Rooting for laundry

for Lawrence Peter Berra
May 12, 1925 - September 22, 2015

Now that Yogi has joined Casey, Billy, Whitey, the Mick and the others, playing extra innings in God’s eternal ballyard, nobody remains from Dad’s old Yankees, the team he loved all his life.

Yogi came to that final fork in the road and, true to his own immortal advice, he took it.

These days we root for laundry, the team name the same, but the players’ names constantly changing (except for the Yankees, who don’t deign to put their names on their shirts. You’re just supposed to know.)

Players hung together in Yogi’s day (not that they had much choice in that long-ago era, before the Flood). Yogi, Mickey, and Whitey were Yankees for life, nothing but pinstripes for them.

Yogi played in 14 “October Classics,” the World Serious (which will now commence in November and probably include games called on account of snow and ice). Yogi won 10 of them. Nobody else ever did that and most likely nobody ever will again.

He wasn’t much to look at, as another Hall of Famer, Mel Ott, once noted (he wasn’t the only one who noticed), “and he looks like he was doing everything wrong” while somehow making everything right.

“Nobody goes there anymore,” he said of a New York restaurant. “It’s too crowded.”

He didn’t make sense. He made joy. He was so much better than sense.
Extra Innings
“consilio et animis”
Number 73 November, 2015

Special guest writer
Raven Fabal

All-Star Columnists
Madonna Dries Christensen,
Rex Owens,
Mark Gaedtke
Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks,
Ron Hevey,
Tom Hicks,
and Jan Kent as THE WORD WHISPERER.

Reviewer
John Swift

Poets
Bonny Conway
Sandy Rafter,
Alan Britt,
Buck O’Neil
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

Circulation and respiration director
S. Dardanelles

Circulation director, midwest division
Norma “Sassy” Sundberg

Circulation director, New Hampshire branch
Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks

Coach-in-Chief:
Marshall J. Cook

...who distributes Extra Innings monthly to an
open enrollment mailing list. Coach welcomes
your submissions. All copyrights remain with the
author after publication. For Writer’s Guidelines
or to get on the mailing list, email Coach at:
marshall.cook@wisc.edu

Extra Innings comes to you through the good
graces of the writing program at the Division of
Continuing Studies, University of Wisconsin-
Madison, led by Christine DeSmet. Find out about
workshops, courses, conferences, and critiques at:
www.continuingstudies.wisc.edu/writing

Extra Innings is a proud supporter of
Write by the Lake, The Writers Institute,
The School of the Arts at Rhinelander,
Weekend with your Novel,
the Odyssey Project,
and The Little Free Library

Back issues available at:
www.continuingstudies.wisc.edu/writing/extra-innings
One of the most vivid memories I have of nature and my response to it began on a beautiful summer day just after I had turned nine years old. At that time, my family lived in a cramped studio apartment above the garage of my mother’s boss. Our second floor part of the old wood house made creaking noises in the night as the house settled around us. There were some cracks around the windows that whistled on windy nights, and it wasn’t very nice having to share what I remember to be one big room between all of us—mom, daddy, brother, and me. It made me feel poor, so I spent as much time outside as I could.

I always loved being outside when we lived in that house because, for all its drawbacks, the old house was situated right on the beach! If I walked down the long beach to the south of the house, the mangroves grew thick beside the shore. I loved collecting shells and the skeletons of horseshoe crabs and playing with the conchs as I sat in the warm sand at the edge of the water. This was what I called “my perfect place.”

On the summer day in question, I had taken refuge in my perfect place from the arguments going on at home. So I played on the beach, collected my treasures, and made a little camp under the mangroves, where I sat and watched the gulf waters and the circling gulls. I must have been daydreaming and lost track of time because the next time I remember looking up the sky was an eerie dark grayish-yellow color!

The waves were high and fierce now, rolling into shore with a crash-slap-crash sound! I huddled deeper into the mangroves as the rain began to pour down, big, fat, warm drops that made deep depressions in the sand. I didn’t want to make a run for home because I was pretty far down the beach, and, also, the lightning was flashing as fast as the thunder that hurt my ears.

This, I would realize when I thought back on it, was my first real experience with a tropical thunderstorm. I was in awe of it, afraid of it, fascinated by it, and yet I loved it so much because of its passion, its strength and, yes, its beauty.

Now those yellow skies held huge galloping rolls of inky black clouds rolling into and over each other on their way toward my shoreline! Oh the magnificence of it all! I can still hear the cacophony of noise, the wind whipping the trees about and frothing up the waves! It was a little frightening yet somehow enchanting—inspiring! And while it made me feel very small, this storm also made me feel strangely honored to have seen it, to have been a part of it.

After the storm blew over, I made my way back to the room I shared with my family over the garage of my mom’s boss, but this time I brought the memory of that magnificent storm with me, and I felt better, smiling a secret smile every time I revisited the memory of “my” storm. No one had noticed my absence, and that was just fine by me—I was wet and tired and happy!

I have since seen many storms rolling off the Gulf of Mexico and many beautiful lightning shows in the skies off the Florida coast, but never has the passionate nature of a tropical storm so touched me. And in my mind, I can see it still.
Bowing out after a four-line debut

To end this series on community theater, I’ll share my one and only experience on stage. For the past eight years my wife has encouraged me to relinquish my backstage roles and take my place under the lights. Her rationale has been that I enjoy public speaking and generally am at ease in front of an audience. Her rationale, on the surface, seems ironclad. But there’s a chink. Public speaking is very different from acting.

In public speaking I am myself. In acting, I’m someone else. I have 64 years’ experience being myself and have learned to be at ease with who I am and express myself in front of an audience. Acting requires getting into someone else’s skin and convincing the audience you are that person.

For me, the most talented, convincing current actors are Daniel Day Lewis and Meryl Streep.

Acting requires memorization. I am not good at memorizing, haven’t been since my days in college Latin classes. I am comfortable speaking extemporaneously but not spewing dialogue from memory.

Acting also requires emotion with body and facial gestures. Public speaking employs a few hand gestures, small moves around the stage, and the only emotion is me being myself.

Public speaking and acting are very different skills.

Having said all that, I did try out the stage – once. Our theater group decided to take a risk several years ago and diverge from our standard program of children shows, musicals, and comedies and stage a drama. Our director was eager to produce the classic *Wait Until Dark*. Our cast was blessed with two leads who graduated with college theater degrees. The lead role, made famous by actress Audrey Hepburn, is blind.

While the show was in rehearsal one of the actors, a friend of mine, became ill and couldn’t continue. The director is one of my best friends; we have worked together in theater for years. He asked me to step in and take the role of Policeman #2. That’s right; my character didn’t even have a name. The character appears in the last act, the last scene, the last two minutes of the show and has four lines. That’s it-- four lines.

Policeman #1 also had about four lines and was not diligent about his work. At several of the shows Policeman #1 forgot his lines and stepped on my lines. I used my improvisational skills to fill in with lines I thought worked. I don’t even think the director noticed.

We were short backstage staff so during Act 1 I helped with props. At intermission I changed into costume and waited for the grand finale.

I never learned how to bow correctly at the end of the show. Several of the other actors tried to coach me, but I was terrible. The director made us practice taking bows – because of my incompetence. Finally, at the dress rehearsal, as he shook his head and laughed, he told me to do whatever I wanted. God knows I tried, but I never did learn how to bow.
MEANDERING WITH MADONNA MADONNA DRIES CHRISTENSEN
Sprinkled with serendipity

Books for children are by their nature infused with magic-- an artistic collaboration between author, publisher, editor, illustrator, and book designer. While recently compiling my anthology, *Serendipity* [See last issue for a review], I learned of one collaborative effort that had an extra measure of fairy dust sprinkled on it.

The project began years back when Nancy Tupper Ling’s friend gave birth to a daughter with Down syndrome. Ling wrote a poem for the baby, “Our Fragile Emissary.” Later, she expanded on the theme with a story called *My Sister, Alicia May* and sent the manuscript to a small press. The publisher, knowing there was a void in the market for this kind of material, accepted the story and began seeking an illustrator.

In my serendipity collection, Shennen Bersani explains the surprising way in which she became that illustrator.

```
~ ~ ~ The call from an editor came out of the blue. She said, “I love your art on your website! Especially your rendition of children. I feel you would be the perfect fit for a book I’m publishing. The author is Writer’s Digest’s Contest Grand Prize winner Nancy Tupper Ling. The book is based on an actual family, about two sisters, from the perspective of the older one, on what it is like being the big sister of a girl with Down syndrome.”

I stopped breathing. I became dizzy. Memories of my lifetime flashed through my mind. Hyperventilating, I dropped my phone on my lap. Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out.

“Are you okay? Did I say something wrong?” the woman asked.

Shaking, I managed, “You couldn't have known. I have one younger sister, and she has Down syndrome!”

The editor expressed shock. She couldn’t wait to tell the book’s author of the coincidence.

I said that I would want to meet the actual girls, and I would need to think about the assignment. It would be an emotionally challenging book to illustrate.
```

```
Time passed, and the publisher called again. “Do you remember? We spoke on the phone about your illustrating a book?”

“Yes,” I stammered and said that I’d lost her phone number. I explained that I’m my sister’s legal guardian. I grew up babysitting her every day after school while my parents worked. The two of us are yin and yang. The editor arranged for me to meet Alicia and Rachel, the subjects of the book I was to illustrate.

When I met Alicia and Rachel, I saw Holly’s and my relationship mirrored in theirs. I was 12 again. I fell in love with the two of them. When I saw their mother, I saw Mom, giving her all to her girls. The whole scene, the memory, gave me goosebumps.

While illustrating the pages of *My Sister, Alicia May*, the author’s words echoed memories of growing up with Holly. Tears ran down my cheeks and fell on the artwork. The scenes were so true to my life with a sister with Down syndrome that I choked with emotion. ~ ~ ~

As the grandmother of a child with Down syndrome, I recognize the love and authenticity in Bersani’s artwork. She incorporated mannerisms, characteristics, and postures easily identified if you know someone with Down syndrome. She described her technique as “colored pencils, Prismacolors and Derwent brands, on watercolor paper.” The story is authentic, too, for author Ling drew her material from Rachel and Alicia May and their mother. The publisher brought all that knowledge together into a beautiful and important book for children and adults.

For other work by these two women, find Bersani at [www.shennen.com](http://www.shennen.com), and Nancy Tupper Ling at [www.nancytupperling.com](http://www.nancytupperling.com). *SERENDIPITY* is available at online bookstores and the publisher [www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com). All royalties from *SERENDIPITY* go to Down Syndrome Association of Northern Virginia.]
```
Fall is my favorite time of year. The weather is crisp and clear, and the hardwoods are putting on their annual show. These sun drenched autumn days make me grateful to have been born and raised in such a beautiful part of the country. Someone please remind me of this during the third week of January when it’s 27 below zero.

Like anything else, however, fall has its downside. It’s also hunting and fishing season, when I begin to hear the voices of the men who have gone on before me. They were competent men, much better men than myself. They hunted and fished successfully. They also tried (unsuccessfully) to teach me to be like them.

They still whisper in my ear when I’m busy playing computer hearts. “It’s getting to be about time to look for muskies. Water’s low, and I’ll betcha a nickel they’ll be hanging down by the weed beds. Muskies are especially hungry in the fall as they’re lardin’ up for the winter. They’ll be out there, sure as shootin.”

Those guys were always sure as shootin’. And they keep at it. “I’d betcha them muskies would go after darn near anything this time of year!” I finally pushed myself away from the computer and hauled myself down to the river.

You have to understand that these guys are liars. They’re not malicious liars, but they specialize in false hope. But hope is what drives outdoorsmen, and it’s what caused me to shut down my computer, load up the blue bullet, and head for the woods.

The blue bullet is a 1992 Toyota Corolla, which belongs to my stepdaughter. This is, by writer Patrick MacManus’ definition, the perfect car for traveling out in the woods-- any car that belongs to someone else. I have to confess, I do own a brand new pickup, complete with four-wheel drive, Onstar, telephone, and an XM radio. I’m afraid to take it out of the garage for fear of getting dust on it. They tell me it’s very nice.

Today the call of the wild was all about partridge, and so I headed for a certain hardwood lot up along the Tomahawk River. What with all the voices rattling in my head, I could hardly hear myself think.

“Are you sure those number 5 shotgun shells are gonna do the trick? Didn’t you always use 6’s before?” Five minutes down the lane someone pipes up again. “Now don’t go shooting anything off the ground. Let that bird get up in the air. Any man who ground swats a partridge oughta be drawn and quartered.”

With partridge hunting, you’d better use the bathroom before you start, or you’re asking for trouble. You’re hiking along, enjoying God’s creation, trying to think about hunting, but after 100 yards or so, your mind begins to wander and suddenly you’re thinking about Oprah, or lima beans, or Margaret Thatcher, and BOOM!!! The partridge crashes out from under your very feet, and your whole body jerks to attention. If you’re very lucky you have not experienced a major lower gastrointestinal event.

That’s what makes the partridge a very dangerous animal to hunt. They don’t warn you. They usually explode from underfoot. After four or five of these bursts from the undergrowth, you’re wound up tighter than a clock. You couldn’t shoot a bird if he stuck his head down your gun barrel. You just want to go home and lie down for a while.

All partridge hunters know about this. I’ve heard many a partridge hunter ask another, “Did you go out today?”

“Yup.”

“Did you see anything?”

“Yup, I saw three.”

“Did you fill your pants?”

“Nope.”

“Good for you.”

It’s been good to get all this off my chest. They say naming your problem is half of solving it. As I look out my window I can see clouds coming in from the west. Looks like it could rain tomorrow. And suddenly the voices are at it again. “Best fishing is in the rain. The fish can’t see you through the splashing on the surface. I’d betcha a nickel you’ll find a nice northern over by the weed bed off the point. It’s the time of year for them to be lardin’ up for winter. Sure as shootin’…”
SIXTEEN THINGS THAT IT TOOK ME OVER 50 YEARS TO LEARN
by Dave Barry
Thanks to Mary Callahan

1) Never, under any circumstances, take a sleeping pill and a laxative on the same night.
2) If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve, its full potential, that word would be "meetings."
3) There is a very fine line between "hobby" and "mental illness."
4) People who want to share their religious views with you almost never want you to share yours with them.
5) You should not confuse your career with your life.
6) Nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and dance.
7) Never lick a steak knife.
8) The most destructive force in the universe is gossip.
9) You will never find anybody who can give you a clear and compelling reason why we observe daylight savings time.
10) You should never say anything to a woman that even remotely suggests that you think she's pregnant unless you can see an actual baby emerging from her at that moment.
11) There comes a time when you should stop expecting other people to make a big deal about your birthday. That time is age eleven.
12) The one thing that unites all human beings, regardless of age, gender, religion, economic status or ethnic background, is that, deep down inside, we ALL believe that we are above average drivers.
13) A person who is nice to you but rude to the waiter, is not a nice person.
14) Your friends love you anyway.
15) Never be afraid to try something new. Remember that a lone amateur built the Ark. A large group of professionals built the Titanic.
16) Men are like a fine wine. They start out as grapes, and it's up to women to stomp on them until they turn into something acceptable to have dinner with.
FOR THE LOVE OF WORDS
ESTHER M. LEIPER-ESTABROOKS

Maybe professor ‘iggin’s should have left Eliza alone

You may never hear Cockney speech or connect it to poetry; nor did I till recently. A chance-met article on language enlightened me. Cockneys are special Londoners, clannish yet conspicuous as blue jays. One is Cockney if born within the sound of Bow Cathedral’s bells in London’s East End. These street-smart folk are quick with words and, yes, cocky. Even their language is, quite deliberately, not what other Brits use. But from a linguist’s viewpoint, Cockneys have created a humorous way to communicate with each other which, to the rest of us, seems odd—rhymed gibberish.

Consider: Have you ever employed a rhymed word-pair that referred to something only a listener in the know would understand? The message of such Cockney phrases is cryptic but greatly enjoyed by the initiated. Still, even secret language leaks out. I learned of such Cockney in-jokes from an article printing exotic examples. Rhyming word pairs indicate a third word or phrase, at times with some logic, at other times with none apparent. Thus the pair “Army and Navy” refers to gravy, “bacon and eggs” means legs, and “biscuits and cheese” indicates knees. “A butcher’s hook” is to look; “pen and ink” means stink, “bird lime” is time, and “Lath and plaster” is master.

“Can you Adam and Eve it?” means “Do you believe it?” “Trouble and strife” means wife; “grubby and tubby”—hubby; “bees and honey”—money; “dustbin lids”—kids. A “biscuit and cookie” is a rookie, “fish and chips” is hips—(large from eating too much?), and a Lady Godiva is a fiver—a five pound note of currency. “Jumbo Jet” means a bet, and “Wayne Rooney” means being loony.

Such odd combos have little in common with poetry patterns such as sonnets, villanelles, or even limericks. They thrive on zaniness, plus the pleasure of keeping their meanings secret to outsiders. Peddlers used it to collude on prices, while criminals mystified police. Such word-play aids Cockney unity, while, ironically, challenging intrigued scholars. Critics and high-brows sneer at such flippant mockery.

New combos continue to appear.

Poet John Holmes says the trend began around 1840. Wikipedia states, “It’s a matter of speculation whether rhyming slang was a linguistic accident or developed to confuse non-locals.

Locals take great pride in such “secret language” so I jotted:

COCKNEY MOCKERY

They warm their lives with odd, short rhymes
Set forth in London since olden times;
Yet still used today, right up to the present
In a way they find most amusing and pleasant,

So let outsiders struggle; folks not in the know
Which way conversation is apt to go!

Of course some word-pairs are rather tawdry
Plus others obscene; yes, dirty and bawdy,
But risque or not, Cockney language takes fun
In puzzling outsiders—yes, most everyone,

(Would Cockneys gripe—if they came over here—
With American usage that we hold most dear?)

American proverbs and slogans must often sound mysterious to Brits, just as Cockney rhyme pairs seem to us. Certainly the United Kingdom’s version of English and ours have separated.
**THE CHEERY TRAVELER**

**RON HEVEY**

**Canadians are the nicest people**

We had made it into Canada, our joke being that Diane’s son would have to go over the American Falls in a barrel to get in. He’d lost his passport.

“Get your passports out,” Diane had told us, yet, night before the trip the young man revealed, “Can’t find my passport.” No passport, no trip.

What would Oprah do? Oprah would call her congresswoman, and, let me tell you, Congressman Chaka Fattah’s eager beavers turned around the passport in two hours.

Not long and we trekked, of all places, under Niagara Falls, with me wondering why anyone would want millions of gallons pouring over their head on a rainy day. Tons of water overhead, and all I craved was the taste of choice Canadian beef while sipping Crown Royal Reserve.

The trip’s original idea was IndyCar racing on Toronto streets. We hoped to watch our favorite, Scott Dixon, win as he had two years ago. Fourteen years earlier Diane picked rookie Dixon for his first win at her first IndyCar race. making her an instant fan.

Toronto rains pouring during a TV interview, Diane stepped next to Dixon, who graciously signed Diane’s ticket from his inaugural win. What a champ!

Next day Toronto remained rainy. A bank that wouldn’t have known us from Waunakee changed $500 for only three bucks, much less than our hotel wanted. The bank manager joined us to chronicle Toronto tourist sites and hailed a cab for us, a huge favor since Toronto’s trolley cars turned out too complicated to learn in a weekend.

I was finding that four adults have four different agendas for the trip.

Diane’s son scoped out exotic restaurants. With 200 nationalities in Toronto, he found Dim Sum on one corner and Indian cuisine on the next. Her daughter hit the shops, raindrops notwithstanding. She wanted to go clubbing but, finding no takers among us, instead we enjoyed Toronto’s Second City featuring *Saturday Night Live* wannabes.

The next day of rain-soaked track events was shortened. No racing for us yet. Sunday, the last race day, threatened thunderstorms.

We took a long walk among Toronto skyscrapers, which were spread out more than New York and Chicago. The same architect seemed to have spawned more than a few of them, although thankfully, ethnic neighborhoods remained mixed in.

Racing would end Sunday on the lakefront parkway that had to be reopened for Monday traffic. We had forgotten ponchos, but a friendly vendor found us bright red ones so we could watch cars skid all over the track in warm up.

**Canadians are the nicest people and loyal too.** I felt it strong when the race announcer said, “Please stand and take your hats off for the national anthems.”

**Every person stood respectfully in pouring rain and cheered both *O Canada* and *The Star Spangled Banner*.**

IndyCar’s professional drivers slowed down from 170 mph to make cars stick. Dixon, our guy, started a strong fourth. He could win from there. But although Dixon raced well, he missed the podium.

We stuck around next day to view outstanding Frida Kahlo, Picasso and Warhol textiles. More than the prints, Frida’s letters were bombshells and not just notes to hubby Diego Rivera.

When we visited Ontario’s Capitol, a too-young-to-be guard at the entrance was feeding squirrels. Reminded us of the old days of open access to the Wisconsin State Capitol.

At night we treated ourselves to the CN Tower’s 115th floor rotating restaurant with city views enthusiastically explained by a seasoned waiter.

We’d be on our way home by 6:30 a.m. only to find a dead battery after four days. This could ruin your day, but Canadian AAA got us running. The young tech who’d come to Canada from Korea refused to take payment, insisting, “This is new car; Hyundai pay for you.”

We were on our way home having survived a trip with two adult children, an amazement to our friends.
SHORT STORIES FROM
THE FUNERAL PARLOR REST ROOM
TOM HICKS

Day job blues

I love to listen to the blues. I used to be a regular at several of the small, smoky clubs that are hidden from Main Street on the north side of the city. Those dens where electric blues screamed from towers of speakers piled on small bandstands. Places infected with rhythm and soul. Places where even old white men would get up and dance.

Some of the best musicians in the country played these joints on their way to Chicago, Kansas City, or Dallas. The best guitarist was Bobby Brean. He was a local kid and made the rounds in all the downtown clubs. Bobby was always playing somewhere. His bottleneck slide techniques are as legendary as his harmonica riffs. Bobby could bend a note until it screamed for release, like a victim on a torturer’s rack. He was backed with good guys on a stand-up bass, drums and keyboards – but it was Bobby we all came to hear. He could lift your soul with his expressive guitar.

He was a good looking kid – tall, lean, with a chiseled face and big hands. Women would throw their underpants at him while he sang and tormented that old Gibson hollow body – some men did, too.

Everybody loved Bobby Brean.

I gave up the nightlife. Years went by, and then I ran into Bobby at my office. I went down to the lower level for a Coke one day, and there he was – dressed in a gray pair of overalls, stuffing soda cans into a vending machine. Same Bobby – older, but still a good-looking guy. We caught up on old times, and I asked him what the hell he was doing filling vending machines. Here’s what he told me:

“Hey, man. This is the day job. Every artist has to have a day job. I know I ain’t no vending guy. You know I ain’t no vending guy, but I need health insurance, man. This is the day job, baby. A guy’s got to eat while he’s waiting for his break.”

Bobby laughed, dug into the bowels of the machine, and pulled out two Cokes. “You’re a writer ain’t cha?”

I nodded as he handed me a cold can.

“So you’re an artist, too. It’s all the same for us – musicians, actors, artists, writers. It’s all the same shit, man. You’re a writer. This is your day job, man. You’re waiting for your break, too.” Bobby winked at me, downed his Coke and then crooned melodiously in that soulful blue tenor voice of his, “You gots the day job blues.”

He tilted his hand-truck and said, “See ya, man. Keep writing. Ya hear? We’re artists, baby. We’re artists waitin’ for our break. You keep the day job till that happens, man.”

I stood there listening to Bobby sing “The Day Job Blues” while he followed his hand-truck to the elevator, remembering his past stage performances and thinking to myself – I know I ain’t no ad guy. He knows I ain’t no ad guy. I’m a writer, and this is just my day job.

Bobby Brean could always lift your soul, man.

JAN KENT IS
THE WORD WHISPER

“Why, in England they haven’t spoken it in years”

And we all think we speak the same English. How about “Everyone treated themselves to a nice . . .bit of chook. All was well.” Sounds risque, doesn't it? But that's just a bunch of Australians having a chicken dinner.
Finding the perfect job

*Thanks to Larry Tobin*

1. My first job was working in an Orange Juice factory, but I got canned. Couldn't concentrate.

2. Then I worked in the woods as a Lumberjack, but I just couldn't hack it, so they gave me the axe.

3. After that, I tried being a Tailor but wasn't suited for it --mainly because it was a sew-sew job, and people liked to hem and haw about the price.

4. Next I tried working in a Muffler Factory, but that was too exhausting.

5. Then I tried being a Chef- figured it would add a little spice to my life- but just didn't have the thyme.

6. Next I attempted being a Deli Worker, but any way I sliced it, I couldn't cut the mustard.

7. My best job was a Musician, but eventually I found I wasn't noteworthy.

8. I studied a long time to become a Doctor but didn't have any patience.

9. Next was a job in a Shoe Factory. Tried hard but just didn't fit in.

10. I became a Professional Fisherman, but I couldn't live on my net income.

11. Managed to get a good job working for a Pool Maintenance Company, but the work was just too draining.

12. So then I got a job in a Workout Center, but they said I wasn't fit for the job.

13. After many years of trying to find steady work, I finally got a job as a Historian - until I realized there was no future in it.

14. My last job was working in Starbucks, but I had to quit because it was the same old grind

So I retired- AND I FOUND I'M PERFECT FOR THE JOB – I LOVE IT!!!!!
Extra Innings

Poets

THE WRITER’S POET
CRAIG W. STEELE

Poet’s note: I’ve always enjoyed chain verse (or linked verse), so I decided to apply it to the limerick. I’ve never seen a chain limerick before, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t hundreds out there. My offering this month is “From Inspiration to Dedication” (chain limerick; 17 lines).

From Inspiration to Dedication

I’ve heard that profound inspiration is key to a written creation, and by perfect word choice in expressing your voice, you’ll readily gain adulation.

You’ll readily gain adulation, creating a sound reputation, if you write to beguile in a formalist style, perfecting your versification.

Perfecting your versification through hard work and self-motivation is more crucial than breath, and more serious than death, requiring intense dedication.

Pink Catawba Evenings
Bonny Conway

Summer vanished with butterflies roses dry on the pergola
Autumn spilled ancient treasure chests of leaves like Ali Baba gold
chords of moonlight play over vines night air carries grapes dusky scent wine is the sky, the trees, and mist that spreads pink sapphires through your soul
Classy Chapeau
Norma J. Sundberg

My abode has a new hat
No more Leakage indoors,
or feet through the ceiling
in an effort to repair sagging
roof line, from inside.
My house has a new hat,
sparkling shingles,
complementing the spiffy
green door out front,
painted in order to please inspectors.
No MORE buckets below
to catch rainwater,
No MORE rainwater,
No more umbrellas, tarps
over cavernous holes.
No more reign of rain
or tears...

At this point in life,
I'm really glad to rent.

The Wisdom of Buck O’Neil

Sometimes I remember
Clear as yesterday
But other times
I have to wait
Until the fog clears.
It’s something growing old.
The fog hangs around longer
And you wonder if it will ever blow away.

I never minded
Riding the bus
Back in the old days.
Other guys hated those rides.
Complained the whole way.

Said: “We ever going to get there?”
I’ll read the paper
Or talk with somebody
Or just look out the window,
Watch the trees.
We’ll get there.

We always get there.

You haven’t forgotten.
You just think you have.
Memory is like baseball.
You might oh-for-four today.
But you’ll get three hits tomorrow.
Right? Good days and bad days.

You’ll remember.
Those stories aren’t gone.
They’re just behind a few cobwebs.

As recorded and put into verse form by Joe Posnanski in The Soul of Baseball: A Road Trip Through Buck O’Neil’s America.
“No man stands so tall as when he stoops to help a child.”
Abraham Lincoln

“Tag, you’re it”
Marshall J. Cook

Once upon a time ago, I bent to take your hand, and we walked out into our morning. You gathered sticks and rocks while the sun still hid behind the hill. The Saint Bernard bounded to the fence to sniff your hand. I chased you through the reeds that smelled like licorice by the river.

I could not know how I would remember this, or how, so many years hence, your daughter would let loose my hand, and I would hear your voice echo in hers as she cried “Daddy!” and ran to your arms.

Nonsense from Colt Lane
Alan Britt
(For Billy, Bobby & Bart)

He named his cat Mr. Heaton & chanted Mr. Heaton they're a cheatin'
every chance he got.

He twisted southpaw curveballs around the water cooler while hypnotizing his hitters. He wrecked his red 90cc Honda & implored me to swear an oil slick so wide it engulfed Browning Drive, the street with two heads & no tail; that's how the fender got bent, but still he deserves that muscular black 150, because he knows how to open it up on Southern Boulevard then tamp it back down just before Gun Club Estates.
Four from Sandy Rafter

Flight
Leaves wave and twirl
to the grass, duller to my eyes
this autumn during my own fall.
My ride to the hospital shows me
the backup camera in his car.
I already see too clearly
the cancers behind me.
He jokes with me, I think,
but my operation looms large,
a fury spreading across my mind;
a grab of the wheel would lead me
to a westward escape, except
wildfires metastasize there, too.

Annie
I saw her in a western movie,
admired the jacket and pants
she wore mounted on her horse,
thick hair flowing in the wind,
a no nonsense smile,
determined but not abrupt.
She looked the rangers
and me in the eye.
I told her this was
my third breast cancer.
She replied she’d had four.
She pushed me toward
the operating room, strong
and full of grit, raised me one,
both of us barbed wire
protecting the range of ourselves.

After Surgery
I am dressed with a bandage
I cannot see and told redness
and swelling might occur.
I have no worries.
I will ride in a limo medi-van
straight to the nearest wild party
where I shall salsa with doctors
wearing Latin suede-soled shoes.
I will hire Swiss guards from the Vatican
to periodically inspect perimeters.
My gown will be quite skimpy behind,
but tubes like fringe will decorate.
I shall be the Belle of the Ball
until my meds wear off.

Mastectomy
I dreamed of my breast
last night, floating:
the Hindenburg,
a Zeppelin,
the Goodyear blimp,
only not such a good year for me.
Then, I grabbed for it
before it drifted away;
too late, my breast distorted
into a withered cucumber
spitting seeds of contempt
at the surgeon’s knife.
I never realized before,
I could have been Prom Queen
when high school boys
panted over stuffed sweaters.
I have since met steadfast men.
The Story of the Lost Child, Elena Ferrante
I had never heard of Elena Ferrante, a pseudonym for a Neapolitan who writes in her native language. This novel, translated by Ann Goldstein, is the last in Ferrante’s four-part Neapolitan saga of Lila and Elena, two fierce friends who first meet as children growing up in Naples, grow apart, and are then reunited in Naples while in their thirties.

My copy had seven pages of blurbs praising this and her previous efforts, using words like “brazen,” “flush,” “fierce,” “bold,” “relentless,” and “intoxicatingly furious.” I could go on, but this was just the first blurb and, as I said, there were seven pages of them, so someone has heard of Elena Ferrante, but they all admit they have no idea who she is.

She writes with a soap opera style or, if you prefer, in the Neapolitan theatrical tradition known as sceneggiatta which, according to Wikipedia, uses “plots [that] revolve around melodramatic themes drawing from the Neapolitan culture and tradition—passion, jealousy, betrayal, personal deceit and treachery, honor, vengeance, and life in the world of petty crime.” This pretty well sums up the book.

Both Lila and Elena are married to men they no longer live with, a condition which seems normal to their culture, where divorce was for a long time illegal and now legal but almost impossible. New men come and go; the byproduct of old and new children stay with the mother.

The Camorra, a mafia-type criminal society, originated in Naples hundreds of years ago and is active today. Currently, there are 111 Camorra clans reported in Naples alone controlling the milk, fish, coffee, and bakery businesses. Mafiosa-style killings and mysterious disappearances are common in life and this book.

Lila is the more striking and brilliant of the two, but Elena was able to continue her education through high school and college and now holds a sliver of world renown as a successful novelist, a career that was kick-started by plagiarizing some of Lila’s homework. That career lets her live in Florence or wherever she wants, while Lila remains in the Naples ghetto that spawned them.

Circumstances change and force Elena to return to that ghetto, where her world renown is worth nothing and where Lila is now in charge. Old loves and old arguments reappear; people get killed, disappear, life moves on.

The book is quite lengthy. Its bulk came in quite handy the other night as I was able to use it to bludgeon a scorpion into leaving the bedroom where he had wandered, scaring my wife.
Male-Female Dictionary

thanks to Steve Born

1) THINGY (thing-ee) n.
Female.. Any part under a car's hood.
Male..... The strap fastener on a woman's bra

2. VULNERABILITY (vul-ne-ra-bill-ity) n.
Female.... Fully opening up one's self emotionally to another.
Male.... Playing football without a cup.

3. COMMUNICATION (ko-myoo-ni-kay-shon) n.
Female... The open sharing of thoughts and feelings with one's partner.
Male.. Leaving a note before taking off on a fishing trip with the boys.

4. COMMITMENT (ko-mit-ment) n.
Female.... A desire to get married and raise a family.
Male...... Trying not to hit on other women while out with this one.

5. ENTERTAINMENT (en-ter-tayn-ment) n.
Female.... A good movie, concert, play or book.
Male...... Anything that can be done while drinking beer.

6. FLATULENCE (flach-u-lens) n.
Female... An embarrassing byproduct of indigestion.
Male..... A source of entertainment, self-expression, male bonding.

7 LOVEMAKING (luv may-king) n.
Female...... The greatest expression of intimacy a couple can achieve.
Male...... Call it whatever you want, just as long as we do it.

8. REMOTE CONTROL (ri-moht kon-trohl) n.
Female.... A device for changing from one TV channel to another.
Male... A device for scanning through all 375 channels every 5 minutes.
COACH’S MAIL POUCH

Readers did try Sandy’s puzzle

Coach’s note: Even though we didn’t get any entries in the effort to crack Sandy Rafter’s 21-clue salute to King Kong, several of you wrote in to say that you’d given it a go. Here are a few of your letters.

Twenty-One is a good number in many endeavors but not as a number of clues to a puzzle, at least for me. My attention span is limited to about one or two good clues.

I enjoy all the issues, but the short stories and your poem were particularly good this time, with a dash of the mysterious, never a bad idea, if, like clues, it’s not overwhelming.

John Swift

Hello Marshall!

I did spend a little time and effort on the puzzle. Got as far as thinking of people going to an island to capture some animals for a zoo or something similar. But then I got confused with the rest and gave up. But I am sure, even if I had tried harder, I wouldn't have solved this one. Solved last one with your input, or wouldn't have done that.

Andrea Lozinsky Schoenthal

Hi, Marshall,

I did indeed try to solve Sandy’s puzzle. Maybe I can blame a short attention span on not figuring it out. That or I simply wasn't bright enough to discover the answer by studying the song titles. Some weren't familiar to me, and I considered downloading them to see if clues were hidden in the lyrics. That's when the attention span came into play. Looking back, that was probably a mistake. Even if I hadn't deciphered the puzzle, I'd have heard some new music. My hat's off to Sandy for making the puzzle. Now that I understand the process it's pretty easy to see how the clues pointed to King Kong. Great job and great I.E., as always.

My best to you,

Pat Fitzgerald

A definition and a metaphor for EI

Ah, I so enjoyed this issue. The poetry was exquisite (and everything else pretty darn fun to read, too.) Thanks for the read, the community, and the Lily photo.

EI looks to me like an extended writing community love letter.

Cheers,

Catherine Young

Dear Marsh, just a note to say hello. Also to say your poem “Imperative” is your best yet. What a wonderful bit of writing. Appreciated for sure.

My retired husband, John, cuts the grass, edges, trims tree branches, hauls out dead refuse to the curb, puts in new plants, and the yard looks lovely. Sometimes I forget to tell him. Maybe because he makes it all look so easy. But it certainly isn’t.

You remind me of John, with your Extra Innings. You do similar things, cut, remove excess materials, fit things in the correct places, grow your publication, and plant thoughts. You also make this seem so easy. In both cases I know different. Wonderful things you do.

Lily is growing into a fine little lady, thanks to Kim and Jeremy, and the Grandpas and the Grandmas! Wow, that sounds like a rock group!

Rock on Lily!!!

Love,

Bonny Conway

Coach’s note: I’m honored by the comparison. John’s a keeper!
Euphemism defined
If you say “pass away” instead of “die,” you have used a euphemism, a mild, indirect, or vague expression for something thought to be offensive. The word comes from the Greek, from “eu” for “good” and “phēm” meaning speak. It’s related to “euphony,” an agreeable, harmonious, or pleasant sound.

A short history of the euphemism
We’ve always had ‘em.

Adam to Eve: “I’m going behind this bush to, uh, make water.”

H.L. Mencken called the early 19th century “The Golden Age of Euphemism” in America—not just for the expected subjects (sex, secretions, body parts, dying) but in matters seemingly far less dangerous. “Indigestion” became “dyspepsia,” and “corset” could not be uttered in mixed company. “Legs” became “limbs” (short for “nether limbs”) when attached to women and “drumsticks” when attached to a chicken. “Breast meat” became “white meat.”

The euphemism in today’s America
“Pass away” is still with us, of course, as is “transition,” “cross over,” and “meet your maker.” Some still refer to “pee-pee” and “pooh-pooh,” which we deal with in the “restroom” (or “little girls’ room” or “washroom” or on and on).

No real harm done.

But hasn’t it gotten a bit ridiculous?

Recently I heard an advertisement for a prescription pill that promised to help to combat the scourge of “Bi-polar depression.” Think about that for a minute. “Bi-polar” is a current euphemism for “manic depression.” “Manic depression” says exactly what it means. You’ve got both hyper mania and depression. You can even have them both at the same time (what one therapist describes as having one foot jammed on the accelerator and the other on the brake).

That somehow became offensive, so we substituted “bi-polar,” which sounds as if you split time between the northern and southern extremities of the planet. So if you say “bi-polar depression,” you’re actually saying “manic depression depression.”

If you watch a football game, you’ll get endless pitches for magic pills that cure the most dread disease of our age, “E.D.” The euphemism “erectile disfunction” apparently wasn’t vague enough (Does that mean I can’t build a house?), so we had to resort to initials.

“Impotence” seems like a perfectly fine word to me. It means “no power.” Doesn’t that sum things up nicely?

By the way, potential side effects from taking one of these pills include “passing away.”

When euphemisms become deadly
This is mostly silliness and prudery, and again, no great harm done, I suppose. If they help folks talk about things they might otherwise ignore, then good on them.

But they can become truly dangerous when they refer to life and death subjects.

We can avoid mentioning the word “abortion,” for example, by being “pro-choice” or “pro-life.” (What sentient human being could be against either one?)

It’s easier to kill people if we call it “terminating with extreme prejudice,” to torture them if we call it “enhanced interrogation,” or to bomb them into rubble if we call it “defoliation,” which sounds as if we did nothing more harmful than trimming their hedges.

Make no mistake. I’m not saying we should all talk like Donald Trump. That isn’t plain talk—that’s boorish attacks on people on irrelevant grounds.

No, what’s needed here in our speech and writing is clarity, and we achieve that through what William L. Rivers once dubbed “the plain style, language in its shirt sleeves.”

Say what you mean and mean what you say. You won’t win any elections, but you will get your point across.
IN MEMORY

Leon Varjian
“The Merry Prankster of Madison,” age 64

He gave us the pink flamingo invasion of Bascom Hill, brought the Statue of Liberty to Lake Mendota, staged the Boom-Box Parade down State Street, and in dozens of other ways brought joy, laughter, and consternation to a town that takes itself much too seriously.

COACH’S PICK TO CLICK

Buck O’Neil’s America
a beautiful place to be

Nobody knew baseball better or loved it more than Buck O’Neil, a player and manager in the old Negro Leagues, a coach and scout in the Big Leagues, an ambassador of good will for baseball and humanity, and one of the best storytellers who ever lived.

It would take a truly great writer to do Buck justice. Fortunately, Joe Posnanski is a truly great writer, who happens to write about sports, and he has written the best baseball book-- and one of the best books of any kind-- I’ve ever read (and I’ve read a lot of books, baseball and otherwise), even better than Buck’s own autobiography, I Was Right on Time.

The book is The Soul of Baseball: A Road Trip Through Buck O’Neil’s America. William Morrow had the good sense to publish it in 2007. My gratitude to Den Adler for sending it to me.

You should read it. You’ll meet a great man. You might just come to love him, as I do.

SURE SIGN OF THE COMING APOCALYPSE

Sports celebrity endorsements have reached a new high.

A recent ad for the Marriott hotel chain featured an appearance by the world’s fastest juggling marathoner, Mitch Kapral.
Esther at the Big Apple

Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks lectured at the New York Poetry Forum, Mid-Town Manhattan, on October 10, 2015 in celebration of World Poetry Day. Her theme, “It’s about time,” was inspired by her column in *EI*, Number 71, September, 2015. This was the fifth time since 2008 she has given the feature presentation to this group.

Another great bookstore

Vocabulary answers

1) SPOONFEED
2) DESSERTS (STRESSED)
3) QUEUEING
4) TORTUROUS
5) UNCOPYRIGHTABLE


Hail and farewell to the baseball season

Zack Hemple, a self-proclaimed ball hawk, snagged his first Major League baseball at Shea Stadium in 1990. As of late October of this year, he had collected 8,616 baseballs from 51 ballparks.

He advises would-be collectors to sit in an aisle seat in a sparsely populated row if possible. “Lateral mobility is key,” he notes.

He studies the lineups before a game, noting pitching match-ups, before deciding where to station himself. He moves constantly during the game.

Balls are easiest to get during batting practice, when players hit a lot of balls into the bleachers, and shaggers sometimes throw balls to folks in the stands. Kids and pretty women get most of these, Hemple notes, but he brings paraphernalia for both teams, switching allegiances depending on which team is out on the field.

Among his prize catches are Alex Rodriguez’s 3,000th career hit ball and the first major league home run hit by Mike Trout.

“In your hand is the object at the center of the game,” Hemple exults, “You own it, and that’s tremendously exhilarating.”


Man jokes

*thanks to Steve Born via Jerry Minnich*

A couple is lying in bed. The man says, 'I'm going to make you the happiest woman in the world...'

The woman replies, 'I'll miss you.......

'It's just too hot to wear clothes today,' Jack said as he stepped out of the shower. 'Honey, what do you think the neighbors would think if I mowed the lawn like this?'

'Probably that I married you for your money,' she replied.

Q: What do you call an intelligent, good looking, sensitive man?
A: A rumor

And now, because we’re all tired after all this fun...
It’s nap time for Lily