One day it happens
Can’t catch up with the fastball
Can’t run faster than fly balls
You might lie to yourself for a while
But you can’t lie forever
Gotta start a new life
No cheering
No crowds

In our beautiful memory
We were all handsome.
We could all sing.
We all had the heart
Of the prettiest girl in town.
And we all hit .300.

Those are the words of Buck O’Neil,
rendered in poem form by Joe Posnanski in
his book *The Soul of Baseball: A Road Trip Through Buck O’Neil’s America*. More Buck
on page 23.

**This month’s tricks and treats...**

Special guest star *Lisa Partee* tells
why “I Am a Writer” (page 9)

**Tom Crawford** utters
“The I, Thou of Sex” (3)

More short-short story winners (10)
  *Bill Spevacek*
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**Madonna Dries Christensen**
goes a haunting (13)

**Tom Hicks** explores “Afterlife” (16)

**Sandy Rafter** solves the puzzle (18)

**John Swift** spear **Phillip Roth** (21)

Plus your letters, blurbs,
your moment with Lily
and, as ever, so so much more.
Extra Innings
“consilio et animis”
Number 72 October, 2015

All-Star Columnists
Madonna Dries Christensen,
Sandy Rafter,
Rex Owens,
Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks,
Tom Hicks,
Jacob McLaughlin
and Jan Kent as THE WORD WHISPERER.
Special Guest Star
Lisa Partee
Short storyists
Bill Spevacek
Vic Johnson
Ron Hevey
Ed Pahnke
Reviewers
John Swift
Randi O’Keefe
Rex Owens
Poets
Tom Crawford,
John Swift,
Norman Paul
Sandy Rafter,
Gary Busha,
Alan Britt,
Marshall Cook
Norma Sundberg
and THE WRITER’S POET, Craig W. Steele

Staff neptis:
Lily
Team doctor:
Dr. Galen Adams
Internet Gleaners
Mary Callahan, Steve Born,
Larry Tobin
Web Weaver
Kerrie Jean-Louis Osborne
The Masked Man
Brace Beemer
Stuntman
Yakima Canutt
Reality checker
S. Dardanelles
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THE I, THOU OF SEX
Tom Crawford

All Actual Life is Encounter.
Martin Buber

Snails can’t hear the rain
but smell it I suppose.
It’s the nose
that brings them out
where they crawl
to each other
for their lovemaking,
right out in the open
and at such a slow velocity
(Be careful!)
it’s easy to crush a couple
on the wet foot path.

The hazards of sex, for sure:
like cumin and chopped garlic
in a wine sauce,
undaunted,
we’ll crawl our way
to the frying pan.

It’s the earth in its sweet,
slow simmer
we can’t resist,
an indulgent god
that eats us all up.

Numbers
Gary Busha

One is a raindrop
hung from a roof eave
in morning’s gray haze
Late at night I count one
finger of an iris root
Two is the sun and moon
reflected over water
Two is a tired prophet
talking to himself
Sparrows are three
They perch on apple branches
and sing to the wind
air and fire
Three notes they sing.

From Factory Rejects: Two for a Nickel, by
Gary Busha, Wolfsong Publications, 2015
Raging
Sandy Rafter

Blue Lake laps waves
gently across my forehead
until boaters race blindly by,
as I wait for the birds
to swoop pecking at me
beneath the surface,
waiting to be discovered,
or, swirled and twisted in swells
to sink like a copper weight
toward the circling nibbling fish.
I am buried at sea
like my sailor brother
who still lives in the city
but vast depths from me,
from my dreams and fantasies,
from emerald and silken moon
and sighs and whispers
of mine wailing through night mist
as I lapse within the surge
of almost reaching him,
he with no arms, heaving
in his own bluster of storm.

Inside and Out
Norma J. Sundberg

tiny fist clutches
dust motes in sun-rays
giggles follow
four small hand-prints
pressed into fresh cement
staking their new claim
an open window
flute notes intermingle
with rain and wind-chimes
a nest of fledglings
in a hanging basket
withering Impatiens
shuttered cottage
empty Adirondack chairs
drifting crimson leaf
moon slips
in and out of consciousness
lunar eclipse

THE WRITER’S POET
CRAIG W. STEELE

Writing Poetry

The writing of poetry’s pleasure;
you jot down ideas you treasure.
The only downside
that can’t be denied?
Ideas too brief for a measure.

Coach replies:
There once was a bard named Steele.
For limericks he had a great feel.
He claimed it was tough
to come up with such stuff,
but I detect no achilles' heel.
GRANDDAD
Alan Britt
For Melvin Lee Smith

Granddad instructs me in the garden . . . tells me what to plant, where to till extra, buds to pinch.

Granddad wears his plastic green-visored, straw stained at every broken crease, mangy hat.

Granddad identifies birds that visit the garden: cardinals, robins, catbirds, mockingbirds, jays, doves, plus finches with fingernails of rust staining their diminutive cheeks.

Granddad's life as a teenager—quite different from mine—surviving his teens by 1919, making my post wars, 1950's childhood rather charming.

Still, Granddad was out early, today, long before I arose, squinting at cucumber vines twisting like Soleil acrobats outside their Amazonian cages, or tomato vines’ flimsy elbows escaping 6 foot rebar, plus cayenne peppers tapping vermilion toes as court jesters or seahorses might against dew-soaked straw.

Now that I'm up, Granddad, of course, snores like a freight train.

Desert Monsoons
John Swift

Clouds dark with suspicion rumble thunder from behind the Spur Cross Mountains; It is summertime in Phoenix and seasonal monsoons doth threaten. But today no cloud dareth send its crystalline children into the Valley of the Sun to be eaten by the Urban Heat Island. Instead they prefer to look down at us and heckle.
Imperative
Marshall Cook

This is the morning I come unmoored, the day the bower breaks.
I feel empty inside, hungering for my home, my berth.
It happens, as it always does, at the first true fall dawn.
I am walking to church, it not yet even September, the early morning breeze cool,
the air crisp, the sky pure pale blue, white clouds like galleons impelled by west winds.
I am transported to the shore of a lake, still, rimmed with snow.
I am about to plunge into the icy water.
I steel myself against the shock, the exhilaration.
If I should jump and miss the lake, I will become a small bird, skimming the water.
I am in a little skiff adrift, tossed on choppy water.
Yearning swells in my heart.
The waters calm, as if He had commanded them to be still.
It will be dark soon.
I am not afraid of darkness or of the night sounds. Not much, I’m not.
It’s just that I want to see everything, I tell myself.
I think of my father, fishing in a boat like this, with me, then alone,
now dead these 30 years and yet with me every day.
I am nearing the age my brother was when he died.
There have been other nights like this, I think, but no night just like this one.
There are never two of anything, never a Christmas tree like this year’s Christmas tree,
which must be left out at the curb, to be cleaved into chips, when Christmas is over.
The moon rises, carving a silvery, shimmering crack in the water,
leading my eye to the beach, where a woman stands alone.
She is tall, with dark hair, straight and long, flowing down her back almost to her waist.
Without my willing it, the little skiff carries me on moon shadow to the shore.
We stand on the beach, embrace, caress. A sole kiss.
When we break the kiss, just moments later, it seems,
the moon has set, and pre-dawn’s light has seeped into the sky.
There is a cabin in the woods. They are waiting for me there. I have only to find it.
I do not know the way. I will need a guide. He will be there. I believe this with all my soul.
The first clear, cool air of fall pierces my susceptible heart.
BLESS YOU

Norman Paul

(Dedicated to High School Publishers)

Ye who edit high school papers,
Writing of such merry capers—
Candidates for *inky* glories—
Ye who pen such splendid stories,
Lovely essays, lyric fancies.
And those well-known romances;
Ye who, fearing no one's strictures,
Draw such enterprising pictures,
Black-and-white originators,
Embryonic illustrators;
Ye deservers of great credit;
Ye still greater souls that edit;
Ye who tell of every game.
And report victorious fame;
Ye who make such jokes and jests,
Laugh producers of the best;
May you never dread oppressors
All-too-literal professors;
May you never know affliction.
Bless you! Take our benediction!
And since wisdom always roams
'Round about inside your domes.
Fame's immortal red geraniums
We would wreath around your craniums.

—Published in the *Central High School Yearbook*, Madison, WI, in 1925 and sent to us by Peter Gilmore, whose mother was a senior in the school at the time.

**Norman Paul** went on to become a writer of multiple episodes for some 27 different television shows, including *Good Times*, *One Day at a Time*, *Get Smart*, *Mister Ed*, *Leave It To Beaver*, *The Real McCoys*, *The Burns and Allen Show*, and *Topper*. 
Will the “election season” never end?

from the Internet

If God wanted us to vote, he would have given us candidates.
~Jay Leno~

The problem with political jokes is they get elected.
~Henry Cate, VII~

We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office.
~Aesop~

If we got one-tenth of what was promised to us in these State of the Union speeches, there wouldn't be any inducement to go to heaven.
~Will Rogers~

Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.
~Nikita Khrushchev~

When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become President; I'm beginning to believe it.
~Clarence Darrow~

Why pay money to have your family tree traced; go into politics and your opponents will do it for you.
~Author unknown~

I offer my opponents a bargain: if they will stop telling lies about us, I will stop telling the truth about them.
~Adlai Stevenson, 1952~

A politician is a fellow who will lay down your life for his country.
~Tex Guinan~
**Am I a writer?**

I don't know if I am a writer or am merely a willing vessel that allows "The Writing" to come and visit with me and tell me stories about who I am and where I come from and what I actually think about some things. The Writing came to me one day, almost five years to the day, and saved my life. And because of the significance it has had in my life and the lives of my children, I am almost afraid to take the credit for it.

Five years ago, I was just starting this journey called Recovery. I was alone and had no support from my family. I remember distinctly thinking to myself, “My prognosis with this disease called Addiction would be more promising if I were diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer...”

I was so afraid that I was not going to survive because, at that point, I was beginning to have a nagging suspicion that in order for me to get better I was going to be forced to turn around and revisit some times and places in my life. I was going to be required to acknowledge some things about [back there] that scared me and had always threatened to kill me if I came much closer. . .

I then decided that since I probably was going to be a casualty to the disease of Addiction, I wanted to use whatever moments of clarity I had left to tell my children about who their mother was and what she thought about them and the life she tried to live. So I started to write. . .

I still cannot explain what happened next. Something happened every time I sat down to write. It was magical and otherworldly how my fingers would start typing; telling me things that I didn't know...no. I did know some things and had just forgotten them.

When I wrote I was safe and strong and smart and insightful and had value in this world. . . and I don't know if I should take the credit for all of that. I love and respect The Writing and I am so grateful that it found me worthy to give Its expression. So, I suppose that, by definition, would make me a writer.

*Coach’s note: Lisa Partee is currently in the Odyssey Project Class of 2016. This piece, written in response to an assignment, first appeared in the Odyssey Oracle, Volume 13, issue 2, September 16, 2015. I publish it here with Lisa’s kind permission. For information on the Odyssey Project, go to [www.Odyssey.wisc.edu](http://www.Odyssey.wisc.edu)*
**P.T. Barnum was right**

Bill Spevacek

It’s said some people were born to shop and shop well. Not me. My shopping gene is missing or badly mutated. However, today it was my turn to restock the larder.

Back home, emptying the grocery bags, she spotted the frozen broccoli: “What did you get that for? You won’t eat it and neither will I.”

“It was on sale. Think of the money I saved.”

“And the pizza cutters, potato peelers, and ice cream scoops?”

“Buy one, get one free.”

“Ten pounds of ground pepper?”

“Sixty percent off.”

“That money you saved--where’s my half?”

She picked up her keys and headed for the mall to spend her windfall. As the garage door opened, I reminded her, “Use the card with reward points. Only 50,000 more and we qualify for a Blue Tooth.”

---

**First earthquake**

Ron Hevey

The bed shook like a train thundering through, Victorian windows rattling in rhythm.

Where are we? Los Angeles – it’s an earthquake. Stand in a doorway. No, don’t.

Downstairs, onto the porch and out front we ran. Murray the innkeeper, surrounded by guests, greeted us: “Just a mild earthquake folks…”

“You get many?” I asked.

“Not like ’94.”

Across from the inn, Mexicans poured from public housing, little noticing our goings on over in Angelino Heights.

“You would be more comfortable back inside,” Murray soon said pointing to my skivvies.

No longer sleepy we sat around doing instant replays. Murray popped on *Thriller*, turned up the volume, and we watched Michael Jackson moon walk into Eastlake Inn.

“They used this place for the video,” Murray said. Outside Mexicans joined in, singing and dancing. Made the whole place shake once more that night.

---

**What happened after the dog barked in the night**

Vic Johnson

A dog barked.  
A man awoke.  
Footsteps were heard.  
A shot was fired.  
A woman screamed.  
“He’s dead!” said the cop. “Do you know him, sir?”  
“My wife’s lover,” said the husband.  
“You lie, he is not!” protested the wife.  
“This old guy with a beard?” said the cop.  
“Yeah,” said the husband. “She had a crush on him.”  
“Why was that?” asked the cop.

“He brought her stuff – gave her gifts.”  
“Ooh! — Why did you do this!” bemoaned the wife.  
“I love you,” said the husband.  
“You know his name, don’t you?,” said the cop.  
“He’s an impostor,” declared the husband.  
“Is that so?” said the cop.  
“Yes,” said the husband. “Any fool would know that.”

“Then how do you explain,” asked the cop, “the sleigh and eight reindeer parked on your roof?”
**E.I. BONUS SHORT STORY**

**Little Nipper**

**Ed Pahnke**

Morna Coyote trotted back and forth. Another mating season had passed by, but she had been ignored. Oh, how she longed for little ones scampering about. Her sadness would bring tears to a glass eye. Shut away in a stretch of woods, Morna seldom saw other coyotes, except for that one time a few weeks earlier when that Vinnie came sniffing and romping around. She blushed under her furry coat. The runt of the litter, she’d always been shy. Looking at herself in a pool of water, she saw a gangling critter.

Her head down and tail between her legs, Morna walked slowly into the grassy field across from the buildings belonging to “those humans.” She saw a little puppy bouncing through the high grasses and clusters of pink Prairie Phlox. Morna’s heart embraced the little critter, her chance for a family.

The “critter” belonged to the people in the lofty brick and stone mansion on the other side of the field. Though the puppy looked coyote-ish, it was really a Norwegian elkhound.

Morna closed in on the puppy and sniffed—politely, so as not to frighten the little puppy. The puppy sniffed in return. It was love at first sight for Morna, and she named the little fellow Nipper. Morna took him by the scruff of his neck and trotting off into the woods. This having a family was easy.

While Morna trotted to her lair, the householders, Sonny Gar and his wife, frantically searched for their missing pup, Corky. Calling out his name and scouring the fields and buildings did not locate the little fellow. As day melted into night, flashlight beams flickered round about.

The next day, the Gar family contacted neighbors.

“Corky’s gone, vanished. You know our little Norwegian elkhound pup, right? Please let us know if you see him or know where he is. Thanks.”

Sonny and his wife, Ginny, began scrounging nearby fields and woodlands, especially folds in rocks and a glacial drift kettle depression, all to no avail. It was as though Corky had been swallowed up by who knows what. Sonny and Ginny thought the worst—a coyote—and shivered at the thought. Why had the little fellow wandered away from the safety of their backyard?

Back in their home, Ginny was on the verge of tears. After comforting her as best he could, Sonny poured himself a large glass of wine, then a second, gulping them quickly. Ginny began checking their house and grounds again for traces of Corky.

Sonny had a different idea. Supper time for Corky was approaching. Sonny filled Corky’s cup with his food and rattled it vigorously. He marched out into the adjacent fields, still shaking the cup.

Corky, alias Nipper, heard a familiar sound. He sat up. It must be supper time. In the distance, food rattled in his pan. He licked his lips. Well, he’d had enough of this getaway stuff to last for a while. Corky scampered away for his supper. Morna saw him and dashed after her adopted pup. The little fellow led her on a twisted path through underbrush and between rocks until he reached Sonny and food. Morna screeched to a stop when she saw the two united.

With tears in her eyes, Morna turned towards her lair. Upon arriving at her lair, there was that funny feeling in her abdomen again. She’d been feeling poorly for weeks. She lay down, and moments later, a pup emerged. She immediately named him Nipper. “So that’s what Vinnie had been up to,” she figured.
How to Speak Like a Greek, or

*So much depends on which syllable you accent*

**Famous Gods and Goddesses from Greek Mythology**

*How many can you pronounce?*

- **Aphrodite:** The Goddess of love and beauty.
- **Calypso:** The sea nymph who held Odysseus prisoner for seven years.
- **Dionysus:** God of wine and pleasure.
- **Persephone:** Goddess of Spring. (Hangs out in Hades in the off-season.)
- **Prometheus:** One of the Titans, who stole fire from Mount Olympus and gave it to mankind.
- **Achilles:** The greatest warrior in the Trojan War. Famous for his heel.
- **Sisyphus:** According to Homer, he was the wisest of all mortals. For stealing secrets from the gods, he was condemned to roll a huge rock up a steep hill endlessly in Hades.
- **Antigone:** Daughter of Oedipus, killed by the gods for burying her dead brother.

**Lesser Known Gods and Goddesses**

*How about these? (Careful. These are tougher.)*

- **Telephone:** Greek Goddess of communication.
- **Envelope:** Greek Goddess of messages.
- **Antibias:** Greek God of civil rights.
- **Amperes:** Greek God of electricity.
- **Follicles:** Greek Goddess of healthy hair
- **Spareus:** Greek God of mercy.
- **Limeades:** Greek Goddess of cool, tangy drinks.
MEANDERING WITH MADONNA

MADONNA DRIES CHRISTENSEN

Let’s go haunting

When Christopher James moved his family to Perry, Florida, in 2006, they had no idea the two houses they bought were haunted.

At Greystone Manor (1904), once a morgue, strange happenings occurred: Windows opened by themselves, rugs were moved, things were pulled from the attic, doors slammed, and passerby reported seeing someone by the tower window when the family wasn’t there.

A woman wallpapering a bedroom heard little girls’ voices and saw children peering through a crack in the door. She fled, saying that the voices screamed at her to get out of the house.

Ghost hunters, who have detected spirits, recorded voices, and saw unexplained orbs of light, say the house is a portal for spirits, one of them belonging to someone from the late 1700s to mid-1800s who was wealthy, prominent, and had servants.

He was not well-liked, and when he died he didn’t have a good transition. His spirit is angry because he’s not being shown the attention he once enjoyed. He’s tall, with a medium build, dark hair and eyes, and a mustache. He dislikes visitors.

Christopher says, “I would love to believe the house isn’t haunted, but too many things have happened. There were about 20 recorded deaths here. Twelve known ghosts haunt this house. Ten are children who died in a fire in an orphanage before this house was built. Voices call the name ‘Sarah.’ A prostitute was supposedly stabbed to death in a bathtub.” He used to hold Halloween tours at Greystone, but he no longer owns the house.

The family’s residence is The Calhoun House (1901). Not long after moving in, an incident unhinged Christopher. While home alone and painting a room at three in the morning, suddenly a green light shot out of the wall, flew around the room like a neon laser, and shot back into the wall. He thought it was a reflection from outside, or maybe a firefly had come inside. Badly shaken, he dialed Leah’s cell phone, told her what he’d seen and that he wanted to move, he couldn’t take this any longer. Leah calmed him and said she’d be home in an hour.

The women in the garden

One day, when Christopher and a friend, Jason, were in the garden erecting a gazebo, Christopher saw a woman walking in the yard. Her hair was piled atop her head; she wore a long white dress and carried a basket on her arm. Christopher said to Jason, “Who’s that woman?”

Jason looked up. “What woman?”

Christopher pointed. Jason saw no one. But later, standing a few feet apart, they both felt a cold breeze pass between them, although the day was stifling and there was no wind.

Christopher later learned that a woman who lived in the house long ago had a bountiful garden. She often took a basket and gathered flowers and vegetables for her neighbors. Christopher is a skilled gardener. His garden in Perry and his previous garden in North Palm Beach have been featured in gardening magazines. He believes that his Perry garden flourishes beyond what it should. Might he, or his plants, receive spiritual energy from the woman in white?

Christopher told no one about the woman. But when his son later reported that he saw a woman sitting on the back porch reading, the description fit the woman in the garden.

A guest, who knew nothing about these sightings, wanted to tour the house. As she reached the second floor, she stopped and screamed. She said she saw a woman at the other end of the hall. She wore a long white dress and was carrying a basket. The guest left and never returned.

Christopher says the woman in white has not been seen for some time, that perhaps she’s satisfied with the family who lives here and that he has resurrected her garden.
FOR THE LOVE OF WORDS

ESTHER M. LEIPER-ESTABROOKS

Scarecrow, beware, crow!

Halloween; good time time for scarecrows! Are these beings benign or do they resent their odd half-life, perpetually stuck on a rough pole? Inanimate—or can they truly mimic life or take on life? Maybe scarecrows long to see the world but stay stuck in place.

I grew up a country child and helped Dad, an excellent gardener, make them each spring. So why does an inanimate figure seem eerily imbued with life, and not just to crows? Surely that's because the scarecrow both mocks humanity yet holds power to stir the imagination.

Scarecrows not only invoke poems, but every culture has a name for them including Tao-Tao, Bogle, Flay-Crow, Maupin, Moggy, Kelson, Espantalho, and Ruebark.

Barbara Euphan Todd wrote novels including scarecrows who come to life, and there was a TV adaptation made from them. Also don't forget the beloved and benign scarecrow from THE WIZARD OF OZ.

Scarecrows today seem outdated. In California, farmers erect aluminum flutter-strips to spook birds while at least one winery uses “air dancers,” the tall, pencil-like balloon beings which--I suppose with the help of helium--dance up and down in car lots, getting attention.

In my verse novel, A CAPITAL CRIME, Nid-Might is a crow who steals a cap from a sleeping elf. Chaos ensues till the happy ending—even for the felonious Nid-Might!

HOLY CROW, WELL, NO!
The big fellow Nid-Might (which is Midnight reversed)
--According to Crocus, his wife, must be first;
Yes, first to steal sweet corn with its tender, gold yield
Or to perch on the scarecrow set for guarding the field,
While the bigger the kernel, the better such treat!
And oh how much Nid-Might can crunch, munch, and eat!
Yet Nid-Might gets blamed for dark tales he's tattled
Since he rarely keeps quiet if his small brain gets rattled,
And he'd be light-fingered, save that born a black crow,
He's got talons for clutching so he can grab, flap, and go.
Yes, up high and scot-free he'll squawk from his beak:
“See how easy I stole this, so it's all mine now, screek!
SCREEK!”

It's hard to hate Nid-Might, even though he's cheeky and conceited. At least the hat he stole becomes a gift for his wife's new hatchlings, to make their nest soft. After all, crows can't knit, and Nid-Might does prove a good provider.

Doubtless scarecrows can be allowed their own point of view, and I used the following piece (long before Nid-Might's escapades) in Peter's and my Christmas card in 1975. I like it as much now as when I wrote it.

THE SCARECROW'S CHRISTMAS
Lean old Patch the scarecrow is dressed in tattered rags;
Such holes at knees and elbows while straw head sadly sags!
Not even his old enemies, the crows, have come to jeer.
They're silent this December; but will be loud next year.
Yet hold it! What's that jingle; quick crunch of crusted snow?
Sleigh bells! Hear Kris Kringle, who's shortling, “Ho, ho, ho!”
He's dressed Patch in a Christmas suit, natty, neat, and new:
Warm top hat, thick ear muffs, plus fur-lined mittens too.
The straw man is so happy that he holds his head up high
As windblown feet dance on the air and frost winks in his eye!

This poem won Honorable Mention from editor Eugenia Moore's PIPER CALLING magazine contest, and was published in 1976.

Never fear whimsy; embrace it if you like it. I do, though people tell me I never grew up. That's often not a compliment, but when it is, such praise makes me content, and helps negate any setbacks in my career or general living. Now, let me close with a quatrain from the poet who calls herself simply Leani:

THE SHAME BLAME GAME
The scarecrow has a head of straw
But tries to teach bold crows the law.
His scoldings they will never heed:
As he laments, they feed and feed!
I can watch a horror movie any time of the year, because I'm a big fan of the genre, but in October I like to watch my favorites while also discovering gems I haven't seen. Here are movies to get you into the Halloween spirit.

**Universal Monster Movies**

These are the essential films for this time of year. I grew up watching them, and they have remained some of my favorite monster movies, especially the Frankenstein films. Boris Karloff does an excellent job as the monster and is able to alternate between being scary and sympathetic. Frankenstein has the best sequels. *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* put my two favorite Universal monsters in one movie.

*The Wolf Man* began my obsession with werewolves, and Lon Chaney Jr.'s performance is stellar. *Dracula* introduced me to the great Bela Lugosi. Christopher Lee is great in the Hammer films, but Lugosi is my favorite Dracula, because he was the first actor I saw as the character. Other notable Universal Monster movies I recommend are *The Raven*, *The Invisible Man*, *The Mummy* and *Creature From the Black Lagoon*.

**The Thing**

This is easily my favorite horror movie. I've yet to see a John Carpenter movie I don't like, and this is his best work. It works in so many ways. It's a great monster movie, the characters are well developed, the atmosphere is tense with a sense of dread, the effects are some of the best, and all of these elements come together to make up a perfect horror movie.

**Alien**

It's been 36 years since this movie came out, and it's still scary. The Xenomorph is such a unique and scary movie monster. H.R. Giger's effects are incredible. Ridley Scott's direction is solid. Sigourney Weaver's Ripley is one of cinema's greatest heroes. She's a strong character, she has moments of fear and vulnerability, and we're able to relate to her. The way the movie builds and gets more and more tense is one of the best aspects. It's a slow burn film that holds your interest.

**The Evil Dead series**

*The Evil Dead* is the best movie made on a low budget. The passion that Sam Raimi had for that first film is clearly seen onscreen. The actors do a really good job, the effects look convincing, and it's a great straightforward horror movie. This labor of love is a must see for aspiring film makers and film lovers alike. *Evil Dead II* is one of my favorite sequels, with a blend of horror and comedy. *Army of Darkness* is a blast as well. The movies in this series are among Sam Raimi's finest work, and Bruce Campbell is perfect as my favorite horror movie character, Ash Williams. I'm really excited for the new TV series coming to Starz this Halloween.

**Ed Wood**

This isn't a horror movie but rather a great biopic for fans of B-movies. I think It's both Tim Burton and Johnny Depp's best movie. Depp is fantastic as Edward D. Wood Jr. He gets the director's passion and drive right. Wood may not have made the masterpieces of his time, but this movie shows that he loved what he did, and he's one of my favorite directors because of that. *Plan 9 From Outer Space* is a great B-movie. The best performance in the movie is Martin Landau's Bela Lugosi. He deserved the Oscar he won for it.

**JAN KENT IS**

**THE WORD WHISPERER**

**Don’t be a psycho; use commas**

It's finally caught up with the Word Whisperer. I've been gifted with that T-shirt that reads – *LET'S EAT GRANDMA*. Please make that: *

LET'S EAT, GRANDMA.* Commas save lives.
Harry Houdini called himself The Greatest Magician the World has Ever Known. Other people called him that, too. This guy was good! He was celebrated all over the world, not only for slight-of-hand magic, but for his death-defying stunts as well. He was a confident, some said cocky, showman who developed a consuming interest in the theory of a life after death or, as he called it, “the Afterlife.” He talked openly about the possibility of a soul returning here in some form after death. Wow. That would be some trick.

Harry liked to debunk the occultists then popular. If anybody were magically going to bring back a departed soul it would be Harry Houdini the Greatest Magician the World has Ever Known.

He attended séances where an occult medium would contact dead souls, usually for money. Houdini sat holding hands with, perhaps, a family. The lights were dimmed or turned off altogether. The medium entered the room, completed the circle of held hands and started an incantation. Soon the group would hear furniture move, smell smoke, hear bells ring, the kind of signals that could only be interpreted as signs from a returning loved-one from the great unknown.

Harry proved time and time again that these so-called mediums were no more than amateur magicians. After the séance ended, he would turn on the lights and walk around the room exposing all the hidden gizmos that brought the dead back. He died in 1926. You must remember: this guy was the Greatest Magician the World has Ever Known.

Houdini didn’t show. In fact nothing was unusual in Appleton that night except for the large crowd of believers assembled at Harry’s house. He has never shown. Even today a few hopeful, adventurous Pilgrims show up for his birthday and reunion party, but not Harry.

Have I mentioned that I’m an old fart, over 70-years-old? I’ve been trying to solve this afterlife thing for a long time. I’ve made arrangements with many of my friends; some are still alive, but more are already dead. Our agreement is quite simple: After you die, you have 24 hours to contact at least one of the others using an acceptable signal. My wife hates this part because she has to sleep on the couch; she hates the smell of melting wax and the light from the candles I burn in our bedroom on these vigil nights.

“Suit yourself.” I say. I close the door behind her, light the candles, turn off the lights, and get ready.

Okay. I admit I’ve fallen asleep, just for a little while, I think, during just a couple of these opportunities, but I’ve been awake for most. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting for that book to fall or a photo frame to collapse. The air could turn colder, or the candles could go out. Even one unusual event would be proof enough. There’s a huge list of phenomenon our members will accept from fallen comrades.

As of this date, no one has made it. At one time I had faith. I think that perhaps Harry Houdini, the Greatest Magician the World has Ever known, had found the return portal but then got stuck in it. I can picture him grunting and furiously kicking his angelic legs while my dead friends unsuccessfully try to push him through. Jeepers. I hope not.

My agreement with my friends is sacred to me. None of them have returned during my vigils. Something is wrong. I can feel it. I rehearse, train and practice every night so that my very last thought before death will be: I’m going into the Afterlife to push Harry Houdini, the Greatest Magician the World has ever known, through that return portal.
BREAK A LEG
REX OWENS

All for the show

Our civic theater group is blessed with two directors who LOVE children’s musicals. I believe that having anything to do with a children’s musical production surely is an assurance of a key to the heavenly gates. The truth – working on a children’s musical makes me nervous and ill at ease. The energy that children release during a musical rivals all other human energy in any capacity – even an Iron Man event.

In 2010 one of our best children’s directors staged CHILDREN OF EDEN, a musical based on the Book of Genesis. The first act is the story of Adam, Eve, Cain and Able, the second act the story of Noah and the flood.

An African American tenor the size of Luciano Pavarotti— not quite the voice, but he was good— played the role of God. The children’s ensemble had 26 members, and there were 29 “storyteller” parts and 16 major roles for a cast of 71. That’s insane.

Our theater was a donated dairy barn over 45 years ago; we pay $1 per year rent as long as the facility is used for theater. We store props, sound equipment, set pieces and costumes in The Barn and use the main floor as a practice facility. The main floor is large enough that we duplicate the size of the production stage – barely. There’s often not enough room to construct the full set. All directors would like to construct the full set to allow actors the full eight-week rehearsal schedule to learn how to move on stage and with any luck do a little acting.

The director’s vision for this set was very ambitious. Fortunately, her husband is a master carpenter. The set included a 12 foot wall, and much of the action occurred at the top of the wall. The director wanted two sets of stairs, one on the side and one in the center of the wall. During tech week the carpenters discovered the stage wasn’t big enough to accommodate two sets of stairs. Their solution was to build a set of moving stairs. They rigged the base of the stairs with coasters to allow the stairs to be moved and then a locking mechanism to ensure the stairs were secure and safe for actors to use.

Everything was looking good the last week of rehearsal until the director decided that she didn’t want stagehands seen on stage moving the stairs at the end of a scene. Really? Sometimes directors make ridiculous demands and this was one of those times.

One of our more experienced stagehands offered a solution. He volunteered to crouch inside the stairs and when given the cue would raise the stairs up on casters and move it himself to the new location. A stage is marked with “spikes” a reflective tape to show him the exact location the stairs needed to be. It worked! The stagehand paid a personal price because he had to remain crouched underneath the stairs the entire 2 ½ hour run of the show.

During one show, while I was operating the curtain, we noticed a small, very intense light backstage. On headsets the stage manager asked us to locate the source of the light. We looked and looked until someone shouted – it’s Sandy! The stagehand was in place crouched underneath the stairs with a flashlight reading a book. He said he was bored and thought he would catch up on his reading during the show. We all laughed very hard. He agreed that we would signal him when he needed to turn off his flashlight. At the close of the show he proudly announced that he had finished reading two books.

Your RMA of of Irony
For the puzzle (last issue), I challenged you to tell what is happening at the end of the list of clues. Remember, the clues tell a story as you proceed through them, 1 - 21. Here we go:

**#1 Ship of Fools** This is pretty clear. A ship with a bunch of foolish people is setting sail. Why are these people foolish? Where are they going?

**#2 Pacific Rim Theme Song** Ah, we have our destination answer right away.

**#3 Island in the Sun** More specifically, the fools are headed to an island.

**#4 Life On a Rock** It’s an inhabited island. Who’s on it?

**#5 Close Encounters** The fools are having some close calls or become very friendly (close) with whoever inhabits the island. Which is it? Read on.

**#6 Annie’s Song** Do we know who this is? Not really (but she’ll appear later if you don’t guess before then).

**#7 Rusty Cage** This is unexpected, isn’t it? Why would a cage suddenly be mentioned or become important? Why would the fools need a cage, or are they in one? Nah, the last isn’t likely since a cage wouldn’t hold all the people on the ship.

**#8 Bless the Beasts and the Children** It’s not likely children would be on the ship for such a long journey. Is there a beast? Hmm, would they try to capture the beast? Think “ship of fools.”

**#9 Hard Times in New York Town** It’s doubtful the fools would stay on an island far from home forever, so they must have sailed away and gone to NYC. But why are there hard times at home? Look at #7 and #8 again.

**#10 Mr. Wonderful, #11 Public Animal, #12 I Used to be an Animal** These three clues tell about what is happening in NYC.

**#13 A Great Day for Freedom** No, it’s not the 4th of July, but there is freedom for some being. Who is it? You don’t have to look far.

**#14 It’s a Shame about Ray** Remember #6 Annie’s Song? — the one clue that isn’t connected easily to any other. This is a tricky clue. Sometimes, names are spelled different ways. This applies to the name Ray. How is Annie connected to Ray and to the freedom clue?

**#15 King of the Nighttime World, #16 Let’s Keep the Dodgers in Brooklyn** Wow, king of the night, and there’s baseball to see, too. Wait, who is this King? This is a bold telling clue.

**#17 Hell in N.Y.** Not everyone is welcomed at a ball game, and sometimes it’s like airplane seats; not everyone fits. And, do you wonder, if freedom was denied before, is there some anger involved?

**#18 Up, Up and away** We all like to get away — especially when we’re bothered. Where to go in NYC to a high place?

**#19 Watching the Planes Go By** You can see this.

**#20 The Blues Come Falling Down, #21 I Could Fall in Love** He patted her and put her down before he died.

Answer to the question “What happens at the end?”: King Kong is falling off the Empire State Building.

(The island in the 1933 movie was Skull Island inhabited by natives, Kong, and dinosaur types. In #10, Mr. Wonderful, Kong was billed as the 8th Wonder of the World. He wanted to be an animal again, #12, not a spectacle. Bless the Beasts and the Children. Did you figure out Annie and Ray of clue #14? Fay Wray was the actress playing the part of Ann Darrow, who was on the ship of fools, loved and later captured by King Kong.

Coach’s note: Sandy and I were disappointed that no one sent in an answer to the quiz. We’d like to hear from you if you at least attempted it.
Why do supermarkets make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front?

Why do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and a diet coke?

Why do banks leave vault doors open and then chain the pens to the counters?

Why do we leave expensive cars in our driveways and lock useless junk in the garage?

Why does the sun lighten our hair but darken our skin?

Why can't women put on mascara with their mouths closed?

Why don't you ever see the headline 'Psychic Wins Lottery'?

Why is 'abbreviated' such a long word?

Why do doctors and attorneys call what they do 'practice'?

Why use artificial flavoring for lemon juice but real lemons for dish washing liquid?

Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?

Why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called rush hour?

Why isn't there mouse-flavored cat food?

Why didn't Noah swat those two mosquitoes?

Why do they sterilize the needle for lethal injections?

You know that indestructible black box that is used on airplanes? Why don't they make the whole plane out of that stuff??

Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?

If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport the terminal?
Luck, fate, God’s intervention, or happy accidents?

*SERENDIPITY*, compiled by Madonna Dries Christensen
iUniverse Publishing 2015
reviewed by Randi O’Keefe

*SERENDIPITY* brims with 71 stories and poems by 45 authors from the U.S., Canada, the UK, and France, relating their encounters with intrigue, magic, and the power of serendipity.

According to Christensen in the book’s Foreword, credit for the word serendipity goes to Horace Walpole, in 1754, relating to a fairy tale called *The Three Princes of Serendip*, in which the princes made fortunate discoveries while not in quest of anything in particular. Since then, the meaning has broadened. Christensen conveniently divided this anthology into three sections, using these definitions:
* An unsought, unintended, unexpected, but fortunate discovery—
* Looking for something specific; finding something better—
* Combined happenings which, coming together immediately or years apart, produce a good or welcome outcome—

Among the stories:
* A former teacher and student are not only unexpectedly reunited as adults, the teacher has unknowingly just purchased a vintage item given to her by the child student.
* Due to an online magazine article, a 1900s autograph book is returned to the great-granddaughter of a man who wrote a verse and drew an illustration in the book.

* As she is about to dispose of a worn robe that belonged to her mother, a woman finds a piece of her mother’s jewelry, which reveals the answer to a question the mother would never answer.
* On a walk with her grandfather, a four-year-old is looking for something in particular, something special. She’s disappointed when she doesn’t find it. However, Grandfather brings home something ordinary, and what he does with it is an eye-opening spectacle.

Birds, books, music, journals, photographs, restaurants, a piece of barn wood, treasured toys, and people all appear in serendipitous ways. In one case, items turn up exactly at the time they’re most needed. But serendipity is not always tangible; it can also be a moment of sudden understanding and peace with a past event.

Christensen expertly weaves pertinent quotes and editor’s notes throughout, enhancing the reader’s experience. Surprising, honest, poignant, funny, inspiring, and inexplicable—readers will find a blend of emotions in this collection.

For me, the stories prove that miracles still happen and prove that God cares about even the smallest details of our lives.

*Serendipity* is available from the publisher (www.iuniverse.com) or any other online book outlet but not in bookstores. A print copy is $19.95, an e-book $6.99. All royalties go to Down Syndrome Association of Northern Virginia.
SWIFT TAKE ON BOOKS
JOHN SWIFT
Roth betrays the reader with inconsistent characters

American Pastoral, by Phillip Roth
In the Biblical story of Job, (which we might call the Uz Pastoral, since Job was from the land of Uz) Job led the idyllic life, with seven strong sons, three beautiful daughters, and thousands of livestock. Job was a righteous and wealthy man. Then he lost all the livestock, all the children, and began to suffer serious maladies, not the least of which were his three “friends” and a kibitzer, there to betray, under the guise of help. In 35 lengthy back and forth long-suffering chapters, they blame him for causing all these problems himself by sinning against God.

Ultimately, after Job had forgiven these insults from his friends and prayed for them, he was blessed with an even better life than before, with seven more strong sons, three exceptionally beautiful daughters, and thousands of livestock, although one might argue that Mrs. Job had to suffer through 10 more childbirths, which may be what one gets for the advice, “Curse God and die!”

So, Phillip Roth and the American Pastoral. Do we want to read about another idyllic life blown to smithereens, whether or not it can be resurrected? One for which Roth was awarded the Pulitzer Prize? I blame Stephen King, who claimed that this was Roth’s best novel, for forcing me to read it.

I’m not saying it stinks; I’m saying it is a horribly told story.

Roth uses an alter ego, a character posing as a writer. This is tantamount to a movie in which the stage is set, the characters introduced, and then the film stops, the house lights come up, an usher stumbles onto the stage with a megaphone and mumbles, “Uh…Sorry about that…uh…but the writer wanted us to tell you…uh…that the rest of this movie is fake, never happened, made up of whole cloth. I guess that’s it…uh…turn down the house lights, please. Enjoy the rest of the movie.”

This is what Roth tells us through his alter ego when the main character of the novel dies in the early going, without really having said much of anything. The alter ego tells us, “Well, I’ll just make it up from here on then.”

Roth turns out to be a real Judas, betraying the unwritten contract between the writer and reader by carefully building up characters, then having them do things completely out of character. With this treatment, I never got comfortable suspending disbelief, without which many novels, including this one, just do not work.

I suppose one could argue that we never see the flailing feet of the duck as it calmly glides about on top of the water. American Pastoral describes the above water duck in excruciating detail, then dives under water to watch the terrifying fight to survive. So the surface description is of the perfect man, the hero, the U.S. Marine, the loving father and husband, the successful businessman, with a heart for the downtrodden, who wins every battle without breaking a sweat.

But beneath that vision lies a two-timing, faithless, stupid man and his equally compromised family and coterie of “friends,” who come more to betray than to aid.

Enjoy the book!
Tarnishing Harper Lee


Reviewed by Rex Owens

In the September issue of *Extra Innings* Marshall Cook and Madonna Dries Christensen wrote thoughtful and insightful reviews of Harper Lee’s *Go Set a Watchman*. Our Tuesday Morning Book Talk discussion group is reading both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman*.

The story provided by the publisher, Harper Collins, is that an editor originally rejected *Go Set a Watchman*, advising Lee to undertake a major rewrite—and *To Kill a Mockingbird* was the result. There’s no way to determine the truth, and in the end it doesn’t really matter. Given Harper Lee’s current medical condition, it isn’t clear if she gave permission or is even aware that *Go Set a Watchman* has been published.

I believe it’s unfair and inaccurate to compare the books. They’re very different books. Characters may have the same names, but the personality and age of the primary characters differ as much as night and day.

I have always found it difficult to find Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* credible. He has been diminished to a white knight in a white suit with admirable qualities of fairness and principles based on the rule of law, but he’s also one dimensional, aloof from his children, and more of a characterization than a living, breathing, middle aged man living in the south.

Frankly, Atticus is too good to be true.

The Atticus Finch we meet in *Go Set a Watchman* is credible, and we learn he can defend black man from injustice while still believing in gradual social progress that doesn’t disrupt the white culture of the south. Marshall’s description of Jean Louise as “self-absorbed, petulant, and insufferably judgmental” is accurate. While *Go Set a Watchman* is Jean Louise’s story, she’s not a character we learn to like or even care about. At best we can feel empathetic for Jean Louise.

The craft in *Go Set a Watchman* leaves a lot to be desired. The plot is uneven and, as Madonna pointed out, at points just boring. Chapter 9 is pure telling, followed by Chapter 10’s exposition of what the reader was just told. Both Chapters 11 and 15 are flashback scenes that have no place in the book and don’t move the story along; in fact, they’re detours from the main theme and story.

Chapters 17 and 18 are pure dialogue with no action. The dialogue borders on the trite rather than being compelling. While the entire story builds to the dialogue of Chapters 17 and 18, the dialogue is disappointing and unrewarding.

As an author, I find it most sad that *Go Set a Watchman* tarnishes the Pulitzer Prize winning contribution of Harper Lee to American literature. In addition, the only real beneficiary is the publisher, Harper Collins, which will generate millions in profit from releasing this book.

*Coach’s note:* During September, Emily Auerbach’s popular BookTalks discussed *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the new biography of Harper Lee, and *Go Set a Watchman* on successive Tuesdays. As always, the discussions were terrific.

The series continues in October with “Law and Disorder,” featuring discussions of Mark Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson*; Alfredo Vea’s *Gods Go Begging*; and Bryan Stevenson’s *Just Mercy*, UW-Madison’s *Go Big Read* book.

For information on the BookTalk series, contact Auerbach at: eauerbach@dcs.wisc.edu, 608-262-3733.
Hi Coach,
I like your new plan about submitting to EI. Keeping the newsletter to about 28 pages is a good length. And, publishing the extra pieces in the following issue makes sense.

Congratulations on another fine issue.
BTW: Loved the photo of Lily. Talk about flexibility! Wow!
Kind regards,
Randi Mrvos

Hi, Marsh,
Your solution to the pleasant problem of having too much material for EI seems fair. One thing you'll have to watch, though, is keeping the masthead current for each issue. I've noticed a couple of times where I've missed a month my name wasn't back in when I again had a column in it.

Am working on several photo projects at once—the city hired me to document the construction of its new Central Fire Station, the Janesville Fife and Drum Corps is having a 40-year reunion in November and I'm putting together some of the thousands of photos I took over the years to get them digitized, and I'm doing a slide show of one of our train trips for Cedar Crest on Sept 21. I just picked our 1980 trip to Seattle on the Empire Builder, so I'm picking slides to show. Those will be an "original" slide show, not digital.
Hope all's well.
Den Adler

Veeck's midget pinch hitter a hit
Was just looking at your latest Extra Innings, specifically John Manesis - "Veeck's Midget Plan was Picture Perfect."

I shared it with son Andy, who is a huge baseball fan as you are. He shared a few things about Veeck.

... Andy said Bill Veeck's dad worked for the Cubs, and he thought he was the president at one time. He said Bill Veeck planted the ivy at Wrigley Field. He was also known to sit in the bleachers with the fans when he was ill with cancer and simply enjoying the game. Veeck's son worked in the Frontier League with the St. Paul Knights. Just a little trivia I wanted to share. Andy has sure upped our interest in sports!!

Now back to Extra Innings.

Sharon Young

Coach's note: I'm a huge fan of both Bill Veeck (as in "wreck," as the title of his autobiography notes) and his son, Bill, who owns (or owned) the St. Paul Saints and, like his father before him, specializes in creative promotions and fan attractions-- like a nun giving massages in a barber's chair behind home plate, a pig bringing the baseballs out to the umpire, and... well, the list goes on.

It's almost Lily time,
but first some kudos...
This is worth a special trip to the library

Tom Hicks made it to the Waukesha Library recently for the honor of having his painting, “Partly Cloudy,” put on permanent display there. It graces the entrance to the Library’s children’s center. Only 17 artists have been selected in the past 10 years for this distinction.

“The Library changed their normal program for me,” Tom reports, “so that I didn't have to walk around. Because of my pneumonia, I just talked about the painting and gushed about the honor from a podium on a mic... then Jennifer and I hit the road for home.”

Tom is still battling multiple health problems. “I've learned to expect something new to strike and just live with it as best I can,” he says. “At present it's Anemia. I'm taking in red blood like a vampire on a bender .... I'm anxious to regain my strength and get back on the stationery bike and my Bow-Flex. And I will. I'll no doubt, look like Arnold by next spring.”

Reader scores a prestigious publication

David Krival, reports that his story, “Second Shift,” has been accepted by Rosebud Magazine, one of the best literary journals in the country. It’s about as fine an acceptance as you can get in the literary journal world, and many readers (and agents) will see it.

“Feel free to say in years to come that you knew the great and good David Krival, storyteller and designated hitter, when he was just an ordinary human being.”

Big thanks to Tana Polansky Mauer, Joan Hughes, and Sandy Rafter for donating books to the Little Free Library of Felton Place.

The artist with daughter Molly and grandsons Nolan and Tommy standing under “Partly Cloudy.”

And huge thanks to our own Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks, runaway champion in “Coach’s Circulation Crusade and Office Cleanup Caper” (see last issue), who signed up the entire membership of the BERLIN WRITERS’ GROUP of Northern New Hampshire, some 40 strong. With our thanks, Esther will be receiving a bundle of books and some back issues of Creativity Connection.

Buck O’Neil has the last word

Young scouts point their guns, Write down the numbers. Are they watching? Really watching. I wonder if they’re looking for life. Because that’s the secret, man. Miles per hour, That don’t mean nothing. Does the fastball have life? Does it move? Does it dive? Does it rise? Bothers me. Too many scouts Not watching for life. Life passing them by.

Again taken from The Soul of Baseball: A Road Trip Through Buck O’Neil’s America, by Joe Posnanski.

And now, at last...
Your moment with Lily

Could Grandpa Coach say “no”
to a request for a cookie?