

Side Tracked - Grim & Darling

April 30, 2021



Today's shout out goes to my friends at the Side Tracked Bar & Restaurant in Berthoud. Maureen and Jim Barnett are wonderful proprietors. Their staff - Laurie, Amanda, Courtney, Haley, Eliza, Sammy and Cayle -- and the talented musician in residence, Jordan Polovina (The Post-It

Poet and part of the duo Grim & Darling - <https://fb.watch/5ap7qTQG0U/> - check out this song), that's Jordan above, make a visit to ST worth your while. They serve all kinds of simple restaurant food, including amazing thin-crust pizza (had one last night - saw my boy "Nick the Lid"), have specials and theme nights, live music and hold Karaoke nights, and Darts, so check out their Face Book web page and, if you are in the area, stop in. Even though I don't drink (long story), I enjoy the atmosphere and the people (reminds me of my once-upon-a-time Bronx watering hole, Coaches II), and consider it my imagination version of Sloppy Joe's. So if you happen to see me there, come over and say hello. Bring a copy of TWA with you and, I'll inscribe it. If I'm not there, ask Maureen (nicely) to text me and if I'm in the area I'll swing by and do it. Worse case scenario, leave it with a note with the staff and I'll swing by my first opportunity and write whatever you like. But even if you never buy one of my novels, please stop by and support this wonderful local establishment. There's even parking for your horses out back.

Berthoud Family Dentistry

April 29, 2021



This morning's shout out is to Doc Carmen Beckwith ("are you telling me the truth?"), Tosha (thank God you don't have a rectal thermometer behind the counter), Danielle (and your wonderful granddaughter, Neveah), Regina (and your family farm), Maria (new kid in town - but a sweetie), Pamela, Sandy and Lindsay, thanks for keeping my teeth in my head, it makes it easier to smile in my photos. Can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but at least you keep it from looking like its from a boar. I always have a laugh, and

I don't even get the Nitrous Oxide. Highly recommend this crew if you want to keep your choppers.
PS. TWA is still charting on Amazon!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

April 28, 2021

People always ask me why I have such long acknowledgements. To me its so obvious. Everyone I mention has played some role in getting me here. Family, Clan and close friends are the more obvious choices. But there are others, the people around me that have made an impression during my day-to-day existence and who otherwise may never be mentioned in a printed novel, that I try to include just to make them smile. To let the world know long after I'm gone that I was thinking about them at that moment. That little bit of immortality. I'm not sure that half of those mentioned even realize they are there, or even care that they are there, but that is why I do it.

Amazon's Best Sellers in Legal Thrillers & Congrats Courtney

April 27, 2021



g (Jack McEvoy Book 3)

nnelly

★ 14,280

on



The Guardians: A Novel

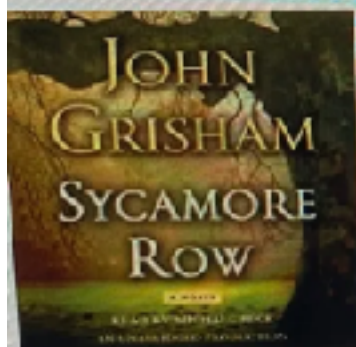
John Grisham

★★★★★ 24,165

Mass Market Paperback

\$7.48 ✓prime

#30



ore Row

isham

★★★ 28,788

e Audiobook

it



The Wise Ass

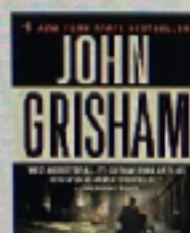
Tom McCaffrey

★★★★★ 41

Kindle Edition

\$4.99

#35



Show all

X



3:28 AM
1/27/2021



OMG its good to be back! As of moments ago the Kindle version was #30 (#5 on the Dark Comedy list). When I opened the page on my computer TWA was boxed in by three of John Grisham's novels. I remember seeing him once when he came into GF&M to see one of the partners on a legal matter. Tall bastard. I have a lot of catching up to do.

Yesterday, after work (yes I still have my day job toiling away in the legal mines), I stopped off at Side Tracked to pick up some copies of the novel that I had left behind from Sunday's event. Anyway, Laurie, the afternoon Bartender, sweetest woman ever, had grabbed the copies from the back and mentioned how she had bought a copy but had it at home. So I inscribed one of the leftover copies and gave it to her (Laurie if you read this, pass your home copy on to a friend). So while I was sharing with Laurie about the reading on Sunday and how TWA was doing well on Amazon, the night bartender, Courtney, was coming on duty and came over to see what Laurie and I were talking about.

After informing us that she just got engaged (congrats again!) she mentioned she had not bought a copy, and didn't want to be the only one at ST that hadn't read it, but had left her purse at home. Laurie told her to take the money out of the tip jar. So I inscribed another one of the left overs and gave it to her. And what an asshole I am?!

When my dear wife returned home from a changing jobs gathering for one of her colleagues (Good Luck Kristen) I told her about my trip to Side Tracked and when I got to the part about Courtney and her engagement, and buying the book, she said "you didn't take her money?" I would have

loved to have been able to look Lisa in the eye and answer "No, of course not."

Men are thick. I'm thicker than most. I was so excited about someone else wanting to buy my book, I did not even consider the circumstances. Young woman in a small town, who has just gotten engaged, spending her tip money on some attorney's book. I know, I know, when you put that in writing it looks really bad.

So, I hopped back into the Toyota (yes, I love that car) and drove back into town. Courtney was serving a few stragglers at a table when I spotted her through the front window. I went inside and caught her attention. When she came over I sheepishly handed her back her money and told her the book was a gift from us, for her engagement.

I'm still evolving, but at glacier speed. *Mea Culpa.*

READING IS A FLUID CONCEPT

April 26, 2021

5:07

◀ Amazon



#51

Kindle Unlimited



An Invisible Client

★★★★☆ 3,027

\$5.49

#52

Kindle Unlimited



Mercy (Neon Lawyer Series Book 2)

★★★★☆ 1,365

\$5.99

#53

Kindle Unlimited



The Wise Ass

★★★★☆ 38

\$4.99

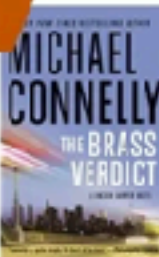
#54



The Missing Piece: A Novel (Dismas Hardy Book 19)

\$12.99

#55



The Brass Verdict: A Novel (Mickey Haller Book 2)

★★★★☆ 4,356

\$10.99

#56



The Associate: A Novel

★★★★☆ 1,827

\$9.99

Yesterday's reading was a fun, relaxed affair. No actual "reading" occurred, but I did sign some books and enjoyed a number of fun conversations with lovely patrons, who shared their own life in Berthoud stories, including, Al, Kim, JoEllen and Cowboy (and I'm talking the real deal), and their daughter and son in law (who actually rode up to the location on their horses). Wonderful people all. Thanks to all of you for your patronage. Thanks again Maureen and Jim for hosting the event and for selling some books for me. Yesterday was also interesting as I learned that TWA was again appearing on Amazon's Bestsellers lists in its Kindle form. This morning it sits at #11 on the "Humorous Dark Comedy" list (which I never saw coming but I am thrilled over). And more importantly, it dropped from #68 to #53 on the full blown, grown-up, "Legal Thrillers" Best Sellers List (No more "New Releases" qualifier). So my name sits in a digital cluster with names like Ellsworth, Connelly, Grisham, Turow and Bailey. Heady company indeed!

My publisher's recent introduction of Amazon advertising has certainly hit its mark! Thank you Reagan Rothe!

Its also interesting because it was my disappearance from the New Releases lists which helped propel me into writing the third novel, and I am glad I did not know of TWA's return to the lists until yesterday, after I had finished writing KMAG.

As I have said numerous times in past blogs, these lists are like crack. Once you see your book up there it becomes all consuming. You cannot stop yourself from hitting that refresh button. You never know if you will cringe or smile.

The lady or the tiger. But you can't help but look. So I'm back again, riding that horse. . . .

KMAG - FINI

April 25, 2021

At about 3:30 a.m. today, I typed the final sentence of KMAG and The Claire Trilogy. I'm hoping I nailed it. I think I did. Its first draft came in at 204 pages, shorter than I expected, given the ground that I have covered, but it's all there. I leave that decision -- whether or not I have satisfied, and fully resolved, the narrative needs of the Claire Trilogy -- to my inner circle of readers who have patiently guided me through the writing of the prior editions as well. After they have all had a chance to digest it, and maybe reread all three novels, I will take their counsel, and make whatever adjustments they suggest, if any.

35 days since I started with that first paragraph on March 22. I was driven to get this story down on paper because I did not want the Trilogy left unfinished and since tomorrow is not guaranteed to any of us, especially in the world we live in today. I owed it to my characters to finish the story they had told me.

I will let this novel sit now for a bit, while I attend to the publishing editing process and finalization of An Alien Appeal (and continue to perform my day job as an attorney, where the writing is not as nearly as much fun, but it pays the bills and deserves and receives my all). The good news is that by knowing how the story ends, I can make sure during the final publishing process that the second novel remains transitionally consistent with the first and last novels.

It will be up to you readers to decide if I have kept my promise. Just know that I have given it my best shot.

With this completed, I look forward to performing my first public reading this afternoon at Side Tracked in Berthoud.

Come on by if you are free. Its starts at 1 pm and will continue until the audience gets bored enough to throw me out. Hope to see you there.

SIDE TRACKED - BERTHOUD COLORADO

April 24, 2021



Tomorrow, Sunday April 25, 2021, at 1 pm, I am performing my first public reading of TWA. Having gone through a trial run in a completely supportive setting in my first private reading last week (thank you again, Dianne Rosenfeld, you are the best!) I'm comfortable with the process and the subject matter, and I am looking forward to having a good time with anyone who shows up. I'll read a bit from TWA, and a chapter each from the yet unpublished, but soon to be

published, second (An Alien Appeal) and third (KMAG) novels in the Claire Trilogy. And I'll tell some background stories simply because I love to talk. I'll even take requests for selections from TWA and answer questions. So show up, take videos and photos, come get your paperbacks inscribed, have a few beers and heckle me if you feel the urge. I'm hoping its an event I'll never forget. With any luck, you won't forget it either. Thanks again to the literary proprietors, Jim and Maureen (Shout out to *Super Cool Band Moms*) Barnett. 237 Welch Ave, Berthoud, CO, (970) 532-9905.

An Alien Appeal

April 23, 2021

Got the word yesterday from my publisher (boy, it never gets old saying that - thank you Reagan Rothe) that the sequel to TWA finally goes into production in June, so that it should be hitting the presale on-line shelves by the end of the summer.

If you liked TWA, you are going to love AAA, and I'm not just saying that.

If you haven't yet read TWA -- no more excuses to my friends at A&W -- go out and pick up a copy before the second installment drops. All your favorite characters return for a completely different and even greater (and far more challenging in every possible way) adventure, plus there are a few new cool additions to the lineup that add to the narrative tapestry. But be forewarned there are some tears.

Since we are on the subject of tears, I also want to share that I'm almost finished the final book of the Claire Trilogy, KMAG. I'm about to write the finale, and from what the remaining characters are saying this is going to be epic. No Soprano exits. No prisoners. Stay tuned, and special thanks to all (five) of my readers for your continued support and patronage.

SLOW MOTION

April 22, 2021

I've been told by some of my readers that as they started getting closer in page count to the end of *The Wise Ass*, that they purposely slowed their pace and the number of pages they read each sitting because they wanted to delay coming to the end of the story. That kind of response thrilled and honored me. In writing the first two novels, I didn't suffer that - delay the inevitable - feeling because I knew there was going to be three novels, and I wanted the Claire Trilogy published in close temporal proximity so that I could quickly build a following, the narrative momentum would carry them between the three books and I would not lose any reader to a waiting game. So I maintained a constant pace to my writing. (I am also old as fuck, and there was never a guaranty that I would get through the three stories.)

Now, as I am about to write the second part of the final act, in just about a month's time, part of me wants to throw on the brakes, slow time down, and stretch out the resolution of my incredible journey with these wonderful characters. The feeling summons up memories of graduations, leaving the professors at Lehman College, and then my classmates - Ray & Ritchie -- at Fordham Law behind, and in a different sense, the night the last of the Riverdale Crew - me and Joe at that time -- moved out of Aunt Violet's Flop House. As Lulu, the indomitable Ginger moppet from the sixties sang in that wonderful movie, "To Sir, With Love," its "time for long last looks, my friend."

But the characters know its their time to shine, they've travelled a long journey to get this point, and everything that

has come before has led to this moment. They won't allow me to delay the inevitable. They are far braver than I am.

Read650.org

April 21, 2021



Based upon a glowing recommendation by my dear friend and talented, creative triple-threat, Colin Broderick, I was honored to be asked by Edward McCann, founder and editor of the above referenced, on-line, literary forum, to submit a short essay, under 400 words, for possible acceptance as part of their latest "Between The Lines" Carnegie Hall segment. The essay was to discuss some aspect of the art and/or suffering and/or comedy of the writing process. Something personal about the process that you could share with other writers. To me, this whole thing was such an honor, given my newbie/rookie status and that the likes of such Irish literary luminaries such as Colin and Malachy McCourt had submitted their own works in the past.

I knew right away what my submission would be about. Despite the fact that I like to weave dark humor into my writing whenever I find the opportunity, it is my belief that writers must be openly in touch with their own vulnerable emotions when they write, if they ever want their readers to share in those emotions when reading the printed page.

Given the terminal nature of a third book of a trilogy, I've been going through my own cathartic rollercoaster, especially now that I am into the final act of the novel. I adapted the essay from one of my earlier blogs on the subject (Real Writers Weep - April 8, 2021) and had a devil of a time getting it down to 400 words. But I did, 400 exactly.

I was over the moon when Ed emailed me and said my essay had been accepted. Of course, then the business part of the experience kicked in and I had to submit a photo to go along with the submission and record the essay so it could be posted on-line.

The recording part seemed simple enough, and I think I nailed it in my perfect Bronx accent after a few dry runs. But when I submitted the only headshot photo I had, which I believe appears on the Amazon website page for The Wise Ass, Ed quickly wrote back to me and asked if I had any other photo that didn't look quite so much like a "mugshot." I explained that since I was born with the self-awareness that I was never going to get by in life based solely on my looks, I had a dearth of photographic evidence of my existence. He provided me with a number of precedents to help me get to the promise land, and after a couple of attempts with my iPhone that made me look like Uncle Fester Addams, I went with some props and think I captured a passable photo. As Ed replied "I think I can work with these." I wonder which one Ed will go with. I'm hoping its the one with the hat and glasses above. The props distract from the otherwise patent deficiencies. I also hope Ed knows how to airbrush. Thank you Ed McCann for the amazing opportunity and your continuing patience. Thank you Colin for the recommendation.

Anyway, I no sooner got all of that taken care of when I had to dive back deep into the emotional well this morning as I wrote a pivotal chapter of the Trilogy. I'm not ashamed to share that I wept openly as I typed. And I could not be happier with the results.

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

April 20, 2021



I am thrilled anytime anyone sends me a photo of them holding my novel. I love all of my readers. But every once in a while some all star comes out of the blue and knocks me for a loop.

The above photo is Doug Davis. As far as I'm concerned this man is Music Royalty. He is an extremely successful lawyer in the entertainment field and represents a lot of the heavy-hitters, especially in the music industry. We are both alumni of Fordham University School of Law. I know Doug as a friend, having been introduced to him through my partner, Robert Meloni (also a wonderful man).

Doug's father is the immortal Clive Davis.

Doug is also renowned for his philanthropic work and is a devoted family man.

It means a lot to me that Doug took the time out of his incredibly busy life to snap and send me the above photo with the message:

"Made it into the office today for the first time in a long time. Thank you for the wonderful dedication. I can't wait to dive in. You are very thoughtful."

Thanks Doug, enjoy the read.

You Never Forget Your First

April 18, 2021



Yesterday I had the honor and privilege to be given the opportunity to perform my first live reading of *The Wise Ass*.

Truthfully, it was like being in adult Disney World. It was hosted at the beautiful home (and I am talking the most beautiful home I've ever been allowed in) of my dear friend and patron, Dianne Rosenfeld. It was a private and intimate affair attended by a wonderful guest list that included my wife, Lisa, Dianne and her friends Lori Miller, Karen Foy, Diane Reilly, Mary Phillips, Nancy Terry, Loni (talented medical intuitive) and Bill Tesch, and Sherri Mattei and Doug

Kirk. Talk about great people and an appreciative audience, they were amazing! Thank you one and all for sharing your time with me. These folks not only listened to me read from TWA but also sat through a chapter from each of AAA and KMAG. They asked some great questions. I got to share some off colored stories as well and inscribed a few books.

That's me and the first row of guests with others sitting out of camera shot. Dianne went all in and served an amazing buffet and was an attentive and gracious host. Hemingway had nothing on me yesterday (not talking talent here) in Gertrude Stein's salon in Paris. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. I must not forget to mention Dianne's two Dobbie's, the sweetest girls you could meet. I could have pet them all day. Dianne even sent us home with doggie bags and extra treats for Jeter and Blue. Thank you Dianne!!!!

Next week I perform my first live public reading at Side Tracked Restaurant & Bar in Berthoud. I'm looking forward to it.

SOME CHARACTERS WON'T BE DENIED

April 17, 2021

Nothing is more magical to me as a writer then to be led off script by one of the characters. In this particular case, they all decided to take me on a detour which was surprisingly a lot of fun and makes a whole lot of sense. They all have now existed in the universe I have created for them well into their third book and, like Adam and Eve, have decided that they are now fully developed and of their own mind and are going to do what they want to do. Knowledge truly is a dangerous thing. Good for them.

Not yet one month into this project and I have reached page 162. Thank you elves. I'm not sure I'm going to reach 300 pages, because all of the story lines have been merged and my characters are all demanding a final resolution to this conflict. And just to make sure I'm committed to a certain outcome, the character Michelle, has just upped the ante in a major way. Got to love a bad assed woman, no matter where she comes from. The Gauntlet has been thrown! Can't wait to see how this turns out. Stay tuned.

A&W AGAIN

April 15, 2021



Stopped in at my favorite beyond burger joint yesterday evening and was thrilled to catch most of the crew. Rachel, Tea (pron. Teya), Brooke & Cloe were all either behind the counter and/or manning the stove. Rachel is on form, and still channels that wonderfully boisterous mafioso vibe.

Brooke maintains an interesting transitional hair coloring to her lively locks and is a lot of fun, and Tea and Chloe - awesome eye make-up - are as sweet as ever.

Wonderfully friendly girl - tall, brunette, glasses - working the register took my order as sweet as you please, but I

didn't catch her name. Food was delicious (especially the vanilla shake).

Jordan was off for the evening, no doubt continuing her newlywed search for a new home, and Rachel's sister Brittany, who is an absolute sweetheart and a lot of fun, and who, sadly, I haven't seen in over two months, was also off. Hey Brittany!!!! But I was glad to learn that Brooke and Brittany have both been checking in on my blogs, so please tell everyone they made this morning's posting.

Had a productive morning at the keyboard working on KMAG. Very excited as to where this story is heading. The Elves added something I just didn't see coming.

Can't wait to see what Claire and Crew have in store for us, but I know it will be epic! Stay tuned.

READINGS

April 14, 2021

This weekend, I'm doing a meet-the-author, private gathering being held at the home of my dear friend and inner circle reader of the second and third novels, Dianne Rosenfeld (she is a class-act that has been mentioned and appears in photos in my earlier blogs). It's going to be a small gathering of her friends and that will be perfect to allow me to get the public speaking kinks out in an intimate and totally supportive setting. I intend to read a few selections from TWA, but I've also decided to read one selection each from the second and third novels as well.

Hopefully, those, never before heard, extra elements will whet the appetite for those attendees who already have read TWA, and give them all something to talk about and look forward to before the second novel drops this Christmas. It hopefully also creates a sales history with the first two novels that will warrant the publication of the third book to the trilogy. Not sure if it is what other writers do, but I've never been a conventional anything, and this feels right in my gut.

With any luck, I'll do the same the following weekend (Sunday, 4/25 @ 1pm) when I perform my first public reading at Side Tracked Bar & Restaurant in Berthoud. I'll also be inscribing any paperbacks that are placed before me, will answer any question put to me and I am all for snapping selfies with any and all who care to do so. Take videos and post them on your Face Book pages if you like (just send me copies please). Who knows, you might be capturing a magical moment. I love all of my readers,

because they are willing to risk their hard earned cash on someone they don't know and have no reason to care about. So, I'll stay there until the last person gets tired of listening to my malarkey (Biden almost ruined that perfectly good word - that's his thing). So come one and all, it ought to be fun, especially if I embarrass myself. See you then.

KMAG

April 13, 2021

Still following the characters through this wonderful story.

Just crossed the 35K word mark with miles to go before I sleep.

I LOVE SHAKESPEARE

April 12, 2021



Back when I was a freshman in high school, I quickly found myself bounced out of honors English with Mr. Halperin, and dropped into regular freshman English with Mr. Rossini (who wore his hair in WS mode). The truth is, both teachers were

top quality, as was Cardinal Spellman, and that did not matter, because I was not ready to do the work under either of their tutelage. I had gotten it into my head that I really was not there to learn, but to have fun and chase girls. (For all of this I blame Lenahan, who led me astray on that first day of freshman year.) And that's what I did until I got bounced from Spellman after my junior year. And that was a real shame, because it meant that I did not learn about the Bard until many years later after I went back to my undergraduate studies at Lehman College (after a failed but fun attempt at Fordham University). Of course, by then, I was ready to give my studies the attention it deserved because I had caught the only girl that matters and married her.

Once I actually began to read Shakespeare's works at Lehman, I realized how many of his immortal lines had worked their way into our modern day lexicon, and I was fascinated that one writer's words could spread over the centuries, like a virus, so that most of the populace have no idea that when they share their own witticisms, they are actually cribbing from the Bard. I won't go into them all here, because smarter people than I have already carefully catalogued them on the Internet, so check them out.

But I still did not fully appreciate Shakespeare until I started to watch performances of his plays. Whenever you see a great actor (non-gender use) speaking WS's lines, they come to life. First I caught performances on PBS in the early 80s, and different film adaptations since then. For example, I loved the 1996 Baz Luhrmann adaptation of Romeo and Juliet with Leonardo DiCaprio. And I've been blessed to catch a few live productions -- I've got tickets to A Midsummer Night's Dream at CSU for July - assuming COVID doesn't lead to its cancellation.

And if you want to watch a hilarious, brilliant and informative look into the possible life of William Shakespeare, that will make you actually want to go back and reread his works, I highly recommend the British Comedy series "Upstart Crow." I give it an absolute 5 star review.

And now, all of these years later, as a writer I have found that, as creative as I am, sometimes there just is no better way to say something than the way Shakespeare put it over four hundred years ago. And today, at the very end of this morning's chapter, I did just that, with respectful attribution. Thanks Will.

BACK AT IT

April 11, 2021

Got another chapter of KMAG in this morning. Got a really nice email from a friend of mine, Michael (always be Mikey) Abramson, one of the smartest young men I had the pleasure of working with while at GFM. Unassuming to a fault, with a frightening intelligence that would have had me applying for Jeopardy, Mikey was just a pleasure to hang with. He was an undergrad at the time, working as a paralegal. He has since become a brilliant lawyer and now has a beautiful family up in the area surrounding the wasteland us Bronxites like to call Boston. He works as some in-house counsel mucky-muck. Anyway, Mikey read and posted a nice review of TWA on Amazon, so I asked if he was willing to give AAA a look before I finalized it. (along with my wife, Lisa, and my editor (and dear friend) Jim Fronsdaahl, I have a closely held, invaluable posse of critical readers who review and respond to my work - V&B, Eileen C, Dianne R, Malachi M, Helen L, Cathy & Beau B - that I feed chapter by chapter - just to make sure I don't lose anyone along the way and the story remains consistent with earlier works and the existing one I'm working on. I'll mention them all fully in the acknowledgements of the published paperback). Mikey's email yesterday in response to reading AAA contained his assessment which included the line: "It is truly a touching and funny trip through space and time." I figured I could share that without spoiling anything, and still whet your appetite for the sequel. Thanks Mikey, you are the best! Stay tuned.

An Alien Appeal

April 10, 2021

Had to take time away from my new writing to review and go over the publisher's suggested notes and edits for the final draft of AAA. I still cannot believe my luck (and that's all this is). I used to watch the 1986 movie *Stand By Me* which is based on a Stephen King novella called "The Body." (SK wrote *The Shining* while in Colorado. It is based on the Stanley Hotel close by in Estes Park, so lots of creative mojo in this area.) Anyway, I always love watching the final scene of the SBM movie -- which is a classic -- where Richard Dreyfus -- the present day Gordie LaChance -- is putting the final touches on his story about his childhood adventures while his young son and the son's friend are waiting impatiently for him to finish so they can go get ice cream. I always imagined myself someday being in that position. And now, here I am - although my anxious kid is a thousand pound Mule named Claire, who, with her sidekick, Honey, are waiting not so patiently for their carrots. Divas, the both of them!

With any more luck I'll get some time this weekend to get back to KMAG. But first my Green Acres chores. Stay tuned. Oh, and I'm doing my first public reading of selections from TWA on April 25th, at 1 p.m. at the Berthoud based bar-restaurant, Side Tracked (across from the Library), so if you have nothing to do that day and are in the area, come on by and say hello. Anyone who brings a paperback copy can get it inscribed if they wish. Thanks again for your patronage.

Visitors at AVFH

April 9, 2021



We had a Visitor's log at Aunt Violet's. It was by no means comprehensive, but there are quite a few familiar names listed. For anyone interested, contact Mark Lenahan (Marklenahan2010@gmail.com) to see if your name appears there. I understand he is willing to black out your entry for a reasonable price.

Real Writers Weep

April 8, 2021



I remember back when I was first writing short stories. I was attending writing classes at The New School in Manhattan just above the West Village on 14th Street. It was way too expensive but my brilliant wife had scraped together enough money from our meager incomes to pay for the semester, while I was still working construction with John O'Hara on and off. This was the late seventies, a year before I left working altogether and attended Lehman College, wrote a play, and then put my writing on hold for a few decades.

My most memorable professor at the NS, Marguerite Smith, worshipped Carson McCullers and was a demanding pain in the ass. But it worked.

My three closest friends in MS's creative writing classes were Lou Meyers, Virginia Riley and Carl Maloof. Lou was an older man, already in his early seventies. He was an accomplished cartoonist, who had published his bodacious and often profane, although incredibly funny, cartoons in all of the major magazines and newspapers throughout the country. That is a copy of the cover of one of his cartoon collections, which he gave me as a gift for one of my birthdays. He was living at the time in Connecticut with his life-long love, Bernice, who was often the subject of his published writing (she appeared under the pseudonym Hortense). He was the first one ever to use the term "The Jewish Riviera" to refer to the Grand Concourse to me. He had also published a number of short stories in literary magazines such as The New Yorker. He was the real deal and became my mentor. Virginia was an older woman who had lived a very successful life, had plenty of money, and now lived in an apartment in a select area of Manhattan with her brilliant cat, Baudelaire. She was bright and witty and had a take-no-prisoners philosophy in her conversation and writing that can only be safely practiced when you have enough money to protect you. She would have been right at home around the Algonquin Round Table. Carl was also older, a tall, soft looking, larger than life gay man, with a bald head, a thick brown moustache, small dark glasses and two oversized earrings. He was flamboyant and wore scarves and colorful clothing. He even sported a beret. I told him he reminded me of Aladdin's Genie. His writing was as over the top as its author, but also shared poignant

moments of despair and pain. It was the first time, for a fleeting moment, that I actually felt like I was a writer.

We used to go as a group to a diner in the area after class to grab a bite to eat, where we would listen in on conversations from the surrounding tables to learn how real dialogue sounds, in order to allow us to recreate authentic dialogue in our writing. I had as much fun listening to the running commentary these three characters provided to these intercepted conversations than to the conversations themselves.

Out of the three, Lou paid the most attention to my writing.

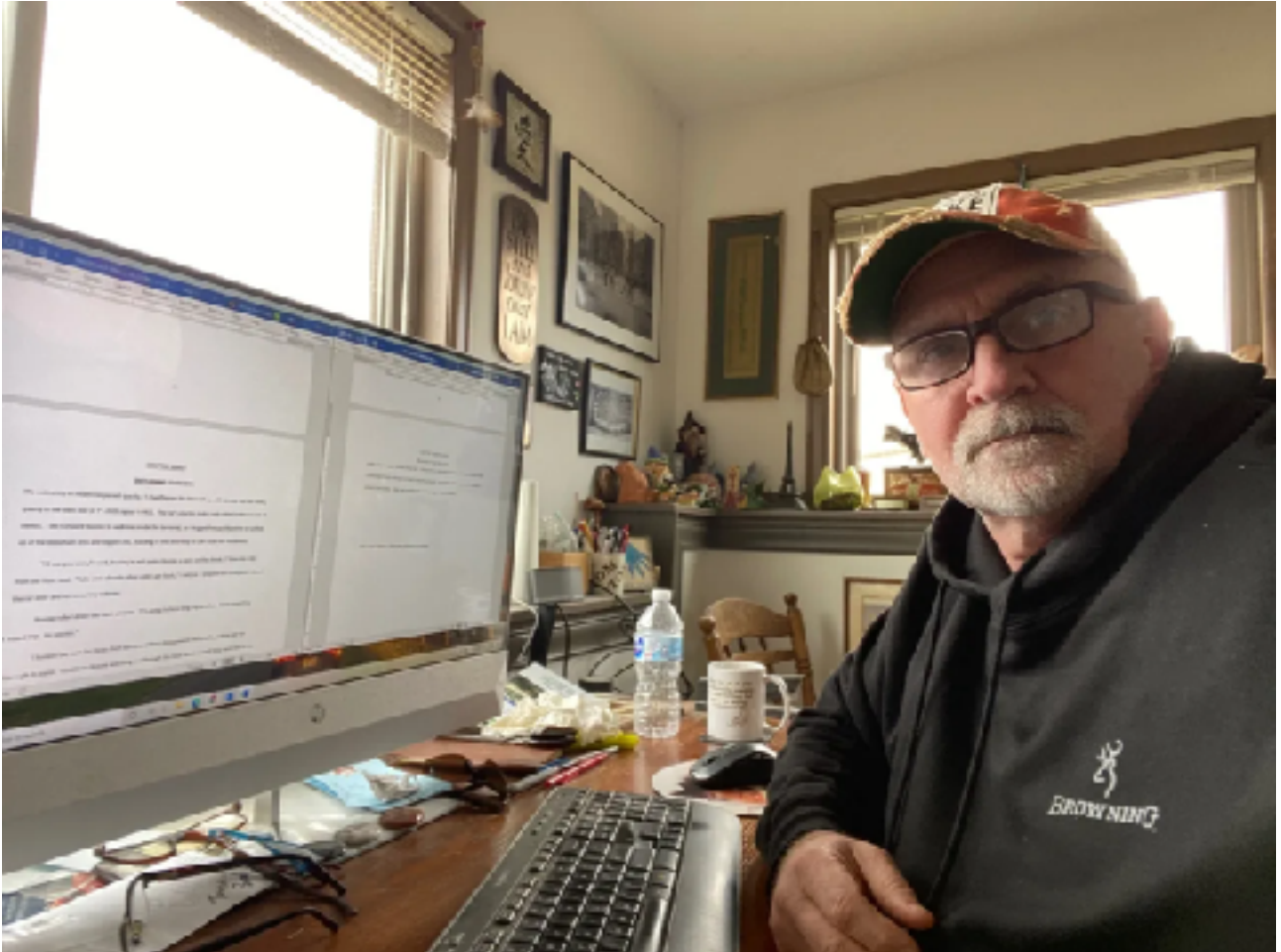
And I hung on his every word. After all, he was a published author and cartoonist, and knew what it took to be successful in the real world and not just the Ivory towers of the university setting. He told me that he recognized that I had the goods to be a writer, when he read one of my stories called *Why Kings Die*. It was my fictional interpretation of the tragic life and death of a friend, BJ, who I have mentioned in other blogs, and whose image appears somewhere photo-crashing a romantic shot of a very young Stein and Delia (on what looks like the neighborhood baseball diamond). Anyway, Lou told me that you aren't a writer until you have written something that not only makes your readers weep, but makes you weep as well while you are writing it. I thought that was interesting coming from a cartoonist who liked to make people laugh.

And, although I had not admitted it to anyone, being a tough macho Irish-American construction worker, I had wept when I wrote parts of WKD. I had also witnessed one of my father's secretary's weep when she read the story. I will tell you this, there is nothing more moving than observing someone else respond emotionally to your writing. Its thrilling and terrifying in the same moment.

Anyway, fast-forward four decades. When I was writing TWA, I wept when imagining and writing Claire's backstory. When writing the sequel, I wept again when writing about the resolution of a life journey (based on a real event). This morning, while I was writing the latest chapter in the third novel, KMAG, I wept again over the unspoken terminality of a final parting. The characters know it, but it remained unsaid. Jeez, I hope its written well enough that my readers get to share that moment with me. Stay tuned.

GRINDING AWAY

April 6, 2021



Ralph Waldo Emerson is quoted as saying:

"A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall." In the oral tradition, a story teller can get away with being inconsistent. The beauty in listening the the same story told by the same person over time lies in the little inconsistencies that seem to add a freshness to the story. But you just cannot get away with that in the written word.

Smart readers pay attention and will catch you out if you try to slack on your consistency in story or character. You can create any universe you like in fiction, but once created, you must follow its laws of physics with consistency, or come up with a reason for any change. (Note: consistency is an absolute necessity in all legal writing -- you ignore that rule at your peril).

I wonder how Tolkien managed to keep his facts consistent from one part of his amazing trilogy to another. It is very hard to keep all the information readily available in your head -- at least for me. Modern technology is an absolute wonder because whenever I have a question in my own mind about a fact from an earlier book, I can just pull its final draft of the book(s) in word and just search for that fact to make sure I remain consistent in my latest work. I cannot fathom having the time to go back and reread the hard copy of an earlier work just to locate a fact. Given the small amount of precious time on any given day that I can devote to it, fact checking alone would prevent me from getting any new writing done. In the photo above, I was double checking the make and model of a car one of the characters drove in the second book, *An Alien Appeal* (out on 12/23/21), to make sure I got it right in the final book (K MAG - hopefully published in 2022), although given the passage of time in the story, I gave that character the latest upgraded model in the new book. Note the cool hat my Riverdale friend, BC (that's his full name - just those two initials - at least until he proves to me he has actually read TWA, at which point I will share his actual name) just sent me, with the saying "Bad Decisions Make Good Stories" above the brim. Shout outs to Joe Serrano, Mike Augustyni, Lenny, and occasionally my brother Eddie, who, along with BC, break my balls on a regular basis while I try to move forward

on this project. They are all going to get theirs when I write *The Riverdale Chronicles* (assuming Lenny doesn't beat me to it - and I really hope he does - he's an amazing writer). Anyway, this story is taking me places I didn't expect, but I am having a great time following along. Just passed the 90 page mark. Stay tuned.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO - ACT ONE COMPLETE

April 5, 2021



I write all of my novels in three acts. Its a habit I picked up when I taught myself how to write screenplays. I started KMAG on March 23rd (actually wrote the opening paragraph to the Prologue on 3/22) and I am fourteen days into the novel. I wanted to get more done this weekend but got caught up taking care of springtime repairs of winter hardships on some of my whirligigs, and I had to get my outdoor fountains all cleaned up and running so that the birds have a place to drink and bathe. Turns out one of the water pumps was fried so I have another one arriving today from Amazon.

But I still got my time in at the keyboards during the wee early hours. That is an outdoor shot of my office where I do all of my writing. I was just coming up from feeding Claire and Honey and heading in to sit down for this morning's writing.

I love everything about my house but especially my office. It is my inner sanctum.

BELATED RIP - STEVE 'THE GREEK' ATHINEOS

April 2, 2021



As you reconnect with people from the past and start pulling the threads of the memories of your youth, certain characters stand out. Steve Athineos was one of the

Riverdale characters that made his mark. He didn't arrive on the Riverdale scene until we were all in our teens.

However, he quickly acclimated and made a name for himself by his willingness to pretty much do anything. He became an honorary member of the PWWC the night he pied Karen B in the hallway outside her Manhattan apartment. He was one of the two cattle rustlers that borrowed the life size cow and calf off of the Del Dairy in Yonkers New York. He was an entrepreneur that channeled his love of riding bicycles in a daredevil fashion through the streets of Manhattan into a successful bike messenger company and also was a dutiful husband and loving father. I learned that Steve passed of a heart attack back in 2015.

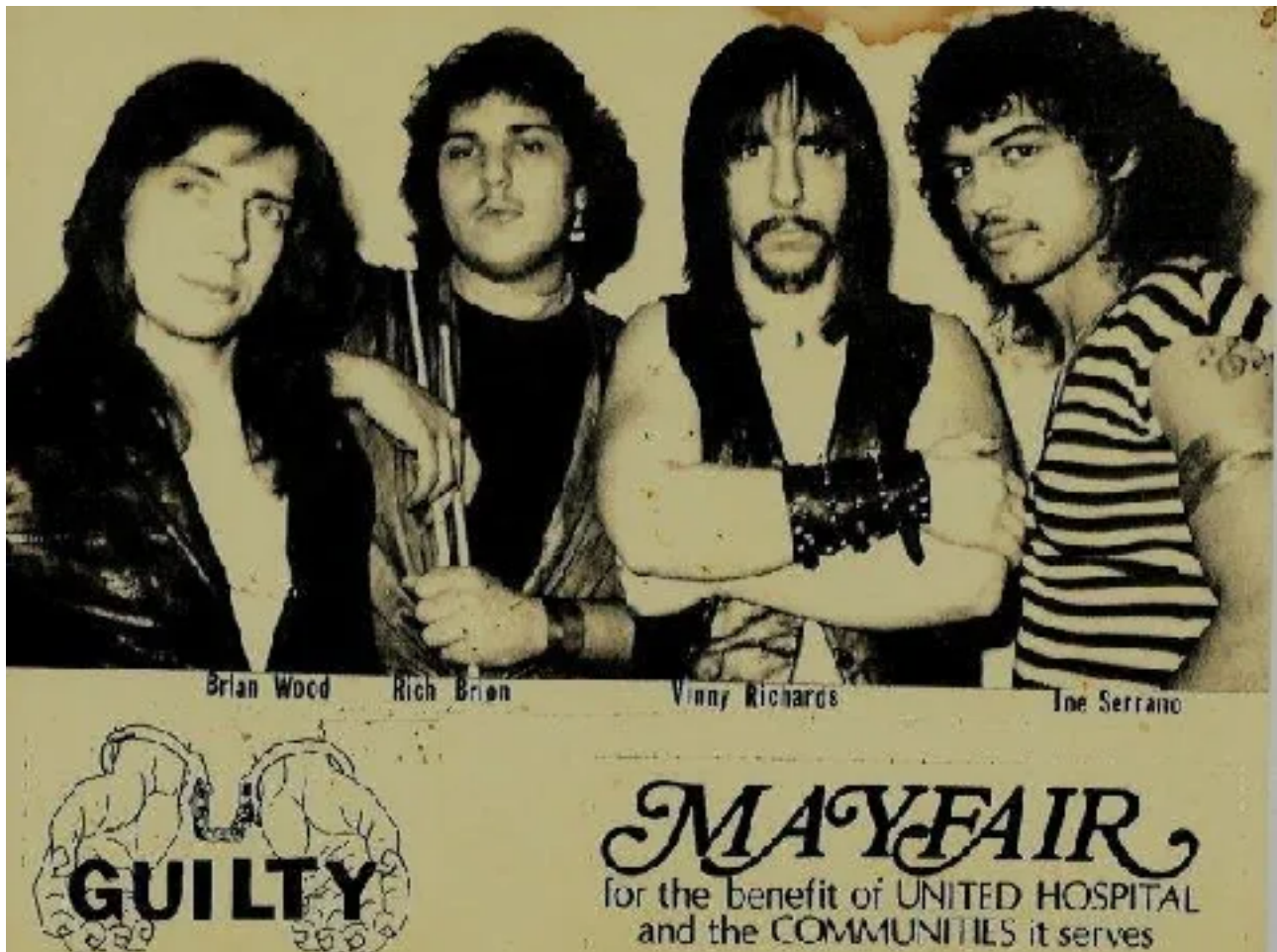
He will be missed.

<https://riverdalepress.com/stories/Stephen-Athineos-was-a-bike-messenger-then-storeowner,58954?>

<http://messarchives.com/memorial/sathineos.html>

Joe Serrano - Fitzcarraldo

April 1, 2021



There was a 1983 movie called Fitzcarraldo, where some crazy rubber baron a couple of centuries back decides he's going to build an opera house in the middle of the jungle in South America, but in order to do so he has to perform a miracle and drag a 32 ton ferry boat up over a mountain to get the materials needed to build the opera house to its isolated location.

I learned yesterday that Joe, (that's him above, far right, channeling Carlos Santana back in the day) in his position

as the director of radiology for his small hospital in upstate New York, was involved in a similar enterprise -- having an entire building moved from somewhere in the mid-west to the open area directly behind his existing hospital building.

This insane move was to allow for the hospital to incorporate a brand new radiology machine and system as part of its services to the local community.

You can find the story here:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/mylittlefalls.com/new-mri-building-squeaks-through-city-streets/amp/>

So in every little bit of madness you will find that stroke of genius. Well done Joe, glad you survived long enough to make that happen. No wonder God kept you around.