60’ 6” FROM HOME
M ARSHALL J. COOK, COACH-IN-CHIEF
10 things my grandbaby is teaching me

For Lily
I know. It’s supposed to be the other way around. I, in my hoary old age, am supposed to be the font of wisdom, she the disciple. But I find that this wisdom business goes both ways.

That’s just one thing she’s re-teaching me. I first learned it from her father.

Here are 10 other things she’s teaching me.

1) We learn first and best by trial and error.
That’s how we learn to walk and talk and love.

2) A smile really can work miracles.

3) Have your meltdown.
When the world closes in on you, go ahead and throw your wingding, put your heart and soul into it. Then get over it, forgive, and carry on.

4) Be patient.
What?! Learn patience from a three-year-old! She started teaching it by example when she was lying in the NICU (Neonatal intensive care unit) in her little incubator, arms back, tiny hands next to her ears. With her little dark goggles, she looked for all the world like a sunbather. She seemed to know it was all going to turn out fine.

5) Let it shine.
Don’t hold back your joy. Don’t play it cool. Share your light.

Lily at her three-year-old Christmas: “All these presents! I love you!”

Not cool. Wonderful.

6) Improvise.
When we taught her hide and seek (which immediately became “hide the baby”— her GramEllie’s cabbage patch doll), Lily didn’t want to stay hidden. She wanted to be found. So the moment we reached “10! Ready or not, here we come!” she came charging out of her ‘hiding place,’ squealing with delight.

I like her game better than the original.

7) Everybody and everything needs nurturing.
She turns everything into her baby— dolls, cats, a leaf, a flower. All receive her loving care.

8) Use your imagination.
She tells wondrous stories. When I ask, “Did that really happen?” after she has dismissed the monster from under the bed, she smiles and says, “No. That’s my imagination.”

Nobody taught her this. Nobody could have.

9) Ask ‘why?’
Most kids go through this stage— driving their parents and caregivers bonkers— asking a string of “why’s” that can only end with your exasperated “Just because.” Eventually, the “why” no longer goes on forever, and the stage passes, but asking “Why?” should never stop.

10) Ask for sugar.
If she “eats a good dinner” (as defined by her parents and sometimes determined by a roll of the dice to see how many more bites she has to eat), Lily gets dessert.

Sometimes shyly, most times boldly, she will ask, “Is there sugar?”

Hey, at Sunday dinner at GramEllen’s, there’s always sugar! But even in situations where there is no sugar, it still never hurts to ask.

The learning continues. I have a strong feeling she’s just getting started in this business of schooling Granpa Coach. This I pray for her: that she will resist all the world’s efforts to shame her for the two things of which she should never be ashamed: her trust and her enthusiasm.
"In lumine tuo videbimus lumen!"

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All-Star Columnists
Madonna Dries Christensen
Rex Owens
Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks
Catherine Young
Jerry Minnich
George Cutlip
Sandy Rafter
and Jan Kent as THE WORD WHISPERER.

Poets
Sandy Rafter
Tom Crawford
Norma J. Sundberg
Gary Busha
Marshall J. Cook
and THE WRITER’S POET, Craig W. Steele

Reviewers
Books: Lisa Krenz
Books: John Swift
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Humorologist
Ed Pahnke

Fictionalist
Larry Tobin

Staff Philosopher
Buck O’Neil

Staff neptis:
Lily

Team doctor:
Archie “Moonlight” Graham

Staff Statistician
Jack “Warning Track” Walsh

Internet Gleaners
Mary Callahan, Steve Born,
Larry Tobin

Web Weaver
Kerrie Jean-Louis Osborne

Coach’s Stunt Double
Yakima Canutt

Coach’s Factotum
Dick Mallard

Head of Creativity
S. Dardanelles

Circulation director, midwest division
Norma “Sassy” Sundberg

Circulation director, New Hampshire
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Coach-in-Chief:
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innings
Whistle Stop Campaigning

This being Presidents’ Month, let’s take a brief look at Teddy Roosevelt, whose image appears on Mount Rushmore in South Dakota.

Having completed two terms in 1909, he later launched a campaign for a third, as a Progressive candidate. His opponents were the incumbent Republican William Taft and Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Wilson won, but the man who still carried a big stick placed second.

The photos featured here show Roosevelt greeting a crowd gathered around a train in my Sibley, Iowa hometown in 1910. Posted on Facebook, they garnered some 250 Likes and dozens of comments. My niece wrote: “The scene has an intimate feel of people bustling around that little entrepreneur popcorn-seller fella.” The boy is identified on the back of the postcard.

It was Saturday, a workday for farmers and townsfolk, but they’d stepped away from the harvest field, kitchen, or business and dressed for a social event. The men wore suits and hats; the women chose Sunday finery, including flowery hats. Some females donned white dresses. Fashion dictated that white be worn only from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and the latter was two days away.

A number of umbrellas are visible, yet the ground looks dry. Perhaps women were shielding themselves from sunlight. Two men climbed atop the Railroad Crossing sign for a crow’s nest view.

One woman on Facebook said she’d seen the photos before because her great-grandparents were there that day. A man commented, “My grandfather was a conductor on the passenger train that traveled through Sibley.”

One man lamented, “People like Roosevelt would stop in small towns all over. Today, they go only to big cities to draw big crowds. Sad.”

Two men from another area remembered a similar event years later. “Wish I had a photo,” Pat wrote. “I sat on my dad’s shoulders and saw/heard Harry Truman speak from the rear of a train in Iowa City. It’s not the same today.”

A woman who’d recently watched a documentary on the Roosevelts wrote, “People traveled for miles to hear Teddy Roosevelt speak. He was that entertaining.”

A local historian identified the young man scrambling over the railing on the train’s platform to personally greet the “Bull Moose.” All the comments seemed triggered by nostalgia—the photos evocative of a simpler time when presidential candidates rode the rails across the country to meet voters (men only).

Marshall Cook said. “Imagine folks thronging to see a politician making a whistle stop speech now? We’d all be home catching sound bites of the speech on the tellie.”

Or quickly scrolling through messages on social media on a cell phone.

But all was not as peaceful as the photos suggest. In 1912, in Milwaukee, a bullet nearly ended Roosevelt’s life. All that separated him from certain death was a 50 page copy of his speech and his steel eyeglasses case. He didn’t know he’d been hit until he saw blood on his hand. Speaking softly, he calmed the crowd and finished his speech.

I don’t know if Iowa was politically significant back then, but since 1972 its caucus has been the first indicator for the nominating process for President of the United States.

On February first, we’re off and running.

Photos supplied by the Osceola County History Museum
After my technical challenges in previous months I met again with my producer to create a detailed list of all the steps to make the transition from “Automatic” broadcasting to “Live on the Air” broadcasting.

On a bitter cold January Monday morning I strode into the station beaming confidence. I met my guests, Joe and Grace Vosen, a father and daughter singing team. When we entered the studio Grace “ooohed and aahed” at the multiple large computer screens, the rack of equipment with wires like spaghetti, and the huge console board flashing green, yellow and red. I asked if they wanted to warm up before we had a sound check, but they said they didn’t need it. They were right. Their voices were clear and strong.

My next step was to push all the right buttons to go live and set up the computer to record my show. I glanced up at the computer screen – I had never seen that screen before – it was a mystery, and my clock to show time was ticking away. Trying to hide my panic and ignore the relentless thumping in my chest, I jumped up to get the station executive director.

I told Jeff I didn’t recognize the screen and had no idea how to get to the screen I needed to set up my pre-recorded introduction and recording. Grace looked at me and calmly directed me to the “Record deck” button. Click! That was the right button. I had Jeff, the executive director, stay in the room as I followed my written instructions – all was well.

About 15 minutes remained before show time. I asked Grace how she knew which button to click. As it turns out she hosts a weekly radio program on Celtic and bluegrass music at her college. I wish her Dad had shared that bit of information with me.

I slipped into overconfidence mode just minutes before the show was to go live. I went to click on the record button and lost the cursor. How can you lose a cursor?

Jeff rushed back into the studio shouting “We have dead air.” Don’t you hate when people state the obvious?

Jeff wiggled the mouse, and the little arrow jumped into existance. With one click we were on the air. Somehow I lost two minutes – dead air. Those minutes are gone forever.

The show went well, we had a caller (our very own Coach-in-Chief), and I pushed the right buttons to take his call. The numbers Joe and Grace sang were spectacular, their sound reminiscent of the Everly Brothers. The show ended and I discovered my notes on making the transition back to automatic broadcasting were not as detailed as I imagined. My producer barged into the studio and asked why we were playing the funky music.

“I didn’t know we were playing any music.” I replied.

Jeff explained that he had switched to the music because I had dead air again.

My producer led me through the steps to transition to automatic broadcasting without raising her voice or chastising me. Refecting on the interview I decided I short changed Grace. Before the show I didn’t know she had her own radio show or that she performed Celtic music. It would have been nice to spend a bit more time showcasing Grace. Lesson learned. It takes time, doesn’t it?

Coach’s note: Grace attends Northland College, where she hosts a show called Campus Celidh* on campus station WRNC. See www.northland.edu/live/play/wrnc. See also facebook.com/Campus Celidh.

* Celidh: a traditional Gaelic social gathering usually involving Gaelic folk music and dancing.

Rex’s show airs on the first Monday of every month at 9:00 a.m. CST. For details on his show and Coach’s new show, see the BRIEFS, page 26.
FOR THE LOVE OF WORDS
ESTHER M. LEIPER-ESTABROOKS

You could get it all at ESTY’s Country Store

The old-time Country Store: They’re almost gone, but my husband Peter and I built and ran one for 30 years. ESTY’s stayed open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, so if you lacked a can of cranberry Christmas morning, we had it, and you could get it.

Besides groceries & deli offerings, we sold gas, diesel, kero, heating oil, propane, beer-wine-tobacco, hunting & fishing licenses, movie rentals, had washers and dryers for campers, and more, while the other half of the business – which Peter’s brothers ran – featured towing, car service & repair, snow plowing, and all sorts of emergencies. We even housed the town P.O. for several years while a new one got built.

To customers, we worked extra hard and made our job look easy, but if employees called in sick, we worked double shifts; and many times triples – often with two rug rats underfoot or racing tricycles along the aisles:

Soon I decided to collect country store verse. Such poems prove nostalgic, heartfelt, and capture olden-days flavor. There are many to choose from, but the following piece, by Edwin C. Hofert, has a surprise ending I never anticipated:

THE OLD-TIME COUNTRY STORE
Looking in the window of an old-time country store
I had a vision of the past of things not seen before.
A farmer on a tractor and ballerina in a show,
Living inside a snow globe; you shake to make it snow:
A young boy with a puppy, a small girl on a walk,
Plus a fisherman, just fishing, while sitting on a rock.
--When suddenly it happened; something began to change:
It seemed the world around me started to re-arrange!
A man outside the window of an old-time country store:
My eyes could see my heart beat but I could move no more.
An old man smiled and lifted me to place in plate glass window,
--Then he shook the globe I live in and it began to snow!

Here’s a piece Besse Loo Hartskert wrote for Peter and me:

ESTY’S MARKET
Step back into nostalgia when you read these little rhymes
I’ll take you to a country store; there’s few in modern times.
Find toys for your little tads plus hunting gear for Dad,
Hued a brilliant Hunter Orange to keep him safe and glad.
All kids love assorted candies, each piece for a penny;
And Mom will find homemade jelly--flavors almost any,
Plus there’s a bin of dog bones; large, medium and small,
So whatever size your pooches, there’s a sort to suit them all.
Order heat-and-eat pizza, there’s gas pumps out front,
And Esty’s sells licenses to make sure folks can hunt.
Open twenty-four-seven, these folks say they don’t sleep,
Though by three A.M. drowsiness--perhaps--will creep!
You’ll view all kinds of sub rolls plus pickles in vat,
But crackers prove sealed now. Health laws say that’s that!
You can admire on display any choice meat or cheese
To fill hefty grinders fresh-made just how you please.
Ham, turkey, bologna, Swiss, American, and cheddar:
Why, I’ve tried them all to see which I like better.
There’s oodles of soda plus a wide choice of beer
So don’t drive into town--but instead shop right here!

Keep shopping-- next page
The next poem, by Loree O’Neill, – excerpted off the Internet – describes further back:

**THE OLD COUNTRY STORE**
The store had wash boards with horse harness too,
And smelled of fresh leather, not sweaty but new.
There was muslin and thread with needles and pins;
Rick-rack and fine lace; bolts of cloth without end,
Plus flat irons and starch with some bluing too,
To make one’s clothes white plus sparkle like new.
--Lye soap for the laundry, all sorted with care;
Water boiled in a boiler that had been bought there.
There was sugar and flour and spices to flavor
Plus lotions and pills and tonics to savor,
With a pot-belly stove to shut out winter cold
And chairs just for sitting as stories were told:
--Generations have missed, but never will know,
The old country store where living was s l o w.
When I worked night shift, with chores done and only
long-distance truckers stopping, I’d sit on the front
steps to watch the sky. When skinny, the moon grinned
like a goblin, but when it grew round I jotted a haiku:
This full moon rising
Like fresh-minted gold to spend
In the stars’ bazaar.
--Heavens above, literally! Yet I couldn’t seem to
forget about commerce!

**YOUR MONTHLY DOSE OF IRONY**

![Seneca Meadows Landfill](image)

*Thanks to Sandy Rafter*

It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.

from “Asphodel, That Greeny Flower,” by
William Carlos Williams

**Notable quotable**

**The real reason why we need newspapers**
"It is the singular felicity of the Americans,
and a circumstance that distinguishes this
Country from all others, that the means of
information are accessible to all descriptions
of people. ...In no Country on earth, not even
Great Britain, are Newspapers so generally
circulated among the body of the people, as
in America. To this facility of spreading
knowledge over our Country, may, in a great
degree, be attributed that civility of manners,
that love of peace and good order, and that
propriety of public conduct which
characterize the substantial body of Citizens
of the United States. ... It is an important fact
in the United States that the best-informed
people are the least subject to faction,
intrigue, and a corrupt administration."

**As for political parties..**
"A party spirit is as great a curse to society as
can befall it; it makes honest men hate each
other, and destroys a good neighborhood."

Noah Webster, in the first edition of his
newspaper, *The American Minerva*, “Patroness of
Peace, Commerce, and the Liberal Arts,”
published December 9, 1793, the first daily
newspaper ever published in New York City.
I am a fond believer in St. Anthony. You read that right – fond. I love St. Anthony. He has helped me find so many of my lost things.

My mama introduced me to the saint when I was a little girl. A devout Catholic, she could recite the special gifts of each of the saints lovingly painted on our church's ceiling.

Mama may have taught me a particular prayer for St. Anthony, but I don't remember one. Here's my paraphrase of the version I heard in Wisconsin:

**St. Anthony, St. Anthony, come around,**

**____has lost her____ and it must be found.**

**Please come help without delay,**

**and bring back ____'s ____ today.**

Into those blanks often go my name and keys, glasses, checkbook, wallet, or more recently, a phone – all those things we carry in transitions away from home. (Perhaps the lesson is to stay at home.)

Recently, the lost item in need of St. Anthony's kindness was a new piece of clothing. A skirt. I don't normally lose clothing in public, but on that day I was part of a costume changing holiday procession at my child's school, and anything could have happened to my clothes. I said my St. Anthony prayer right away, and then I phoned every place I had been that day. I even sent an email to the parents at the school, wondering if the situation sounded indecent.

One week later, the strangest thing happened – I opened my washing machine, and my slate gray skirt was there. Right there. Wet, even. What was odd about it was, I had poured bleach into the machine the day before – so surely my skirt would've gotten wrecked. But thanks to St. Anthony, my skirt and I were reunited intact.

St. Anthony has always come through for me – though sometimes it may take a few years.

There was a time when I moved from Madison, Wisconsin to St. Paul, Minnesota for nearly four years and then returned. Before I left, I had lost my glasses. They were my favorites: black wire rim aviator glasses. The triangular lenses were so large I could not see the frame at all. In the mid-1970s I spent nearly a week's earning for what was then known as a finely-jeweled metal frame – no rhinestones, but beautifully made.

I had had them for six years, and just before I left for St. Paul, my glasses disappeared. I prayed fervently to St. Anthony. No glasses. In the 1980s, the styles had changed, and I could no longer get wire rims or aviator style. With heavy heart, I purchased a rimless pair with cheap plastic lenses.

**Four years later, I returned to Madison, Wisconsin. On the day I arrived, I was standing at a corner on the east side of the city, waiting to cross a busy street. A bright yellow Union Cab pulled right up to me. To my surprise, the driver, a woman, got out, and she called my name.**

"Catherine!" I have your glasses. You left them behind at my house a few years ago. Remember?"

Stunned, I stood with the glasses in my hand as the cab raced off.

For those of you who are skeptical about St. Anthony, please consider this.

1. It had been four years since I lost the glasses
2. I did not know this person well, or remember her, and I didn't know she was a cab driver.
3. The event took place on a street corner on the day I arrived back.

My daughter claims that when she says the St. Anthony prayer, she gets a kind of energy or an idea of where to look. If all the prayer does is to wake up our hearts and brains, I'm all for it. Really, it's astounding how many people know about St. Anthony and use some form of the prayer. (You readers of *Extra Innings* might have your own St. Anthony tales.) Even my Jewish friend Ellen knows the St. Anthony prayer. Her mother, Shirley, taught it to her through a voicemail message I once heard. The prayer was extremely lovely when spoken with a Yiddish accent.

I believe in saints and helpers of all kinds, and that they come to us in many forms. And definitely, I believe in St. Anthony, who besides lessening our sense of helplessness, gives us hope that all is not really lost.
Jerry serves

Coach’s note: I received this email exchange the other day and asked the two authors for permission to print it for you, figuring it would cure what ails you. I know both of these fine men and will not attest to the sanity of either one.

As I have way too much time on my hands, I decided to look into a subject that fascinates me. In keeping with today’s supposition that everyone in the world is interested in my thoughts and opinions, thought I’d share this with you.

Since I have spent my entire career in advertising and marketing (of books and magazines), I am always curious about how marketers choose audiences, and, thus, how marketing platforms reflect audiences. Since I watch the evening news (usually NBC), I’ve noted a particular slant to the commercials that support it. So I jotted down all the commercials in just one evening half-hour telecast. The results:

- Tamiflu (for flu)
- Centrum (vitamins)
- Shingles vaccine
- Preparation H
- Salonpas (for aching muscles)
- Robitussin (for coughs)
- Orencia (for arthritis)
- Prevnar 13 (pneumonia prevention)
- Bayer Alka Selzer
- Linzess (for constipation)
- Prevagin (for brain health)
- Biotene (for dry mouth, perhaps because of the other medications)
--also commercials for Geico and the Salvation Army

My challenge to you: Can you draw a demographic profile of the evening news watcher?

No hints.

And good health to you all!

George returns serve

It's always been the agony hour, the evening news. A catalog of the world's troubles puts you in the mood to inventory your own. But wait... suddenly comes into view the very cure that will assuage all your woes. Amazing. How well timed! The ague? -- we're on it. Lumbago? -- you're in luck. 'Roids? -- sit right down. Dropsy? -- step up. Toes aboil with fungus? -- not to worry. General Life Sucking Malaise? -- right this way.

All clearly aimed at an aging, presumably more educated audience with some concern for civics and current affairs. But not so educated that they can't be snookered into laying out for an extra large jar of Mr. Meriweather's finest deluxe omnipotent never fail power pills. If only one will make you feel like a million, another dose will likely put you on the brink of blissful eternal life. Here, down the whole works.

Remember the Geritol tired blood pitches, and the hammer, lightning bolt and twisting rope in your skull of the Niacin ads?

Now of course, in our modern, advanced and enlightened era, things have so loosened up that we are subjected to all manner of topics that shouldn't ever be anybody's business-- like arse flames and wilted weinies. Can decorative cartoon imprinted colostomy bags be far off? It's the cheerful thought that counts.

Conveniently and efficiently back in the 50s and 60s they could sell you the cause and the cure at the same time. Remember the Camel News Caravan with John Cameron Swayze? At the end of the news an announcement was inserted naming some Vet's hospital where that week's recipients of free cartons of Camel cigarettes were attempting to get well.

But wait! There's more!
And that's just the over the counter stuff that you can walk in and buy. Now we have Big Pharma on the attack, pushing all manner of mega-priced chemicals at an advertising cost greater than the research budgets for cures.

The feature on those ads that strikes me is the way they slide in horrendous lists of frightening side effects (and ass-covering provisos so they can't be sued), and make it sound like elevator music. Or the soothing soundtrack Nurse Ratched played for the dayroom boys at pill time.

The cure often sounds a much worse fate than the original affliction. But Big Pharma is right in there for their piece. "You're in pain already so you won't mind another nasty slice out of your ass -- right about here -- near your wallet."

Maybe we should look at all this on a brighter side -- like a public service for people trying to lose a few pounds. Tune in the evening news and bodily functions failure bandwagon and be made queasy and slightly nauseated at supper time.

News and nostrums. It's enough to open a trap door right under your will to live.

**Jan Kent is**

**The Word Whisper**

Don't forget the mushroom soup

Journalists like to refer to an article that isn't time-sensitive, can be run any old time, as an evergreen. Someone at the Chicago Tribune suggested that one could be called a frozen casserole. But if you're from Minnesota, it would have to be a hot dish straight from the freezer.

As I get older I realize...

I talk to myself because sometimes I need expert advice.

I don’t need anger management. I need people to stop pissing me off.

My people skills are just fine. It’s my tolerance for idiots that needs work.

The biggest lie I tell myself is, “I don’t need to write that down. I’ll remember it.”

When I was a child I thought a nap was punishment. Now it’s like a mini-vacation.

Even duct tape can’t fix stupid, but it can muffle the sound.

Wouldn’t it be great if we could put ourselves in the dryer for 10 minutes and come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller?

At my age, “getting lucky” means walking into a room and remembering why I’m there.”

The last will and testament of poet John Keats

“My chest of books divide among my friends.”
My Ovid
Sandy Rafter

I stand by the sunset waiting
and watching for the SUV to turn in home.
Our son Liam, snuggled inside with grandma,
fears the brittle fingers of the shrubs as they grope
to catch the swirls of snow sweeping up the street.
The half dead arm of the silver maple
paints a bleeding watercolor as it sways.
I shiver near our door, restless, as I listen
to the caw of crows rankling far off roofs.
No one stirs in the shadows,
though I loiter like a thief,
and worry about this rendezvous
in the looming dark, and
cookies to bake for school.
Then, I remember once when we were hiking,
you ran ahead and hid in the hollow of a tree,
flaring out at me like the wolf
waiting to ravage Red Riding Hood.
No heroes  
on board  
Tom Crawford  
This little poem  
is a boat.  
Keep it clean.  
If you need to puke,  
do it over the side.  
If a bird appears,  
it means nothing.  
That’s a movie.  
We will take turns  
at the oars,  
all of us.  
Don’t complain.  
A poem with blisters  
is a good sign.

Survival  
Tom Crawford  
When the rare one  
appears at the feeder  
(You don't have a lot of time,  
so forget your Field Guide  
to Birds of North America,  
it's just a book),  
Don't move.  
Stand still.  
Be like Muir  
at the waterfalls.  
Get all the bird you can.  
It'll displace,  
for a time,  
the bomb blast  
front page,  
The New York Times,  
the blood spattered sidewalks.  
Question: How to stay alive?  
It's like a parachute,  
your refuge,  
you have to pack  
the bird in.  

From Caging the Robin: Poems by Tom Crawford, Cedar House Books, 2014

SOMETHING REALLY BIG  
WE WANT TO WALK ON  
Tom Crawford  
Jumbo, superstar elephant, hit by a train in London, 1860. Humans all over dead Jumbo for the photo op. Some thing in our smallness we want a picture of. And it doesn’t stop there. Amundsen at the South Pole, feet planted in that icy vastness. Who did he think he was? I was twelve when the circus elephants came to Bakersfield. Young women, eyes a glitter of silver, wearing black tights, their legs around the elephant’s swaying back. I didn’t know their legs could spread that wide. I remember that. The trunk or proboscis I liken to poetry—the articulation—it can grasp with perfect tenderness a single flower or a whole log. What’s this big brain I have I’m suppose to be so proud of, and why do I feel so lonely? Around the white bones of their dead ancestors, elephants linger, smell, turnover with their trunks, nudge with their great feet, before the herd lumbers on. Memory keeps them steady. They don’t need to hold each other’s tails.
Tribute to a Daughter
Norma J. Sundberg
Fragile, dainty little girl
Or tomboy in a tree,
Making your mark upon my heart
Then flitting off to see
What's around the bend.
Following a bird's sweet morning song,
Or tracing Daddy's path,
Tormenting brothers and sisters till
They turn to show their wrath
In full-scale war.
You play for hours with trinkets
In an old purse of Mom's,
It won't be too many years hence
That you may be holding pom pom's
In front of the High School Band.
I have to keep remembering
That you're on borrowed time
That you're a complete personality
And not a possession of mine,
You must be free.
But I let go reluctantly
So you may find your way
Into the big wide wonderful world,
By letting go you’ll most likely stay
Close to me.
Plot Up!

A plot is a critical setup; a guide you should always have thought-up, so that when you compose your most best-selling prose, it doesn’t end-up sounding mixed-up.

Wine biscuits

Bonny Conway

He loves Sherry, Port you name it has two or three glasses after dinner each evening gets to thinking maybe this is too much of a bad thing so when he receives a bag of cookies made with Cabernet Sauvignon decides to eat his wine with coffee instead

Everybody needs a bear poem

Gary C. Busha

Thanks to Bruce Taylor

My bear plays the violin does cartwheels eating ice cream, recites Othello while waiting on tables, draws mustaches on posters, downs two sixpacks before nap and roars my bear roars to a Strauss waltz


From Bullheads, Gary C. Busha, Wolfsong Publications, 2015

gbusha@wi.rr.com
“Well I guess if you say so
I’ll have to pack my bags and go. (That’s right!)”
“Hit the Road, Jack,” Ray Charles

“If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words,
leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.”
Matthew 10:14

Packing Lite
Marshall Cook

Take nothing for the journey, he told them
no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no second tunic
no cell phone, no GPS, no nothin’.

Don’t go back to bury your dead
don’t even say goodbye
and don’t look back
something might be gainin’ on you, like old Satch said

This is crazy talk, of course
He can’t really mean that
You’d be a fool to leave home without your credit card
wouldn’t you?

Once the road claims you
everything changes
the mustard plants wave to you from the side of the road
and the gawky sunflowers bow as you pass
The sparrows dart and flit above them
weaving not, worrying not
arrayed in all their glory and grace.

That song running through your head?
It’s the one the blind man sang
with such outraged gusto.

How can you keep from singing?
There’s no one here to hear you
or to think you a fool
now
Recently, while visiting with my son’s ninth-grade English teacher, I asked her how much emphasis would be placed on the study and writing of poetry. Very little, she said. She planned to have the students read one of Shakespeare’s plays and, of course; they would have to learn quite a few terms related to poetry. So the ninth grade curriculum “teaches” poetry by having students memorize a bunch of poetry terms? I asked. The teacher then explained that poetry had been removed from the national core standards anyway, some time ago.

I’m a university biology professor, yet I can see how this approach to “teaching” poetry deprives our children of literary enrichment and might confirm it as a subject to be avoided in college, as well as potentially fostering a lifelong aversion to poetry.

I can envision how this excision of poetry from the national core standards could also make the job of college English teachers even more challenging, while also possibly making it more difficult for us as a nation to foster support for the written arts in future generations.

To emphasize this point, the New York Public Library recently hired Miles Hodges, a spoken-word performer at the Riker’s Island Prison complex, as an ambassador of the Library to develop programs to attract members of the millennial generation to reading and poetry.*

The arts nourish the soul. If souls are neglected or undernourished during the pursuit of academic knowledge or of vocational, technical, or athletic skills, our educational system fails, and whatever sprouts from the sowing of such national and state educational policies will bear roots both shallow and atrophied, regardless how profitable the business of education remains.

Appropriately, I’ve chosen to express my opinion of what I see as the short-sightedness of those who determine the subject content in the national core standards and my concern for the popular trend among politicians and educational “reformers” to approach education, at all levels, with “trade school” and “Sports-R-Us” mentalities in a poem.


Barbarian Conquest
Craig W. Steele

I’ve recently learned that in our country’s delirium that poetry’s been cut from the national curriculum. This nation, once teeming with literate egalitarians, is now the domain of scholastic barbarians.

But good news for all from that learned consortium: vocations and sports are both safe from moratorium.
Observations floating on the Internet

The location of your mailbox shows you how far away from your house you can be in a robe before you start looking like a mental patient.

My therapist said that my narcissism causes me to misread social situations. I'm pretty sure she was hitting on me.

My 75-year kindergarten reunion is coming up soon, and I'm worried about the 195 pounds I've gained.

I always wondered what the job application is like at Hooters. Do they just give you a bra and say, "here fill this out"?

The speed in which a woman says "nothing" when asked "What's wrong?" is inversely proportional to the severity of the storm that's coming.

If I make you breakfast in bed, a simple "Thank you" is all I need... not all this, "how did you get in my house?" business!

The pharmacist asked me my birthday again today....Pretty sure she's going to get me something.

On average, an American man will have sex two to three times a week, whereas a Japanese man will have sex only one or two times a year. This came as a real revelation to me. I had no idea I was Japanese.

I can't understand why women are okay that JC Penney has an older women's clothing line named, "Sag Harbor."

What is it about a car that makes people think we can't see them pick their nose?
BOOK REVIEW
LISA KRENZ

It’s Scout, not Atticus, who’s the problem in Watchman

I’m sure it comes as no surprise to anyone alive and watching television this summer that Harper Lee’s much anticipated novel Go Set a Watchman was first on all the fiction booklists. According to the Nielsen Bookscan Adult Fiction Top 20 for 2015, Go Set a Watchman sold 1,599,189 units to top their list. Remarkable in many ways, but the least of which is that it was released in July so racked up all those sales in only half a year.

Forty-five years after it was first published, To Kill a Mockingbird was also high on the list at #7 with 563,293 units sold last year.

I didn’t read Watchman when it came out for several reasons. I didn’t want my love for Mockingbird tarnished in any way. It’s enough for me just as it is, and I was content to leave it at that.

Also, I felt no need to pay twenty-something dollars for a hardback book I wasn’t even sure I wanted to read, just because the marketing geniuses had made it so ubiquitous.

Not too long ago, my neighbor discovered that I hadn’t read it yet, and her copy appeared in my husband’s hands. Now I had to read it.

A lot of the hoopla in the press focused on the startling revelation that Atticus was a racist. My feelings about and for Atticus were solid enough to survive whatever Watchman had to throw at me. It turns out it wasn’t Atticus I had to worry about; it was my old friend Scout.

A lot of the hoopla in the press focused on the startling revelation that Atticus was a racist. My feelings about and for Atticus were solid enough to survive whatever Watchman had to throw at me. It turns out it wasn’t Atticus I had to worry about; it was my old friend Scout.

What no one mentioned was how self-important and insufferable Jean Louise had become. Why doesn’t her inflexible, unforgiving, and harsh approach to her own tribe disturb anyone? Perhaps Atticus and Jean Louise are both products of their time. Atticus can be forgiven for just being who he’s always been, although 30 years have shown his wrinkles more clearly.

The Jean Louise of Watchman is not the Scout of Mockingbird. This is the more distressing part of Watchman. I loved the innocent, hopeful, open-hearted Scout of Mockingbird. Not so, Jean Louise. It’s not that the overt racism of Maycomb in 1957 isn’t disturbing; it’s her own lack of tolerance and plain ‘ole good manners that make her so unlikable.

Mockingbird has a profound timelessness about it. Thus it’s long-held place in the pantheon of American literature. Watchman, on the other hand, is very much of its time.

Although not prize-winning literature, there are lessons for us there, too.

As a teacher of future teachers, in all my courses I point my students to the 1954 Supreme Court ruling of Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education ruling as a pivotal turning point in American education. Without Brown, the laws of the 1970s and 1990s to provide education and civil rights for people with disabilities would not be possible. Today we laud Brown and those who fought that fight as heroic. To our modern sensibility it is hard to imagine the sections of Watchman that decry the Brown ruling and the infringements on their state’s rights to treat people as less than true, but they were.

When we’re frustrated that nothing seems to have changed in regards to race relations in this country, Watchman is a good reminder that cultures do change, albeit ever so slowly. It took 20 years from the Brown ruling in 1954 to the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1974 for the idea that separate is not equal education to be applied to students with disabilities. It would take another 16 years for the Americans with Disabilities Act to be passed in 1990. Many were not happy about either of these laws, and yet I have students in my classes who find it inconceivable that there was a time not so long ago when students were turned away from schools because of their disability.
When my son read *Mockingbird* as a freshman in high school, I was delighted that he, too, loved it as I did—did until he got to the end. He was horrified and incredulous when Tom was convicted in the face of all the evidence in his favor. He learned a valuable lesson of history from *Mockingbird*, much more so than if he had just read it in a history book.

With so much of *Watchman* shining a light on racism in late 1950s, it surprised me that Ms. Lee inserted a reference to Tom being acquitted, not convicted, as if she were writing in a parallel universe. Oh, if it had only been so. Imagine the long, meaningful life that Tom could have lived.

I found this reference in *Watchman* jolting, not because I didn’t want it to be so but because I knew it couldn’t have been that way.

If Atticus attended the Maycomb County Citizen’s Council and spent time with men who had donned white hoods in 2016, it would be unforgivable, but in 1957 it makes sense.

If *Go Set a Watchman* had been sent to an agent under my unknown name, would it have gotten published? Probably not. I think Harper Lee was wise to keep this book private all these decades. Perhaps it took all these years of loving *Mockingbird* to make us ready to read *Watchman*.

I’m glad I read *Watchman*. It hasn’t tarnished *Mockingbird* but instead made me appreciate it all the more. It’s like going back to the hometown of your childhood after being gone for 30 years. It’s nice to see what happened to folks and how things have changed— or not. More than anything it makes you long for those whom you loved and who are gone. I missed Jem, Dill, and Boo most of all in *Watchman*.

Coach’s note: Lisa’s call to my “Writers and Their Words” radio show on January 12th, during which we discussed Lee’s two novels, was for me the highlight of the show. I’m glad to give her the last word on the topic in the newsletter.

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**In Memory**

**David Robert Jones**

**David Bowie**

**Ziggy Stardust**

January 8, 1947 - January 10, 2016

singer, song-writer, musician, painter, actor

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**In Memory**

**Glenn Frey**

November 6, 1948 - January 18, 2016

co-founder, lead singer, guitarist, songwriter, The Eagles

“Take it easy”

“Peaceful Easy Feeling”

“Hotel California”

Don McLean was wrong, of course. The music didn’t really die in 1959, although three of its brightest young stars perished in a plane crash on February 3 of that year.

The music will never die.

But it sure took a pretty hard hit in an eight-day span in January, 2016.
Last month, Jake named “Better Call Saul,” “Fargo,” “Doctor Who,” “Agent Carter,” and “Daredevil” as top television shows of 2015. Here are his final five.

**Jessica Jones**
I went into Jessica Jones without knowing anything about the character other than that she is a private eye and that she's had a relationship with Luke Cage. Like *Daredevil*, this is one of the best properties that Marvel has done. Jessica is a damaged yet strong character, and Krysten Ritter plays her well. Mike Colter is perfectly cast as Luke Cage, and David Tennant does an excellent job as Kilgrave, one of the most despicable villains Marvel has had. Both of Marvel's Netflix shows are willing to show the darker parts of the Marvel Universe.

**Ash Vs. Evil Dead**
I was a bit concerned that this might be a lesser installment in the Evil Dead universe, but those worries were put aside when the Comic Con trailer was released. This show is made for the fans without being full of fan service. Bruce Campbell steps back into the role of Ash as if he never left it. He's the right hero, but he's also a bit of a buffoon. The show is a ton of fun in the spirit of the films. There are some horror elements; the gore effects look great, so be warned if you don't like bloody violence. If you're an Evil Dead fan, you should be plenty happy with this series.

**Master of None**
Aziz Ansari has become one of the best comedians working today. He's also a good actor, and now he's made one of the best television comedies in years. *Master of None* is a semi-autobiographical, hilarious and heartfelt look at Ansari's life as an actor and comedian. The show deals with parents, relationships, auditions, and more with an honesty that few shows pull off. Ansari's parents play themselves on the show, and they're both really funny, especially his father.

**Justified**
Two of my favorite shows ended last year. After *Breaking Bad*, I think *Justified* is my favorite TV drama. It was a smaller show that didn't get as big a following as it should have, but for loyal fans like me, this final season was the solid conclusion the series deserved. The game of cat and mouse between Raylan and Boyd made for an intense final stretch of episodes. I think the finale was nicely done and poignant, giving the characters a proper sendoff.

**Parks and Recreation**
This show has been my favorite sitcom since *Arrested Development* and, like *Justified*, this final season was a well done farewell to Pawnee and its citizens. This sitcom shows its characters being happy instead of miserable like so many other clichéd comedies. *Parks and Recreation* always had such a warm feeling. With each episode, I felt as if I were revisiting some good friends, because this ensemble did such a good job of playing these wonderful characters.
The Orphan Master’s Son,
by Adam Johnson

_The Orphan Master’s Son_, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for 2013 and numerous other awards, has been favorably reviewed by everyone in the world, which told me I probably wouldn’t think that much of it.

This book is set in North Korea, a horrible place. This gives the novel a dystopian backdrop that I don’t care for in fiction (but we may suspect it’s not that far from the truth in North Korea).

It has two parts. The first part follows the fortunes of one Jun Do (a nameless but gifted orphan. We might call him John Doe.) He survives the orphanage to become a tunnel rat, living in the total darkness of tunnels stretching below the DMZ, where his Taekwondo comes in handy in subduing South Koreans.

_He then serves time on a fishing boat, recording short wave “intelligence,” and is sent on missions to Japan, where unsuspecting citizens are kidnapped off the streets and beaches for the amusement of the North Korean elite. Other missions provide an unforgettable glimpse into the evil that is North Korea._

The protagonist assumes the identity of another person in the second half of this book, while the other person is being interrogated in a prison (generally meaning being tortured to death). Johnson weaves both conversations on top of each other, creating a massive distraction. A distracted reader is not a happy reader.

Johnson has done a truly masterful job in showing the reader the devastating horrors of starvation, brutal torture, and repression. They do treat ill or imprisoned people kindly by harvesting their organs and draining all their blood for future uses, which seems to bring about a rather pleasant death, far less brutal than the life they were forced to lead.

When one of the characters, over in Japan to kidnap Japanese, sees a Japanese grocery store for the first time, he suspects that it’s a set up because there are no buckets of radishes or barrels of chestnuts; those, along with millet, are the only staples in North Korean groceries.

_To the extent that this novel shines a light on some of the horrors that the citizens of North Korea are forced to accept as everyday living, it’s important. If that is something you don’t need to read about in its bloodiest detail, read something else._

This depressing book does represent a great effort by the author to open a window onto the atrocities that define North Korea in a totally believable fashion. But for me, the only pleasure from this book came from reading about their use of millet, which we use only for birdseed. That reminded me of Samuel Johnson’s _Dictionary_, wherein he defined oats as “A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland, supports the people.”

Had this not won the Pulitzer Prize, I would not have read it. A literary accomplishment to be sure, but, in my opinion, hardly a great novel.
Gettin’ Rowdy
Larry M. Tobin
Part two of two

2

In last month’s episode, our Montana Sheriff convinced the town bully to leave off bird-dogging the Sheriff’s wife. But the story left off on an ominous note: “I still had Rowdy issues to deal with...” And just how did Rowdy wind up gettin’ the Sheriff fired? Read on.

He’d get drunk and bust up a bar and I’d get called. But even when he was whiskeyed up, he never gave me any trouble. I’d just toss him in a cell to sleep it off. Next morning I’d turn ‘im loose and he’d leave without sayin’ a word.

Within the week he’d always pay the bar man in cash for the damages and the charges’d be dropped. I never knew whether Rowdy took care of the damage and a little extra to soften things up or took care of the damage and hinted at a bigger brew next time if the charges weren’t dropped.

Then there was the thievin’. Somebody’d complain that this or that was missin’ and, sure enough, this or that’d show up in Rowdy’s pasture or his barn. Funny thing was, it never seemed to stay there long, or else it wouldn’t be quite the same this or that as the one the fella called to report lost.

One old boy did say the ATV in the back of Rowdy’s truck was his, but a day or so later a “ranch accident” cost him a week in the hospital. That incident caused him to move to New Mexico for his health before any proper charges could be brought.

Another fella claimed two heifers in Rowdy’s pasture were properly his. He disappeared a couple of days later. Someone said they heard he’d gone to Idaho, but the state boys over there could never find him. Rowdy sold the heifers over in one of the Dakotas.

Rowdy Howell finally got his due, though. Somebody caught up with him out on Durkin Creek Road where it crosses Highway 4. Touched off a shotgun round into his left ear as he sat in his truck.

I got the call at three in the morning. My deputy, Birdie Hirsch, found him.

I drove out and looked around a little. From what we could tell, he’d been there awhile.

Truck was out of gas and the ignition was on. It appeared he’d been stopped on the other side of the paved highway when he got shot. He’d slumped to the passenger side and, when his foot came off the brake, the engine idle was enough to roll him across the road and into the ditch. Anyone who might have seen the truck there wouldn’t have given it a second thought. Ranch hands are always parking off the road and riding to a job with whoever has the most gas in the tank. Sometimes they’ll come back several days later and fetch the truck.

Birdie and I talked a little. We figured Rowdy knew whoever done it but he sure wasn’t expecting it. He only had a few friends and they were mostly toadies. Not likely to back sass him, much less shoot him.

Rowdy probably knew most of the folks in Adrian County by sight at least. Weren’t that many to know. In his own mind he likely figured they were way too afraid for him to worry about.

The fact was, in this case the usual suspects were just about anybody in a 200-mile radius. All it took was a fella with either some gumption or enough whiskey courage who’d finally had it up to his ears with ol’ Rowdy.

The coroner came out, so I figured he ought to know what to do with Rowdy’s carcass, and I drove back to town. McBride’s Garage could tow Howell’s truck in the morning. It seemed to me that the investigation likely was pretty much over at that point.

Rowdy’s last gasp— next page
Too many suspects, no witnesses, and too few clues. Didn’t figure many folks other than his wife and his girlfriend would particularly much miss him anyway.

More likely they’d have a celebration and throw in a parade to boot. Oh, I’d look around some. Talk to a few folks. But unless some mighty incriminatin’ evidence jumped out and bit me, I didn’t plan on losin’ any vacation time or sleep over the fact that Rowdy Howell got shot non-accidentally.

But that’s just what got me un-elected. I didn’t put much effort into finding Rowdy’s killer, so they yanked my badge come election time. I just thought somebody did eastern Montana a helluva big favor.

Heck, it saved the taxpayers a lot of money. Didn’t have to run him through a trial and wasn’t no need to keep him locked up and feedin’ him for a bunch of years neither.

It’s funny how folks can hate a guy so much they want him dead. They’re always gripin’ about the way the law don’t punish crooks and such the way the law ought to. But if someone else finally does do something about the sonofabitch and put him in the ground, they want the law to find the guy what done it. They’re scared and don’t want ‘a killer runnin’ loose,’ even if the guy he killed was another killer. He may of never even broken the speed limit before but folks think that poor fella must be a troublesome sonofabitch and they want the law to punish him.

That just didn’t make any sense to me and, when I wouldn’t bust my buckle to find whoever killed Rowdy Howell, they sided their vengeance against me instead. People who voted me out claimed that, according to the law, justice needed to be done. Didn’t matter that the dead sonofabitch was a thief who likely killed a few fellas himself. I figured justice had been served, even if the law hadn’t. All I wanted was to leave it at that.

Maybe I was wrong, I don’t know. Even as a sheriff I knew that there are times that, just because it’s the law don’t make it fair. Sometimes there’s what them smart fellas call poetic justice. I reckon that’s what Rowdy got. Poetic justice. If I’d caught him, that was better’n what the other unfortunate sap was gonna get from any Adrian County jury.

**JUST FOR THE PUN OF IT**

**ED PAHNKE**

**Nun the wiser**

In the days of Prohibition, Sister Mary Elizabeth’s job focused on the wine vats and the barrels of spring water in the cellars of St. Hollister Monastery. Sister Liz watched out for the well-being of all the monks.

Visitors at the church were occasionally treated to a tour. Abbott Egbert, dressed in his black cassock, with its 33 buttons, escorted them. “The vats hold a wealth of wines ordained to make a lot of people really happy,” he said.

Sister Liz heard a man in the tour group snicker and whisper to a friend, “Probably making wine or beer illegally.” The friend merely chuckled. Two men dressed in priestly black suits inclined their ears to the man’s comment. They were Federal agents, Bud and Lou, on the prowl for illegal alcohol production.

Smiling, Lou whispered to Bud, “All we have to do now – when these folks leave - is open the barrels for evidence, confiscate, and arrest this Abbott Egbert.”

“I’ll get a crowbar and a hammer,” Lou replied. “You get the jug to hold the evidence.”

Abbott Egbert led the group out of the cellar into the bright sunlight. Sister Liz resumed her duties, thinking to fill some jugs to send out to churches. “Hey, you guys are not priests!” she shouted.

“No, we’re Federal Agents on the trail of illegal alcohol. Stay where you are or we’ll arrest you for obstructing justice.”

Hammer and crowbar in hand, Lou started banging and yanking at the barrel, which towered high above his head. He dug the crowbar into a wooden lat with a thud that reverberated throughout the monastery. The wood gave way. Sister Liz held onto the wine vat so as not to be swept away by the surge of water that engulfed the two Federal agents.

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“Two Feds are wetter than Nun,” she said, chuckling.
Everything did not come up roses in parade story
Dear Oldest Bestest Friend:*
Loving the Rose Parade story. One small note: Hoppy’s horse was Topper. Trigger was Roy’s.
Happy New Year!
Dick
[Richard Mallard]
A humiliated coach replies:
Dear Beloved Friend of Longest Duration,*
I cannot believe I made that mistake. I, who know the name of the Lone Ranger’s nephew’s horse** misnomered all over Topper! I may as well have called that great horse “Silver.”
I apologize to all who were offended and outraged (and rightfully so) and especially to Topper.
I prefer “friend of longest duration” to “oldest.”
Ducky and I have known each other since kindergarten, and honey, that’s been awhile.
** Dan’s horse was named Victor.
THE LETTER OF THE MONTH
Rose Parade brings back memories for this Hawkeye
Marshall,
Always excited when I see Extra Innings in the mail and check out Ms. Lily first thing.
I’m signed up for the KSUN newsletter, awaiting the program with more excitement!
I enjoyed your reminiscence about the Rose Parade. Even though I grew up in Iowa, I also have a fondness for it. My family traveled to California one winter, an interesting change from our regular routine of wintering in Daytona Beach, Florida, and we went to the Rose Parade. I remember few details about where we sat or what I saw of the parade. Fortunately, I have Mom’s movie clips of it.
But I do remember going to the park [Victory Park], seeing the floats up close, and the fragrance of the flowers. Oh, that surprising fragrance, hints of which I did note at the parade, and which shouldn’t have been a surprise, knowing the floats were covered with fresh flowers and plants.

Never mind my ignorance, I enjoyed it all, and that fragrance became the touchstone for my memory and continuing enjoyment of the Parade.
Plus, this year the Rose Bowl figures largely: Iowa Hawkeyes vs Stanford Cardinal! It’s been a fun season for us Hawkeye fans.*
Thank you, Coach Marshall, for your continuing connection and support for all of us readers and writers. School teaching is over for the year, and I’m excited to get back to writing and reading, almost full-time, for the winter.
All blessings for the new year and always,
Nancy Obermueller
P.S. Less than two months until pitchers and catchers arrive at Spring Training!
For more on my first foray into living on the air in Sun Prairie, see the Briefs ()
* My Big Red certainly ended the Hawkeyes’ fun in a hurry.
Hi Marshall!
Super, super Rose Bowl memories. I love memoir, of course, and this was a wonderful piece. Please put more out there.
Also enjoyed the Odyssey class’s musical musings.
Hope to sometime hear you on the radio!
Happy New Year.
Catherine Young
Livin’ on the air in Sun Prairie
Marshall,
The best of luck on your new radio show. I have the utmost respect for anyone who goes live in the media. When I ran a business in NYC the company trained us on how to deal with media who we bumped into often in the big city. You will have to let us know if tapes of show will be available online.
Happy New Year. And I am so glad the Badgers beat USC to take care of 53 years of unfinished business.
Cheers,
Ron Hevey
Coach responds, next page
Coach responds: I taught those “how to handle the media” workshops for years! It ain’t science, but there’s definitely an art to it.

Shows will be archived on the website but aren’t being put up yet. Remember, you can hear them live on the computer. For more information on the show, “Writers and Their Words,” on WLSP-LP Sun Prairie, see the Briefs, next page.

My brother went to grad school at Wisconsin in 1963, and we actually went to the Rose Bowl that year to root hard for them against hated USC (my mom went to UCLA). It was an incredible game!

and on other matters...
Thanks for everything, Coach. I was wondering where you would break “Gettin’ Rowdy.” By the way, you misplaced the angel. She’s at the BOTTOM of the tree!

Have a great New Year.

Larry Tobin

Dear Coach,

You do such a wonderful job in turning out E.I and I love to settle down with it for a spell. Big thanks are in order. Best wishes and HAPPY NEW YEAR from a devoted fan,
Pernetta Deemer

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BULLPEN BRIEFS AND BLURBS

COACH’S PICKS TO CLICK

If Garrison Keillor and Jan Karon had a love child...

Thanks to Sandy Rafter for introducing me to Philip Gulley’s Harmony Novels. They offer small town warmth and humor, a bit of social satire, gentle exploration of the foibles of human nature, wrapped up in good storytelling. I read Signs and Wonders, and there are others waiting for me.

Russo isn’t a comedian but he can play one

I usually don’t go anywhere near academic farces, mainly because most of them are self-conscious, precious, and, worst of all, not funny. But I’ll read anything Richard Russo concocts (The Risk Pool, Nobody’s Fool, Empire Falls, the memoir Elsewhere...), so I readily tackled Straight Man (1997) and wasn’t disappointed. In it, William Henry Deveraux, Jr., a prof’ at a podunk third rate college, sees his tenure there as more of a death sentence than a perk. His noisy, often hilarious breakdown forms the basis for the novel.

I’m looking forward to discussing the book with Emily Auerbach’s amazing UW-Madison Tuesday morning BookTalk group. March 8 at 9:30 a.m. at the main Madison Public Library, downtown Madison. You can register at the door.
Two radio shows you don’t want to miss

As a lot of you already know, Rex Owens and I now both have radio shows on WLSP The Sun, 103.5 FM Sun Prairie. You can stream them live on your computers by going to www.sunprairiemediacenter.com and click on the arrow on the far left in the menu bar. And there’s also an app for that.

Rex’s show, Conversations with Wisconsin Artists, airs the first Monday of the month at 9:00 a.m. CST. My show, Writers and Their Words, airs weekly, every Tuesday, also at 9:00 a.m. CST.

Both shows are being recorded and replayed during the week but are not yet archived. Both shows welcome calls from listeners.

Upcoming guests for Rex’s show will be:
Feb 1: Christine DeSmet, writing teacher at the UW-Madison Division of Continuing Studies, co-founder of the Writer’s Institute, director of Write by the Lake, award-winning screenwriter, and mystery writer.
March 7: Emily Auerbach, UW-Madison English professor, Jane Austen scholar, author, co-host of University of the Air on WHA, and co-founder and director of The Odyssey Project (www.Odyssey.wisc.edu)
April 4: Silvia Acevedo: Milwaukee television personality, indie author, and publisher.

Upcoming topics for my show will include:
1) Tom Crawford’s poems are for the birds: Exploration of one of America’s greatest poets.
2) Best children’s books ever
3) Novels that changed the world.
4) Chuck Amok: the story of Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck’s daddy.
5) Mason Williams-- from Smothers Brothers to a Senate probe.
6) What got you started as a reader?

Got suggestions for show topics? Email Rex at rexowens00@gmail.com. Email the coach at marshall.cook@wisc.edu.

And now, because you’ve be very patient (except for those of you who skip right to the last page)...
Your Moment with Lily

Guess who’s already a huge Star Wars fan?