa Coach: “Then how would you describe yourself?”
Lily (after some thought):
“Pretty little Lily ball.”
Ode to a Closer
John Manesis

—Dan Quisenberry, 45, died yesterday. 
N.Y. Times, October 1, 1998.

The Kansas City Royals bullpen ace appeared in two World Series in the 80’s, not overpowering, but he possessed the best control in the Major Leagues and showcased a submarine delivery, his money pitches sinkers that coaxed a host of ground ball outs.

Players, fans and writers admired this right hander with the red mustache, a modest man who credited team mates when he snuffed out rallies and shunned excuses if he failed to save a game.

A quipster and wordsmith with a wry sense of humor, he served up memorable quotes—
“I found a delivery in my flaw,”
“I want to thank the pitchers who couldn’t go nine innings,“
and describing his Peggy Lee fastball said, “Is that all there is?”

At the close of his pitching career, he furthered an interest in poetry, enrolled in writers’ workshops where he shared his verse, surprising many followers who had never guessed he nurtured a creative bent.

In 1998, shortly after learning that he had a cancer of the brain, his book, On Days Like This, was published, free style verse, direct and economical, as in the tribute to his former manager—
Dick said he was tired
go on without him
baseball’s just a game
try to win...

In the late innings of his malignancy, after trials of surgery and chemotherapy, he was asked if he wondered, “Why me?” Dan Quisenberry said, “Why not me,” as though he had just retired the side and was walking off the mound with the game ball in hand and a poem in his back pocket.
My first ‘critic’

For as long as I can remember, I’ve tried to make people laugh. For me it was a tool for an introvert to protect himself from others getting too close. I got ‘good’ enough at it (my teachers would have used a different adjective) to be elected “class wit” (half right, my friends said) of my high school graduating class of 1,001. They were a lot of nitwits to choose from, believe me. It was a high honor.

Also for as long as I can remember, I’ve wanted to be a writer, perhaps in emulation of my Grandfather, William Gilmore Beymer, perhaps just something in the gnome. (We used to say “blood.”)

The first humor piece I remember writing was 11 pages, single-spaced, pecked out on a manual typewriter (Google the term if you don’t know what that is), describing my first day as a construction laborer-- a summer job my father was able to procure for me, “to make a man out of me.” I earned a princely $3.75 an hour, (almost) all of which I banked for college.

How I ever managed to find humor in such a physically and emotionally challenging and frequently terrifying endeavor I’m not sure. It was just my way of managing.

As I wrote my masterpiece, I frequently checked spelling with my mom. (No spellcheck on a manual typewriter.) We lived in a small house, and from my room I had only to ask, “Mom, how do you spell...?” and promptly receive the answer from her daytime headquarters perched on a stool in the kitchen. She was an inveterate crossword puzzle solver (which also got passed down to me) and excellent speller. (Nope. No such luck.)

When I finished, I gave my pages to Mom for her critique (unalloyed praise), asking her to make a little penciled check in the margin beside anything she thought was funny.

I fled to my room to await the verdict.

After what seemed an eon (I sure it’s spelled that way; I have spellcheck now), I answered her summons and received my manuscript back with trembling hands. To my delight, the margins were peppered with check marks. She’d obviously thought my effort was nothing short of a laugh riot.

How’s that for affirmation!

I soaking up her effusive praise like a tree in the first rain after a long drought.

Only later did the realization hit me: from just down the hall, I hadn’t heard her laugh. Not once. My mother had a great laugh. I couldn’t have missed it.

What do you make of this little parable? That I wasn’t all that great at humor writing? Well, yeah, certainly that. But from the perspective of decades later, I realize that, right or wrong, good or bad, my mother loved me, encouraged me, and always, always supported my efforts.

My father, in his steadfast support and encouragement in athletics and math, gave me a different form of the same unconditional love.

But this is for Mom. This is “thank you.” I never said it enough while you were alive. and I can never say it too much now.

Mother’s Day is May 10. If your mom’s still alive, call her up and tell her you love her. If not, tell somebody else.

That’s what I just did.
Puns for the discerning punologist

*Thanks to Sandy Mickelson and Emily Auerbach*

I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.

An algebra teacher confiscated a rubber band pistol because it was a weapon of math disruption.

No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.

Atheism is a non-prophet organization.

I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.

The soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.

If you jumped off the bridge in Paris, you'd be in Seine.

Two fish swim into a concrete wall. One turns to the other and says “Dam!”

Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused Novocain during a root canal? His goal: transcend dental medication.

Then there was the guy who sent 10 puns to friends, with the hope that at least one of the puns would make them laugh. Alas, no pun in 10 did.

I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid. He says he can stop any time.

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went. Then it dawned on me.

This girl said she recognized me from the vegetarian club, but I'd never met herbivore.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I can't put it down.

This dyslexic man walks into a bra....

What do you call a dinosaur with an extensive vocabulary? A thesaurus.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.
Do you read the obituaries more as you get older? I do. I saw one the other day with the usual list of bereaved family and friends, calling hours and other burial arrangements, and at the end, the family's favorite recipe of their mother: mac and cheese. Initially, I was taken aback, but then thought of the family sitting around the table with their mother -- smiling, eating, enjoying her, each other, and what she had cooked especially for them -- and the inclusion of the recipe seemed a real loving tribute. I wonder if recipes are a new trend in obituaries?

I'll be making my own funeral arrangements, and I've hesitated to do so because it seems, well, unnecessary; no; that's not the right word. Of course I'm going to die. Maybe. I haven't planned ahead, because it seems confusing: funeral services and music, a burial plot, tombstone, casket or cremation, on and on. Now will I have to choose a recipe for my obituary?

If so, I am in deep trouble. I used to cook and bake. Now I hardly ever do, and I wasn't that good at it anyway.

**Dare I list a frozen TV dinner, "Healthy Choice Lemon Pepper Fish," as my "recipe," or, better yet, "Amy's Homestyle Salisbury Steak?"** ‘Homestyle’ suggests hours of cooking, even though they'd more likely be spent sitting at the kitchen table with a cup of tea and a book.

I suppose I could tone it up a bit with "Amy's Black Bean Tamale Verde" so people might give me credit for being a vegetarian concerned with animal welfare. Besides, I've been watching cooking shows and find that long names of food dishes are the most impressive.

There are tricky issues involved here. Would the real makers of these products I'm passing off as my ‘recipes’ think to sue me? Could they learn about my deception? (Anyone reading this, please contact Coach for a form to complete saying you'll never tell.)

There also is a philosophical issue to consider. If I stick a frozen dinner in the microwave, is that really something I cook? If I wander into the living room to check the weather report on TV and there is no one in the kitchen to hear the timer, does the timer still sound? But, if I don't set the timer, there will be no cooking, so I AM necessary to the cooking process. I doubt if I'll be classified a master chef.

I could sign up for a course at a culinary institute, but since I'm contemplating an obituary, it stands to reason my days are numbered. I'm not sure I want long days of lessons and hefty tuition. Still, I do like those white stovepipe chef hats.

What if there’s a misprint in the obit and someone makes my recipe using the wrong amounts? Would I want the mourners standing around grumbling about me and my awful baked tofu?

Another dilemma might occur if my newspaper ‘recipe’ led mourners at the funeral home to expect snacks I'd prepared ahead. That would be fitting if I choose cryogenic preservation for my body. Probably it would not be wise to serve "finger foods." Would mourners expect me to provide appropriate recipes for someone passing on: angel food cake, heavenly hash, baked sole almandine, Christmas cookies?

If I did learn how to cook, there could be a positive aspect for my funeral: many songs have food in the title, and I might be able to find better songs for the service: “I Heard It through the Grapevine Jello,” “Strawberry Fields Forever Cobbler,” “Blueberry Hill Pie,” “American Pie Pizza,” and “Peppermint Twist It” for a really lively wake.

I suppose friends who have eaten at my house will have a good laugh reading my obituary, and that's not so bad. But I'm not sure I want to leave this world totally dishonest, so I probably should include two recipes, one something I actually make. Okay, it will either be a recipe for a Peanut Butter Sandwich or Saltines Smeared with Butter Dunked into Black Tea. I also make a mean artistic appetizer with olives and pickles, and then there are pepper slices of green, yellow, and red arranged on a small plate. Perhaps, I can master a cheese sandwich before I go, though choice of mustard can be difficult.

In the end, I expect my friends will read my obituary and fake ‘recipe’ and say to themselves, “This should have been Devil's Food Cake.”
He modestly presented the history of the United States of America, portraying Thomas Jefferson going door to door to get signatures for the Declaration of Independence and confronting a skeptical Ben Franklin, who muttered, “Look at that show-off Hancock! Pretty flamboyant signature for an insurance man.”

Freberg also asserted that the bald eagle was supposed to be the main course at the first Thanksgiving, while “The turkey was for the centerpiece, Charlie!” (Actually, it’s widely reported that Ben Franklin did favor the turkey as the choice for our national bird.)

He demonstrated the power of radio advertising by using sound effects to turn Lake Michigan into a giant chocolate sundae, complete with cherry on top.

He coaxed eight great tomatoes into one little bitty can.

He sold Sunsweet pitted prunes by promising “Today the pits, tomorrow the wrinkles!”

“Say mothers,” he once cooed, “as sure as there’s an ‘X’ in ‘Christmas,’ you can be certain those are Tiny Tim Chestnuts!”

He sent up Harry Belafonte’s “Banana Boat Song” with a parody in which he characterized all those “Day-O’s” as “too piercing, man.”

He demonstrated his political correctness by penning “Elderly Man River” and his lack of PC with his classic “Take an Indian to lunch.”

He wrote an entire soap opera episode using only two words, “John” and “Marsha.” (It was all in the vocal inflection.

He did a better Lawrence Welk than Lawrence Welk did, even when he got his popping finger stuck in his cheek. “Turn off-a da bubble machine,” Freberg as Welk wound up wailing at the end of the parody. “Turn off-a da bubble machine!”

For being the first to bring satire to advertising-- even poking fun at his own clients-- he won 21 Clios, the ad world’s equivalent of the Oscar. Those clients often had to agree to a contractual stipulation that “The decision as to what’s funny and what is not funny shall rest solely with Mr. Freberg,” as did the radio network that signed him to replace the great Jack Benny and become the last comedian with his own regular show on a major radio network.

The Beatles learned to be funny from him. Albert Einstein loved him when he became a seasick serpent named Cecil to Bob Clampett’s Beany on an early TV puppet show.

Stanley Victor Freberg was born in Los Angeles and reared in South Pasadena. His father was a Baptist minister/vacuum-cleaner salesman, which somehow seems right. He grew up to be one of my creative heroes, an inspiration. He pushed back the boundaries, revealed the possibilities, made me laugh with surprise and joy.

Those are pretty wonderful things to do.

Coach.
Flight of fancy

Humor writing takes a special talent, in particular when combining wit with solid information. Henry Mitchell, whose gardening column enlivened the Washington Post, enticed not only green thump readers but those who might not have a profound interest in his subject. I don’t know weeds from wisteria, but I read his columns and books for the delightful writing.

Mike O’Connor, who pens “Ask The Bird Folks” for The Cape Codder, has that knack. Actually, the byline reads “Mike O’Conner and the staff at the Bird Watcher’s General Store in Orleans.” Does the staff flock around the birdfeeder and toss ideas among the spilled thistle and sunflower seeds? Does Mike separate the kernels from the chaff and peck out a column? To simplify, I’ll call Mike the writer and the column ‘ATBF.’ The full page spread is nicely illustrated by Catherine Clark.

I enjoy birds, albeit not enough to tromp through the primeval forest laden with a camera, tripod, lenses, binoculars, a bird guide, lunch, a canteen, and a camp stool.

Fortunately, birds hang out along the preserve and pond in our Florida backyard. We hear barred owls in the night, watch ospreys swoop down on a fish, marvel at the red-shouldered hawk perched in a tree and the majestic bald eagle gliding overhead. There are sandhill cranes, limpkins, anhingas, Florida mallards, great blue herons, egrets, ibis, night herons, wood storks, and roseate spoonbills.

I admire the tiny orange birds that flit around the butterfly bush. Wait—those are butterflies. I confuse them with bee hummingbirds, which are only an inch long and weigh less than a penny. I learned that from reading ATBF.

How is it I read a Cape Cod newspaper? Because my son-in-law’s mother sends clips to him, and he mails them to me. I enjoy the clever writing, and the bonus is, the envelope often includes drawings and notes from my grandkids.

ATBF begins with a question from a reader. Mike’s reply usually begins with chiding the questioner, followed by self-deprecating remarks to soothe unintended ruffled feathers, followed by actual information about the subject bird.

But that part isn’t cut and dried; it’s sprinkled with merry chirps and twitter, digressions, bird puns, and amusing parenthetical asides. Closure comes full circle to the question, ending with another spritz of humor.

In a column about kiwis, Mike wrote:

“True or False? The ruby-throated hummingbird is the smallest bird in the world.”

Mike: “The answer is False. Now what? Answering your question was easy, but it makes for a rather short column.”

He managed to fill the page and explained that the smallest bird is the bee hummingbird.

Regarding a query about a bird featured on a postage stamp, Mike responded: “Come on, Jake. If you want me to identify your bird you have to do better than saying it’s red and green and sits in the lower right-hand corner of a postage stamp. Would it have killed you to send me the stamp?”

Out-of-context excerpts don’t do justice to the writing. For the full accounts, see http://www.birdwatchersgeneralstore.com. There’s a link to the archives plus other fun stuff. Before leaving your roost, don’t miss the photos of The Famous Bathroom.

The site claims, “Inside you’ll find hundreds of cartoons, signs, posters, and pictures—all humorous and all (most, anyway) in good taste. We hear the laughter all the way out on the floor. Often, we have to go and drag someone out for being in there way too long.”

There’s another special writing knack—potty jokes without being offensive.
**What's In a Word?**
Norma J. Sundberg

Granddaughter and I watching an old movie, A Character says: “Ain’t She Swell”? “Gramma, what does that word mean”?

Stopped in my tracks, A child can do that, Takes me to another time frame, Forget the 'literal' meaning, bloat, expand, overflow...
In context, when “swell” would mean “Neat,” Cool,” or “Great” in this generation...

Perception-- something old, something new, Awakens the senses
When a child questions, “Gramma, “What does that word mean?” How to answer?


What’s In A WORD?

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**World of Words**
Norma J. Sundberg

Too Many Notebooks, sticky post-it notes small and large with empty pages, waiting, ready to be written upon, to soak up ink on lines of time--and space--

Thoughts, Information, Ah Ha! Moments, posted—to be remembered.

Pages to be fed, to be filled with all manner of words, phrases, shapes, paragraphs depicting happenings in a busy, bustling, troubled, ever moving world.

Space a happy place, waiting to be filled.

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**Procrastination**
by Craig W. Steele

Today, I won’t procrastinate, unless I have no choice.
I only need to concentrate to wake my writing voice.
It wasn’t always such a chore to find the perfect word.
Yet there’s no doubt, not anymore, my muse cannot be heard.

While marking time without success, I’ve waited anxiously for inspiration’s sweet caress to set my dear muse free.
But lack of progress leaves me irked—I wish I had a Coach.
Procrastination hasn’t worked—I need a new approach.

Perhaps reverse psychology will lead me back to rhyme—procrastination does give me more television time.
You think you’re computer illiterate?

Thanks to Steve Born

Customer: This is Martha, I can't print. Every time I try, it says 'can’t find printer.’ I've even lifted the printer and placed it in front of the monitor, but the computer still says he can't find it.

Customer: My keyboard is not working anymore.
Tech support: Are you sure it's plugged into the computer?
Customer: No. I can't get behind the computer.
Tech support: Pick up your keyboard and walk 10 paces back.
Customer: OK
Tech support: Did the keyboard come with you?
Customer: Yes
Tech support: That means the keyboard is not plugged in.

Customer: I can't get on the Internet.
Tech support: Are you sure you used the right password?
Customer: Yes, I'm sure. I saw my colleague do it.
Tech support: Can you tell me what the password was?
Customer: Five dots.

Tech support: What anti-virus program do you use?
Customer: Netscape.
Tech support: That's not an anti-virus program.
Customer: Oh, sorry... Internet Explorer...

Customer: I have a huge problem. A friend has placed a screen saver on my computer, but every time I move the mouse, it disappears.

Tech support: How may I help you?
Customer: I'm writing my first email.
Tech support: OK, and what seems to be the problem?
Customer: Well, I have the 'a' in the address, but how do I get the little circle around it?
FOR WHAT IT’S WORTH
REX OWENS

Please buy a book!

I was fortunate to be invited to make a presentation on my novel at a local independent bookstore, Mystery to Me, on St. Patrick’s Day. This unique Irish holiday was the perfect time for an independent author to tout a book about Ireland and the period called The Troubles.

This small bookstore near downtown Madison has very limited street parking. The rear corner of the store was set up for author presentations, and the audience of 10 nearly filled all the seating available. Near the entrance a table was set up with a display of my books, a plate of shamrock cookies, and a bottle of wine, provided by store owner Joanne Berg.

I provided two bottles of whiskey, a Concannon and a Jameson aged black label, to share with the audience following my presentation. I sent out 35 evites for the event but received only one positive response. Of the 10 people attending, I knew seven, and each had received an evite but didn’t respond. This is one of the mysteries of evites. I’ve concluded people don’t like to make a commitment and respond yes. I did receive about 10 no’s because people had plans to go out and eat corn beef and cabbage that night.

There were a number of excellent questions during my presentation. But - - - there’s always that One in the crowd, isn’t there? Yes, even with an audience of only 10 that One was there.

As part of my presentation I explain how the Irish Republican Army was the first organization designated as international terrorists by the United Nations. A woman raised her hand and said she’d looked up the definition of ‘terrorism,’ and proceeded with a diatribe on how governments, including the French, British, and Americans, practice terrorism.

What could I say? She was so off topic. The only saving grace was another person in the back row raised his hand. I called on him even as the woman was continuing her monologue. My behavior was a bit rude, but I was desperate.

At the close of the discussion I mingled with the audience members and shared a bit of whiskey. We talked about 20 minutes, until closing time approached.

Now, here’s the odd thing. Not one person bought my book. Not one person bought ANY book. I was flabbergasted! People come and listen to a discussion for an hour, drink my whiskey, and don’t by a $14.95 book?

I’ve participated in over 20 author presentations in the past year and at each event sold books. Later that week I queried several author friends and asked if they had a similar experience. No one had. There are occasions when only a limited number of books were purchased but never – ZERO. The lesson for me is that I must never, NEVER have expectations.

The moral: when you attend an author event – PLEASE – BUY A BOOK!

Coach’s note: Obviously, Rex didn’t ask me if I’d never sold a book. Note to self: Don’t try plying them with booze. Even that doesn’t work!

JAN KENT IS
THE WORD WHISPER

Words, wondrous words

On the bookshelf over the computer is a yard or so of irresistible books: Origins of the Specious, The Whatchamacallit, Woe is I, Oxymoronica, The Cynic’s Dictionary. And one – The Word Museum – that cries out to be consulted every once in a while for an unlikely word. Like ‘wee-wow’ meaning wrong, in an unsettled state; or ‘cabobble’ – to mystify, puzzle or confuse. All this heavy thinking calls for a cold ‘chalybeat.’

IN MEMORY

Ivan Doig 1939 - 2015

Asked why he wrote, in an interview with Powell’s Books in Oregon, Doig replied: “A lifetime of reasons, but here’s one: For the love of language and that daily tryst of the pair of us, it and me, creating something that did not exist before.”
After Plan 9 From Outer Space, we got into the late night movies starting with Black Mama White Mama, a 70s blacksploitation film starring the lovely Pam Grier. It's about two female prisoners who are chained together and are on the run after the bus transporting them is attacked. It's a pretty entertaining entry in the genre, though I was getting tired by the end.

The next film was Yongary, Monster From The Deep, which is a South Korean rip-off of Godzilla. It was entertaining enough for a kaiju film, but nothing special.

Next came Avalanche, which looked like it was going to be a bore, so I went out to the lounge area, put two chairs together and caught about an hour long nap. I woke up from the excitement and energy I had in me and caught the last 20 minutes. Carl said he had fallen asleep in his chair, so I didn't miss much. There were a few funny scenes towards the end, but I think I picked the right movie to sleep through.

Next up, Cloak & Dagger was one of the surprise highlights of the marathon. It's about a boy who has an imaginary friend and a father who doesn't pay him enough attention. The boy witnesses a murder and gets caught up in a spy group's plans. The film gets more insane and enjoyable as it goes along. I can't believe this was a “family film,” because there's some dark stuff. By the end, I was thinking how much therapy the kid was going to need after all that had happened.

Andy Hardy's Private Secretary didn't really seem like a B-movie. It was more of a wholesome comedy from the 40s. During the majority of it, I went out into the lounge area and talked. It was nice to be out in the sunlight, since I'd been in a dark theater for over 12 hours now.

Can't Stop the Music, a musical about the forming of the Village People, was awful, two hours of one of the most unbearable films of the bunch. It didn't help that halfway, they had to reboot the system and stop the movie.

After this, there was a raffle, and I won a couple of DVD box sets of B-movies, many of them featured on Mystery Science Theater 3000.

Then we had to watch the worst film of all, Alien From L.A. I had seen the MST3K episode with this movie, but even with the riffing, the film is unbearable. Kathy Ireland plays a whiny teen who goes searching for her missing father and falls into the underground city of Atlantis. Luckily the movie is mercifully short at under 90 minutes.

That led to the best film of the marathon, Miami Connection, one of Carl and my favorite B-movies. In it, a martial arts rock band faces the ninja gang corrupting the city. It was so much fun to see it with a crowd.

The marathon wrapped up with Viva Knievel! an Evel Knievel vanity project with Leslie Nielsen as the villain. It was a great movie to end B-Fest with because of how absurd it was. One of the film's opening scenes has Evel visiting an orphanage, and a kid with crutches is able to walk because of him. The movie also has some really over the top action sequences and a subplot involving Evel's mechanic having a problematic relationship with his son, who looks up to Evel.

B-Fest 2015 was one of the most fun experiences I've ever had, even if there were a few stinkers in the marathon. Carl and I have decided that this will be an annual trip, and I can't wait for next year!
I saw my cousin, Virginia, and my aunt, and my father in the grocery store today. All had their eyes down when I passed by. What were they doing there? They are dead.

When I turned to look, Virginia was sniffing tomatoes and putting them in a brown bag in her cart. I couldn't find the other two. Perhaps, they are look-alikes; yet, I saw my father's scar on his cheek below the corner of his eye. Aunt Margaret was wearing her rain hat she always wore, rain or shine. Virginia lived in Arizona; she had a tan and was wearing sandals. I hurried to the canned meat aisle. My father liked sardines. My aunt always bought licorice, but I couldn't find either one. Apparently, Virginia wasn't making a salad. She was no longer in produce. I felt like I was on skates gliding from deli to Danish to dairy to toilet paper. Would dead people need to wipe?

I decided to buy a half gallon of milk and go home, and there they were, all three buying cheese. I sputtered words at them as I tried to grab their arms. They didn't want me to touch them. Virginia hit me on the shoulder with her purse and my aunt kicked me in the shin. My father yelled to the man stacking beer telling him to call the manager. He rushed up to us, and I told him you can never trust your family to do the right thing. He led me to his office and offered me a bottle of water, store brand, and called the police. I tried to explain that I was only trying to talk to my family and told him about the scar. The police didn't lock me in jail. I wish they had. I'd be safe to go out when I want to, and not now with the family.

I wonder if I should have eaten that salami sandwich last night. My stomach aches a little. I'm on the run now. On the way home, a black limousine was trailing me, or, going to the car wash.

I'll probably starve. I'm not going to the grocery store again. I'm buying candy bars when I get gas. I'm riding down 5th Avenue, over to Hershey, and then to the Milky Way and Mars. No one is going to find me where I'm going. Some people who still see me think I'm crazy. I'm not, I figured it out: I'm just deceased.

Sandy Rafter

“I write to find what I have to say. I edit to figure out how to say it right.”
Cheryl Strayed
FOR THE LOVE OF WORDS
ESTHER M. LEIPER-ESTABROOKS

Revision decision

Every serious poet wants to go from good to best. How does a good poem become better?

Jonathan Dubey, though fairly new to crafting poetry, is a successful wordsmith who’s written, directed, and produced two full-length plays, Arthurian and Yard Sale, in Berlin, New Hampshire. The first, set in ancient Britain, holding action, humor, and pathos, broke in a city wary of “culture.” Yard Sale, featuring a more familiar subject, proved a moneymaker. Now Jonathan, plus acting and filming movies with his brother, is exploring poetry and illustration.

Asking for my feedback was brave of him, for feelings can be fragile. I was honored, and when I asked to feature a recent poem in this column, he graciously agreed. In the following sonnet-like piece his quirky humor shines.

LIBRARY POEM
Let’s find a place we could be together:
Hold my hand and follow just you and me.
Take shelter from unrelenting weather.
Come as one to the public library.
Ignore computers; head right for the books.
No one will see us as we cover our tracks:
Tell me what you want with suggestive looks
Since we’re hid safe in the shadowy stacks!
Novels and stories, yes, books galore
And classic tomes that stretch out end to end.
Let their bulk surround us while I adore,
For though I like reading, I won’t pretend:
--This non-fiction shelter aids my desire
Since here, for a start, the shelves are higher!

The poem has the requisite 14 lines of a sonnet. However, the rhythm is bumpy--not iambic pentameter--and punctuation needs attention. I understand glitches because I began my own sonnet-writing with vivid images but little feel for rhythm, flow, or the handling of pauses and clauses. Iambic pentameter, the meter sonnets employ, has ten syllables per line, with each second syllable accented. That’s basic, but a poet should learn (if, how, and when) to break rules for special effect.

Rhythm, save for a lullaby, shouldn’t be too smooth. Sound-flow is a tool. Whatever pattern or deviations, (and skilled poets make them), the ideal is keeping readers engaged.

Jonathan excels with varied subjects plus quirky viewpoints,. What matters is to make a poem sound right. Jonathan’s poem is colloquial, chatty, and confessional—qualities I admire.

Here’s my stab at a rewrite. Though flowing better, it still lacks smooth iambic pentameter.

“Let’s find a place where we can be together.
Just hold my hand tightly and follow me.
We’ll shelter from the unrelenting weather;
Just we two, right here at the library.
Ignore computers; head straight for the books.
None will see us as we cover our tracks:
Show me desire by sweet come-hither looks
Since we’re hid safe in the shadowy stacks!

There’s novels and stories, yes, books galore
And classic tomes that stretch out end to end.
Let their bulk surround us while I adore,
For though I like reading, I won’t pretend:
--This non-fiction shelter aids my desire
Since here, for a start, the shelves are higher!

Dividing the poem into stanzas of eight and then six lines makes it look sonnet-like, though sonnets aren’t always divided. But the piece can be further revised so as to be in iambic pentameter (which the above version still isn’t) while remaining playful. Therefore, consider a third version to which I added quote marks.

“Let’s find a place where we can be together.
Just hold my hand now; quickly follow me.
We’ll shelter from the outside rainy weather
Safe in the stacks, deep in the library.
Ignore computers; head straight for the books.
No one’s looking, so quickly let’s make tracks.
Show your desire with sweet ‘come hither’ looks
And let us stay unseen in shadowed stacks.

“See novels, research tomes, and verse galore;
Plus old-time classics stretching end to end.
Note how their bulk surrounds us; I adore
Such privacy—this wet day’s dividend.
Come further! Such non-fiction aids desire
Because, conveniently, these shelves rise higher!”

Rules are useful, but good poets learn when to take risks. Via only 26 squiggles A to Z, we describe all existence, including countries, worlds, even the universe. If we fail, the letters don’t fail us; but await genius, and Jonathan might be on that list. Possibly, so might you--or I.

ESTHER’S NEWS: Esther is invited to write poems to accompany pictures for a new children’s book by fantasy artist and novelist Judi Calhoun. This collaboration is intriguing and lots of fun.
You know it’s time to hire a proofreader when you print this

Thanks to Larry Tobin

Man Kills Self Before Shooting Wife and Daughter.

Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says.

Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers.

Panda Mating Fails; Veterinarian Takes Over.

Miners Refuse to Work after Death.

Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant.

War Dims Hope for Peace.

If Strike Isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last Awhile.

Cold Wave Linked to Temperatures.

Enfield (London) Couple Slain; Police Suspect Homicide.

Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges.

Man Struck By Lightning: Faces Battery Charge.

New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group.

Astronaut Takes Blame for Gas in Spacecraft.

Kids Make Nutritious Snacks.

Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half.

Hospitals are Sued by 7 Foot Doctors.

And the winner is.....

Typhoon Rips Through Cemetery; Hundreds Dead.
Sandy Mickelson

Coach's note: I had the joy of attending the party her hometown threw for our friend Sandy a couple of weeks ago. I was going to write about it, but not surprisingly, she did it herself, better than I ever could. I reprint her column from the 4/26 Fort Dodge Messenger with her permission.

If I felt safe standing on the edge of a rooftop, I'd be standing on the highest rooftop I could reach yelling THANK YOU as loudly as I could.

Thank you for caring. Thank you for praying. Thank you for coming to the party held in my honor on April 19.

OK, so it was a benefit, but calling it a party was the only way I could get through without wiping out a full box of tissue. I've got John Daniel to thank for that. One day a few weeks ago I stopped by the pharmacy to pick up meds, and he said he was looking forward to my party. My party.

Calling it a party stopped that silly stream of tears that flowed every time I thought of a benefit for me. I can do a party, any time, anywhere. I love parties. I felt uncomfortable knowing a benefit was coming.

Yes, it might seem odd to you, but that's how I felt. I thought if someone came to a benefit and donated money and I didn't die, they'd feel cheated. And yes, again, my head tells me “don't be stupid,” but my heart feels otherwise.

Marian Dencklau stopped by my house one afternoon and said she'd like to plan a benefit for me. I told her no, I didn't want one. At that time, I didn't have extra expenses, so please, no benefit. The following Sunday, my pastor at Grace Lutheran, Matthew Martens, sat with me after church and said a group of people wanted to plan a benefit for me. I gave him the same spiel I gave Marian. Please, no.

The Sunday after that, he sat with me again and said everything was planned. The Friends of Sandy had set April 19 for the benefit. Paulette and Don Heddingter, Connie and Mark Gustafson and Jim Blocker gathered others to help and planned a party. For me.

I guess you don't say no to pastor Martens.

And I've got to tell you, I felt honored, humbled, and shocked all at the same time. This party made me feel like a bride at a reception where I knew everyone.

Sure, there were people I knew by sight alone, and it embarrassed me not to find a name in my brain before I opened my mouth to say hi, but I've been there before, so I just sucked it up and said, “I'm sorry, I cannot remember your name.”

My sister Barbara and her husband Ray drove up from Illinois to surprise me, and a friend drove over from Madison, WI. to spend the weekend. Having them with me any time makes everything good.

But what really made my heart happy was seeing so many people enjoying themselves at the party. We even danced.

With your prayers, I will not die. God said in the Bible that we can heal ourselves if we ask it in Jesus’ name, and I’ve been asking. I've been praying, and many of you have been praying for me.

I trust God to keep his word.

So long friends, until the next time when we're together.

Sandy Mickelson, retired lifestyle editor of The Messenger, may be reached at mcsalt@frontiernet.net.
I had dinner with friends on a rainy night at a restaurant downtown last week. I had been bragging to them about owning my official Handicapped Parking Permit. It wasn’t easy getting it. Among its many benefits, It’s a trophy for winning the final argument with my doctor.

I said, “I’m dying for christsakes! You give me less than two years to live, and for that I can’t get a parking permit? Which one is the joke, Doctor?” Pretty compelling.

With my handicapped permit, I get the best parking spaces right near the entrance of where I’m going. When I can’t find a reserved space, I can park anywhere for as long as I want after I hang my badge from the rear-view mirror. I don’t even need to read a sign.

“I just love to reserve park and then skip into the store while tossing and catching my keys. It drives people nuts.” I said.

I can’t really do that because my spleen is the size of a loaf of bread, but it makes for a better story.

Afterwards, I continued to boast while they kept laughing under a light rain. The area was under construction, and we serpentined the puddles scattered in the gravel covered road. There were no reserved spots because of the excavation, so I had to park on the street. We got to my car, hugged our goodbyes, and then they pointed to the soggy parking ticket on my windshield. Their laughter echoed on the street while they walked on to their car.

I called the number on the ticket the next day, explained my situation, and complained about the injustice of the ticket and fine to someone named Leslie. She told me that she’d give me a number and a date to go to the courthouse, see the judge, and explain.

“You’re kidding, right? I have to go to the courthouse just because someone made a mistake? The cop didn’t even look to see my handicapped sign. That doesn’t sound fair, Leslie.”

I could hear her take a deep breath and then say “Please hold, sir, and I’ll get that appointment.”


“I’m sorry, sir. I can’t. Now if you just …”

“Leslie? … Come on. … Leslie? … I could be your Grandpa. You don’t want to give Grandpa a ticket. Do you?”

“SIR. I can’t.”

“Alright. I’m going to have to do this the hard way, Leslie. They record these phone calls, don’t they? Put a flag onto this call if you can, Leslie, because my attorney may need it for my trial.”

Leslie tried to talk sense to me. “It’s only a twenty-dollar fine, sir. They won’t arrest you, but this will cost you more later, and if you don’t pay it, it could affect your credit rating.”

“Thanks, Leslie. Don’t bother with the appointment. I’m off to fight injustice!”

I hung up.

This shouldn’t happen to handicapped people. I can get along okay, but that isn’t the point. I’m fighting for handicapped AARPies everywhere. I haven’t paid the fine. I mailed a letter in place of my check. Since then, I’ve been cowering behind the window drapes waiting for the authorities to pull into my driveway.

TO:
City of Waukesha, Parking Enforcement Center
Congratulations crime-fighters! Your dragnet of the evening of 5/2/2014 was successful in ticketing a senior citizen for parking with his handicapped permit displayed in the windshield of his car from the rear-view mirror. It’s difficult to find a place to park let alone walk to a restaurant in downtown Waukesha because of all the street construction. It’s even more difficult, almost impossible, for a man suffering from acute chronic myelomonocytic leukemia. I hope you get to try that sometime in your life.

I am not going to pay this fine. If you need to arrest me bring your handcuffs and a wheelchair to my home.

You should be ashamed of yourself.”

Come and get me, Coppers.

Tom’s medical update: “My mood’s okay, but I’ve just kind of given in to my condition. It has dawned on me that my doctors are really druggists and chemists. If I complain about a side effect from a drug, they just give me another drug to suppress that side effect.
A recent post by a Facebook friend asked people to weigh in about when and how to tell her kids the truth about Santa Claus. It generated a wide variety of responses.

I grew up believing. In fact, I argued with my mother when she told me there was no Santa. I had seen him come to our house. But she said, “It was a friend of ours dressed up like Santa Claus.” I was eight, and that ended that, but I don’t recall being traumatized. Nor did I tell my younger sisters the truth, something I was afraid to do because I knew my parents—and maybe my sisters—would be angry. I never have been very brave about doing what I think is right in the face of anger.

I know of people who want to abolish Santa Claus, and I have mixed feelings about that. For one, it did me no harm. I didn’t consider my parents’ letting me believe it to be a lie, though now I recognize it as such. It was fun, but I think I could have had fun at Christmas without it. I’ve read some adults’ stories in which they said they pretended to believe in Santa as kids so they wouldn’t disappoint their parents. Lots of parents want the myth to continue with their kids. I wonder why. They find out eventually, and I think few kids are traumatized when they learn the truth, or perhaps figure it out for themselves.

I’m also concerned about kids whose parents don’t have money to “play Santa” and are unable to deliver what Bill Watterson’s Calvin in Calvin and Hobbes called his “loot.” What message do kids get when they’ve been good all year (Santa’s watching, you know—it’s in all the books and on TV) but get no toys to play with?

It happens, especially as our society again degenerates into one of have’s and have-nots. That, to me, justifies abolishing the myth. Imagine for a moment how getting stiffed on Christmas morning must feel to kids—knowing they’ll have to face their classmates the day after vacation when everyone asks, “What did you get for Christmas?” I no longer believe the joy of most kids outweighs that huge disappointment of the poor kids. Not when it’s based on a myth. And I wonder why more adults believe their kids are unable to handle the truth.

So they inevitably wind up with a dilemma—when to tell their kids the truth—all because they told a lie to the kids they probably taught to tell the truth. Hmm. It’s easy to see the problem. Somewhere, someday, someone is going to lay it on the line to all kids everywhere. Eventually, they find out: There is no Santa. I think Christmas can be plenty magical enough without him—lights, special music and food, visits by family and friends. I wonder if we really do our kids a favor by teaching them to expect more?

To check out other people’s views, I googled, and after reading the first three answers I closed the computer. All advocated letting kids believe as long as possible. In case another kid “spoiled it” for theirs, they would explain to their child that Santa doesn’t exist if that kid doesn’t believe, but he does exist if they believe. Huh? Why teach a kid something that nonsensical?

Things either exist or they don’t: Believing they do or don’t makes no difference to reality, and I think it’s cruel to tell kids it does.

The issue reminded me of one of Watterson’s cartoons that appeared on December 21, 1987. In frame one Calvin says to Hobbes, “This whole Santa Claus thing doesn’t make sense.” In frame two he says, “Why all the secrecy? Why all the mystery? If the guy exists, why doesn’t he ever show himself and prove it?” In frame three, Calvin says, “And if he DOESN’T exist, what’s the meaning of all this?” In frame four, Hobbes answers, “I dunno ... isn’t this a religious holiday?” Calvin replies, “Yeah, but actually, I’ve got the same questions about God.”

I’ve always wondered how many letters Watterson got for giving Calvin doubts about Santa and God in one strip. But I think Watterson had it right, that kids have more brains than we give them credit for, and I think many of them, like Calvin, think about these things.

Mrs. Claus and Santa carving by Lee Olson.
British humor is different
*Thanks to Steve Born*

These are classified ads that were actually placed in U.K. Newspapers:

**FREE YORKSHIRE TERRIER.**
8 years old,
Hateful little bastard.
Bites!

**FREE PUPPIES**
1/2 Cocker Spaniel, 1/2 sneaky neighbor's dog.

**FREE PUPPIES.**
Mother is a Kennel Club registered German Shepherd.
Father is a Super Dog, able to leap tall fences in a single bound.

**COWS, CALVES: NEVER BRED.**
Also 1 gay bull for sale.

**JOINING NUDIST COLONY!**
Must sell washer and dryer £100.

**WEDDING DRESS FOR SALE ..**
Worn once by mistake.
Call Stephanie.

**** And the WINNER is... ****

**FOR SALE BY OWNER.**
Complete set of Encyclopedia Britannica, 45 volumes.
Excellent condition, £200 or best offer. No longer needed, got married, wife knows everything.
Swift Take on Books
John Swift

It’s our good luck that Pearlman finally found a publisher

Honeydew, by Edith Pearlman
Little, Brown, January, 2015

The problem of finding the truly exceptional book is that my language rarely rises to the level of what I’m reading so I treat my readers to a “This is a great book, read it” review, hardly influencing the sophisticated readers of E.I. or pleasing anyone who has already read the book, in this case, Edith Perlman’s collection of short stories, Honeydew, or her previous collection, Binocular Vision, which won several literary awards. Honeydew contains 20 short stories, many set in a fictional town I’m told resembles Brookline, MA, where the author, 78, lives with her husband.

Her literary career serves as inspiration and warning. She wasn’t published in book form until 1996, and only then as a result of entering and winning some literary contests with three of her short story collections, despite having an agent who tried and failed for 10 years to place her work. Honeydew is her first book to be published by a major house.

So she kept trying and finally grabbed the brass ring. But had she missed that ring this is still a wonderful, wonderful writer that you and I might have never read nor heard of. The London Times has said, “Edith Pearlman is the greatest short story writer in the world…” Ironically, the last great writer I read was Laura Hillenbrand, who suffers from a debilitating disease that often leaves her unable to write. Mrs. Pearlman has been under treatment for cancer and has been unable to write, I believe, since finishing Honeydew. It would be another great tragedy in the world of letters if this is her last book.

Her first story in this book, “Tenderfoot,” involves Paige, a pedicurist, who lost her husband to the war he favored over her softly spoken objections.

…the tank he was riding met a mine. Each of his parts was severed from the others, and his whole--his former whole--was severed from Paige.”

She now knows she is being spied on by a lonely neighbor from his third floor bathroom. His former wife never forgave him for not stopping in a blizzard as they drove past a fatal accident on the other side of the turnpike, and the incident led to divorce. Pearlman’s characters often need to deal with loss, and here, it’s a loss that keeps on taking.

“He liked to see the customers relax on the chair, as if this quasi-biblical experience transported them to some soapy heaven; as if, briefly dead, they could call their sins forgiven.”

The voyeur arranges a pedicure with the woman whose man left without saying goodbye. Pearlman’s sentences come tumbling from her accordion of time;

Remarkable details

“Muffy and Stu Willis slid into the store at least twice a week. Like many long-married people they looked like siblings—both short, both with fine thin hair the color of Vaseline, both with a wardrobe of ancient tweeds and sand-colored cashmere sweaters. An inch of pale shirt showed at the neck of Stu’s sweater. Pearls adorned Muffy’s. The rims of their glasses were so thin that the spectacles seemed penciled onto their old and yet unwrinkled faces.”—“Assisted Living”

Lengthy perspectives

“Happiness lengthens time. Every day seemed as long as a novel. Every night a double feature. Every week a lifetime, a muted lifetime, a lifetime in which sadness, always wedged under her breast like a doorstop, lost some of its bite. When she went back to New York she would feel that a different person had occupied her body for a while, and a different wardrobe had taken over her closet—now she wore only tees and jeans.”—“Stone”

Life and death

“But what counted was how you behaved while death let you live, and how you met death when life released you.”—“Blessed Harry”

Yes, some of her stories may be too short to handle, in an Aristotelian fashion, everything that happens. Then they may seem like reporting. But one should forgive the occasional stone in a field of diamonds.
E.I. SPECIAL MEDICAL RAPPORT
FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

Pollywollydoodlegram

My wife Ellen (aka Mrs. Coach, aka Gram Ellie, aka the Wild Irish Rose, aka The Google Queen) has studied medicine. No, she didn’t receive formal training. She is that most wondrous of all learners, the autodidact, and she has only to hear of a disease or operation (and she hears of many), and she hits Google and susses out more studies and anecdotal evidence in an hour than med school can impart in a year.

She can out-diagnose any TV doctor you can name, Oz, McGraw, even McDreamy.

I help out by providing her with an in-house example of all sorts of diseases, syndromes, conditions, and maladies.

For those of you who missed January’s episode (“Intimations of mortality: Crazy Heart,” issue #63), I recently added still another doctor to my support staff after a trip to the emergency room early on a Sunday morning (symptoms: a meth-crazed conga drummer was pounding on my heart) and a subsequent meeting with Dr. Bachhuber, ace cardiologist, who diagnosed me with atrial-fibrillation.

In this month’s thrill-packed adventure, I find myself checking into the St. Mary’s Sleep Center for a sleepover, pillow in hand, jammies packed along with my new issue of Sports Illustrated, having been advised to do so by my very own sleep doctor, Scott Johnson, who, like Dr. Bachhuber, is terrific-- straight-shooter, funny, personable, concerned, incredibly well-versed in his field. If he thought I needed a polysomnogram, then that’s what I would have.

For the 94+% of you who will never have the joy of taking a polysomnogram (or as it is known in my family, the “pollywollydoodlegram”), it’s a truly surreal experience. After the "sleep technician" got me all hooked up with what seemed to be several hundred electrodes on head, chest, and legs, I looked in the mirror and heard the voice of the mad Dr. Frankenstein cackling, “It's alive! It's ALIVE!”

“You really expect me to fall asleep with all this hanging off me?” I asked Nicole.

“Most do,” she said cheerfully.

Being me, I didn’t.

It wasn’t so much the wires as knowing someone in a nearby room was waiting for me to go to sleep! Creepy. Also, if I needed to go to the bathroom ("If," he says! I’m a 70-year-old man with a prostate!), I had to call Nicole, who had to unplug me so I could carry the little router box, dripping wires, into the bathroom. And here's the really creepy part. All I had to do was talk. She could hear me! Yikes!

“Nicole?” I would whimper into the darkness.

“Yes,” her kind, supportive voice would come on over the intercom. (Apparently she couldn’t sleep either, poor thing.)

“I have to go to the bathroom.”

“I’ll be right there.”

After 90 sleepless minutes, Nicole offered me a sleeping pill, but I declined, since the only time I took one I stayed awake hallucinating for two nights and two days. I finally got to sleep without the pill-- and woke up-- and went to sleep-- and woke up, finally sleeping pretty well from around 3:00 until 6:00, when Nicole woke me and announced that I had passed the test. I qualified! I have sleep apnea.

It’s a mechanical malady that shuts off your breathing tube for 15 seconds at a time while you sleep. (Naughty, naughty apnea!)

They returned my personal possessions, gave me $10 and a suit hot off the rack from St. Vinnies and a bus ticket out of town, and I emerged into the light of a new day, shouting, “Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, I’m free at last!”

Being a glass-half-full-of-caffeine-free-Diet-Coke kind of guy, I’m concentrating on the hope that treating apnea may sharply decrease episodes of A-Fib. Beat one, diminish the other. Win-win.

I imagine I’ll also become a much more charming bedmate for the aforementioned Google Queen. I just hope she doesn’t wake up and, still groggy, glance over at me wearing my C-PAP mask and scream “It’s alive! It’s ALIVE!”
Coach’s Bullpen Briefs
Pourchot publishes new romantic thriller

In *Open Souls*, a new novel by Becky Pourchot, Brad, a tough biker, and Olivia, an uptight cupcake baker, cross paths in historic St. Augustine, Florida. When they discover and open an ancient box, their lives decay into chaos. *Open Souls* chronicles the darkness they discover and the sacrifices they make to return to order.

“If you love the unexplained and you’re in my neck of the woods (Northeastern Florida),” Becky invites you to join her for a great night of storytelling on one of her Paranormal Tour Dates: Saturday, May 9, 5:30 pm, DOS Coffee and Wine, St. Augustine, Florida, [www.dosbar.com](http://www.dosbar.com)
Thursday, May 21, 5:30 pm, The Hammock Wine and Cheese Shop, Palm Coast, Florida, [www.hammockwine.com](http://www.hammockwine.com)
Wednesday, June 24, 6:30 pm The Beachhouse Beanery, Flagler Beach, Florida, [www.beachhousebeanery.com](http://www.beachhousebeanery.com)

Notes from Sandy’s party
As she reports in her column on page 15, Sandy Mickelson had a marvelous party recently, and I was delighted to spend the day before the party with her as well. I will never forget lunch with the regulars at the Vincent Bar and Grill. (Vincent consists of the B&G, a nicknack shop, a post office, maybe 20 small homes, a church, and some of the biggest silos I’ve ever seen.) We toured the gravel roads of Sandy’s growing-up years, investigating towns like Thor, Eagle Grove, and Humboldt- a wonderful slice of Heartland America.

And as a bonus, I mastered the complexities of a dice game called "Farkle" and learned that there is a family in America as competitive as mine.

I arrived home to find wife awaiting, dog completely recovered from a tooth extraction, and the news that granddaughter Lily had picked out her first pair of big-girl underpants! She picked super heroes. THAT’S my granddaughter!

Art Talk
Tom Hick’s new creation, “Screaming Fish,” demonstrates that the artist has not lost his touch.

Book Talk

Library Talk
This just in from our literary correspondent, George Cutlip: UK’s smallest library, in Belbroughton, Worcestershire, England.

“Too big to be a little library surely,” George reports, “but too small for a librarian and a check out desk as well.

“What’s more, I think phone boxes and booths, both here and in Mother England, should be brought back so people can have a quiet place to make a call, and also thereby not disturb those around them.”

The winner of last month’s nursery rhyme parody contest is...

Hey Middle Middle
Annette Van Veen Gippe

Hey middle middle you are such a riddle.
My stomach hangs over my pants.
I really try to watch what I eat.
But, now I have to resist *every* treat.
Hahnke Pahnke
Ed Pahnke
Cowd

A sour expression on his bewhiskered face, Hugh Heiferner sat alone in the kitchen of his farm house. Penned up in his out of the way farm at the turn of the twentieth century, he lamented his bachelor life. Elsie was the only single local young woman, and he knew why she was single. He’d seen better looking kettles.

Wind rattled the windows, and the flame in the kerosene lamp flickered as spring winds lashed the countryside.

His thoughts and dreams whisked him into the big city with its wonders, which he read about in books and newspapers. Hugh saw himself with bevies of beautiful young women in their flashy gowns from the dance halls. He yearned to be with those beauties.

All he had for companionship were 10 milk cows. He hated them.

Hugh vented his frustration and anger on the cows at milking time, smacking and yanking their udders while they mooed in protest. He took pleasure in their pain.

The clock struck nine, and Hugh yawned and crawled into bed. He lay in bed staring into the blackness until sleep overtook him.

A nightmare galloped in.

Hugh sat on a chair unable to move. Cow udders surrounded him. Wriggling towards him, the udders enveloped him until he couldn’t breathe. Hugh’s yells for help were unheeded. A revelation flashed before his eyes.

He awakened engulfed in his covers, sweating. He quickly proposed to and married Elsie.

If Hugh ever fretted about farm life afterward, the revelation reappeared in his mind’s eye, putting him back on the right course:

“Do unto udders as Hugh would have them do unto Hugh.”

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Extra Innings #67

“Meam amare matrem”

Madison, Wisconsin May Flowers, 2015

This month’s All-Star Lineup:
Sandra Rafter, Madonna Dries Christensen, Rex Owens, Jacob McLaughlin, Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks, John Swift, Deadline Den Adler, and Tom Hicks
with special guest stars
Sandy Mickelson and Jan Kent as The Word Whisperer™
Poetry from John Manesis, Norma Sundberg, Sandy Rafter and The Writer’s Poet™, Craig W. Steele
Internet Gleaners: Sandy Mickelson, Emily Auerbach, Steve Born, and Larry Tobin
Staff Photographer: Gram Ellie
Web Weaver: Kerrie Jean-Louis Osborne
The Masked Man: Brace Beemer
Stuntman: Yakima Canutt
Coach-in-Chief: Marshall J. Cook
Co-conspirator: S. Dardanelles

Because a kleptomaniac takes everything literally. I publish Extra Innings monthly and distribute it free to an open enrollment mailing list. To get on the list, email the Coach at: mcook@dcs.wisc.edu

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Next Deadline: Friday, May 22, 2015

And now, at last...
Lily turns three!