I asked: “Where do you write?”
Jim and Larry answered.

**Jim starts writing by running, listening**
I write on the run. Well, I can’t really write on a run, but that’s where I listen. The first 15 minutes of a run, I’m busy monitoring that all systems are working properly. At some point, things seem to settle down to a gentle purr and my mind begins to wander. That’s when I might start to hear conversations. If that happens, I keep quiet and listen. When I get home and sit before the keyboard, I describe place and context for what I heard.

On other runs, I might have to do a little searching for my characters. Take this afternoon, for example. I had already passed through the nethermost section of my course. My running seemed easy on this blustery day. However, I hadn’t heard from my characters. It is not my way to be reluctant about butting into things, so I said it aloud: “Hey, Thomas! Are you there?”

“A little busy, Mister Jim,” I heard him reply as clearly as I could hear the wind whistling through the pine needles overhead.

“What’s up?” I asked.
“l’m packing.”
“You didn’t tell me you were about to travel.”
I heard only my footfall for a few yards.

Thomas was rather methodical as a result of all his medical training, so I could visualize him careful putting together his backpack. Nevertheless, I thought it would have been proper for me to have known about this plan to travel.

“Hey! You still there?”
“Yeah.”
“Where’re you going?”
“Yakawlang?”
“Never heard of it.”
Readers respond to first Extra Inning
Editor-in-Coach hires lawyer to defend against libel suits

Will Den get to the end of Charing Cross Road?
You mentioned your lists and piles of intended reading. I seldom finish books because another one is called to my attention and I start that and forget the previous one or two or whatever number. Then, months later, I discover a bookmark in a book that looks interesting and gee! I guess I was reading that one! And sometimes I go back to it.

Right now I'm reading Judy Hanff's book about her visit to England but could get only the cassette (unabridged) of her "84 Charing Cross Road. I like books of letters and the readers did a great job with this one. Of course, the main cassette player I have now is in the kitchen, so I listen as I do dishes. Makes time go faster.

Den Adler

Wally missed the joke
The one thing that I missed were the funny column notes.

Wally Littman
Got you covered this issue, Wally.

Larry did get the joke
Love the first issue. Also glad you kept the 'Marginal' stuff. I need all the day-brighteners I can get. And, by the way, the older I get, the more I think wrinkles do hurt. Glad I could get into this without trying to figure out passwords.

Larry Tobin
Larry found the jokes!
The older I get, the more I think everything hurts!

Steal this book?
Nice job, Coach. You have another good publication going. I sent a notice to some of my friends and I think a couple of them have asked to be on the mailing list.

I agree on several of the books you mentioned: Blessings, Peace Like A River, So Brave, Young And Handsome. I think I read Stegner's Big Rock Candy Mountain years ago.

I recently read a book that is unforgettable. Not a pleasant subject, but surely one of the best books I've read in a long time. Maybe even a holy book. Below is a review I posted on Amazon.

Madonna Dries Christensen
The Book Thief is a story and characters I will not soon forget. Although fictitious, young Liesel Meminger takes her rightful place alongside Anne Frank. And there's Rosa and Hans Hubermann, Rudy Steiner, the mayor's wife, and Max Vandenburg. Hans's accordion is almost a character itself. The first half of the book often moves slowly, but staying with it is rewarding. Narrated by Death, even Death is moved when required to collect some of these characters' souls. I can't recall the last time a writer's words brought me to tears, but the final few chapters were read through blurred vision.

You talked me into it, Madonna. I moved The Book Thief to the top of my must-read pile, read it, and loved it.

E.I. affirms Bob’s faith
Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus...and maybe a God, too! For today, yes, Virginia, TODAY, I was able to download and read Extra Innings!

"Innings" is dog-gone good reading as we clickity-clack along the track!

Bob Hale
So glad you enjoyed the first effort, Bob. They should come every month now and get bigger and better.

You never ‘find’ time; it isn’t lost
Hi, Marshall,

I enjoyed your first edition. How do you find time to keep up with all of your projects? Looking forward to the next one whenever it comes...

Richard Davidson
Author of: DECISION TIME! Better Decisions for a Better Life (Self-Help) and Lead Us Not into Temptation (Mystery)

I’m reconciled to being perpetually behind, Richard.
What part didn’t you read?

I rec’d your Extra Innings and read almost all of it. I loved it. I printed it for future reference. I'm attempting to read I Promessi Sposi, The Betrothed, in Italian, yet. When I read an Italian book, I need my dictionary near me and after a while, I get tired. So, I've decided to have one of your book selections with me -- for Italian relief. Thank you so much.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving. As I told you, my granddaughter is cooking. When I cook, everybody winds up at the ER. :)

Ciao,

Angela Rosati

When I cook, folks prefer the food at the ER. Are you volunteering to translate for an Italian language edition of E.I.?

Yeah, but did she read it in the original Japanese?

Bravo Coach! The newsletter is wonderful! I love it! And, many thanks for including the mention of my two books — I already forwarded the newsletter to my publisher.

Speaking of books to read -- another relatively new book that I loved is THE HOUSEKEEPER AND THE PROFESSOR. Not only is it beautifully written (translated from Japanese), but it has a storyline about baseball — gotta love that, right? Here’s part of the the blurb from the NY Times (2/26/09) about “this deceptively elegant novel”:

Jeanne Harvey

********************

A car accident has robbed the main character of the ability to remember any new memories for more than 80 minutes. For him time stopped in 1975, when he was a prominent math teacher and the famed pitcher Yutaka Enatsu was mowing down batters for the Hanshin Tigers. He lives in a ramshackle cottage in his sister-in-law’s backyard, doing math puzzles and walking around with reminder notes stuck to his suit, the most prominent of which says, “My memory only lasts 80 minutes.”

The Housekeeper and the Professor tells of the adventures, such as they are, of the remarkable virtual family formed by the professor’s new cook and cleaner, the single mother of a 10-year-old boy whom the professor calls Root because his flat head reminds him of the mathematical sign for a square root.

... Where do numbers come from? The professor’s answer is that they are already there at the beginning of time, “in God’s notebook.”

This is how he responds when the housekeeper has made a lucky guess about a problem:

“Good,” he almost shouted, shaking the leather strap of his watch. I didn’t know what to say. ‘It’s important to use your intuition. You swoop down on the numbers, like a kingfisher catching the glint of sunlight on the fish’s fin.’ He pulled up a chair, as if wanting to be closer to the numbers. The musty paper smell from the study clung to the professor.”

If we all had learned math from such a teacher we would all be a lot smarter.

Thanks, Jeanne. Another addition to my endless list.

Anybody got a match?

Got it, printed it, lit a fire in the fireplace (no -- not with Extra Innings), poured a glass of wine . . . .

Thanks.

Jan Kent

Thank you, friend. (My stuff has been put to worse uses.)

Will “Open says me!” work?

Marshall:

I really enjoyed the first edition. The first time I received it I couldn't open it because it asked for a password. Problem resolved. Congratulations on a great launch.

Rex Owens

Thanks! Don't feel singled out. Everybody got the same rotten treatment with the first issue. I think we* got all the distribution problems ironed out for the second issue. I'll know for sure if everybody gets this one okay.

* By ‘we’ I of course mean Celeste Anton, webmaster extraordinaire, who constantly answers my cyber cries for help.
E.I. Marginal Book Report

Bill and Leo:

Compare and contrast

Sent along by Mary Ramey

A high school student turned in the following report, comparing the story lines from *Titanic* and *My Life: Bill Clinton*. He proposed that the stories were nearly identical.

His teacher gave him an A+.

Titanic:... Over 3 hours to watch
Clinton:... Over 3 hours to read
Titanic:... The story of Jack and Rose, their forbidden love, and subsequent catastrophe.
Clinton:... The story of Bill and Monica, their forbidden love, and subsequent catastrophe.
Titanic:...... Jack is a starving artist.
Clinton:..... Bill is a bullshit artist.
Titanic:...... In one scene, Jack enjoys a good cigar.
Clinton:..... Ditto for Bill.
Titanic:...... During the ordeal, Rose's dress gets ruined.
Clinton:..... Ditto for Monica.
Titanic:..... Jack teaches Rose to spit.
Clinton:.... Let's not go there.
Titanic:..... Rose gets to keep her jewelry.
Clinton:.... Monica's forced to return her gifts.
Titanic:...... Rose remembers Jack for the rest of her life.
Clinton:...... Clinton doesn't remember Jack.
Titanic:...... Rose goes down on a vessel full of seamen.
Clinton:...... Monica.. ooh, let's not go there, either.
Titanic:...... Jack surrenders to an icy death.
Clinton:...... Bill goes home to his wronged wife -- basically the same thing

What is it, girl? Did Coach fall down the cyber well again?

Rim Shots

Wisdom on marriage from the vaudeville circuit

* I just got back from a pleasure trip. I took my mother-in-law to the airport.
* I've been in love with the same woman for 49 years! If my wife ever finds out, she'll kill me!
* What are three words a woman never wants to hear when she's making love? "Honey, I'm home!"
* Someone stole all my credit cards, but I didn’t report it. The thief spends less than my wife did.
* We always hold hands. If I let go, she shops.
* My wife and I went back to the hotel where we spent our wedding night; this time I stayed in the bathroom and cried.
* My wife and I went to a hotel where we got a waterbed. My wife called it the Dead Sea.
* She was at the beauty shop for two hours. That was only for the estimate. She got a mudpack and looked great for two days. Then the mud fell off.
* A boy comes home from school and tells his mother he has a part in the play. She asks, "What part is it?" The boy says, "I play the part of the husband." The mother scowls and says, "Go back and tell the teacher you want a speaking part."
Meandering with Madonna
Storytelling begins
in childhood

By Madonna Dries Christensen

In Kathleen Norris’s mesmerizing book, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, she tells about teaching writing to children in western South Dakota. An Indian girl draws and writes furiously all during class. When the bell rings, the girl, who the other children pass as though she’s invisible, hands Norris about twenty sheets of paper. Looking them over, Norris smiles and says, “So many poems; you must love to write.”

Norris says the girl shifts from foot to foot and weaves her hands in the air. “I don’t have paper at home,” she says, “so I keep them in my head. That’s where they live until I write them down.”

Probably nothing excites children more than learning to read and write. They memorize the ABC jingle, recognize their written name, and move on to printing crude letters. On entering kindergarten, typical children can usually print the alphabet in order and read simple words. There’s no better time to harness their imagination, creativity, and energy.

I witnessed this when I spoke about writing at my granddaughter’s kindergarten classroom in Arlington, Virginia, where the students write and publish stories. Ms Rente uses a program called Writer’s Workshop, designed by Lucy McCormick Calkins. The curriculum expects writing to be a daily activity or, at the very least, three times a week.

The aim is to merge students into writing by having them draw pictures and then add a few words to explain the story. Students become intrigued with seeing their words on paper and want to continue.

Using Workshop guidelines, Ms. Rente began her instruction early in the school year. The students learned that a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Basic punctuation was introduced along with the phonetic sounds of words, language patterns, and rhyming words. Each student then wrote a one page story.

Gradually, they managed two pages, and by January they were writing three page stories. They were proficient in using punctuation, including apostrophes, exclamation points, and quotation marks. They knew about revisions (editing) and proofreading. They understood upper case and lower case, and the difference between printing and cursive. After learning the difference between fiction and nonfiction, the students chose characters and a setting for their fictional story. They understood that their story should have a problem and a solution. My granddaughter Grace created *Rosie The Mailbox*. Rosie went to the library for a book but the checkout machine didn’t work. She solved the problem by going to another library.

From the stories they’d written, they were allowed to pick one to publish. The books have a construction paper front cover, with the title, author’s name and an illustration. A title page includes the title, author’s name, illustration, and date of completion. The class then enjoyed a publishing party, at which each child in turn took “the author’s chair” and read his or her book aloud. If peer critiques are part of the event, the workshop guidelines suggest using TAG: Tell one thing you like about the story. Ask a question. Give one suggestion.

Given an opportunity to ask questions of me, hands floated in the air. “What’s your favorite part of writing?” a boy asked.

When I responded that I like writing dialogue, and asked what punctuation is used with dialogue, the children knew it was quotation marks.

“How long do you write?” my granddaughter asked.

“How long each day?”

She nodded.

I explained that it varies; sometimes for several hours; other days not at all. Or I might do revisions or research. Ms Rente had earlier talked to them about research. I asked if they knew what action is, and some of the children shook their heads. Ms Rente prompted them with, “Remember I told you that something must happen in a story or it will be ….”

“Booorrринg,” the group chorused.

We talked about ideas for stories. They had each planned a how-to book. Ms. Rente had explained that it must be something they knew how to do. They could not, for instance, write a how-to about piloting a plane. Some of the ideas they came up with were: how to brush your teeth, how to make ice cream, how to draw, and how to clean your room.

I showed them my published books and explained what they were about and where I got the ideas. A girl raised her hand and asked how long it took me to write a book with that many
pages. I also talked about finding a publisher. I explained that it was not easy, that sometimes writers try for a long time to find someone who wants to publish their story or book.

We completed the session with my promise to write a story about our visit and publish it on the Internet so they could read it and print a copy. This brought smiles all around.

That night, I asked my Grace what the best part of the day had been (her mother often does this). She said, “Having you come to my school to visit.”

“That was my best part, too,” I said. Reprinted with author’s permission from The Perspiring Writer, available at theperspiringwriter.com. (My column, “Keep the Day Job,” also appears in Ned Burke’s fine online resource.

Coach’s Bullpen Briefs

‘Duke’s Mayonnaise Girl’ helps launch sports mag

Hi Coach,

Just wanted to drop some info to you...I am the Dukes Mayonnaise girl with the tomato sandwiches!! [Coach’s note: Alice wrote a great piece on making the perfect tomato sandwich -- using Duke’s Mayonnaise -- for a long ago issue of Creativity Connection.]

Anyway, a friend of mine has launched a high school sports magazine here in Greensboro, NC and I am one of his feature writers! I just finished the feature profile for the first edition of the magazine, set to come out in January! The funny thing is, I was reading through my notes from the class I took (online) with you and you mentioned that to really test your interview skills I needed to interview a 16 year old boy! I did! The profile is about a 16 year old boy! He gave me 14 pages of notes!! He is an awesome kid.

Just wanted to share the success. Hope you are doing well. Thanks for everything.

Alice Owens

Dead or alive?

My novel, Wanted:Husband will be published Jan or Feb. I still can’t believe it. I'm working with my editor and when I finish doing revisions, corrections, weeping, and re-writing, it will be published by Moongypsy Publishing. They publish romances only; but this is sort of a comedy/romance/almost tragedy. It takes place in the ‘50s and my young editor, an Italian-American lady from New Jersey, says some of the things I've written are too impossible. But, believe me, Italians are nuts!!!

Thank you so much for all your help and encouragement. Isn't it just my luck!!!! Oprah is retiring!!!!! Fooey!!!!

Angela M. Rosati

Send along your publishing news so I can give you a shout-out in the next Extra Innings. Email the Coach at mcook@cs.wisc.edu.

Grace proudly holds a copy of her book, Rosie the Mailbox, which she created in her Writer’s Workshop.
Extra Innings

For resolute and dissolute writers, their enablers, and those who love them

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Columnist this issue: Madonna Dries Christensen
The Masked Man: Clayton Moore

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They’re the best.

Extra Innings is a proud booster of Write by the Lake
The Writers Institute
The Rhinelander School of the Arts
Weekend with your Novel
and the Odyssey Project

No added sugar, honey. No carbs, no trans fats, no salt-- pretty tasteless all in all.

Like its predecessor, Creativity Connection, this newsletter contains your recommended daily dose of nouns, verbs (transigent and intransigent), gourds, adjectives, adverbs and other artificial sweeteners, pronouns, antinouns, prepositions, propositions, conjunctions, contradictions, contractions, eruditions, bloviation, chiasmus, charisma, metanoia, paranoia, trace metaphors and the occasional half-witticism.

Another great free e-letter for writers:
The Writing News is a free, e-mailed newsletter designed to give you news and views from the writing staff at Liberal Studies and the Arts. It gives you fuller descriptions of upcoming events and is usually issued 4-5 times a year. We also tell you about the successes of our participants -- writers like you -- as we hear about them. This is our programming news in a handy format with everything you need to know all in one place. To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to: join-writing-news@lists.wisc.edu.

Next issue:
How about your book review? Read something the rest of us should know about? Let us know. Email: mcook@dcs.wisc.edu.