

Screw Godot - The Wait's The Thing

February 28, 2022



Never was a fan of the Theatre of the Absurd. Never liked Samuel Beckett's Play, *Waiting for Godot*, when I was forced to study it in college. Sure, I can concede that the writing is brilliant. However, I found it frustrating both in reading it and watching it being performed. I was right there with the characters going for my own rope and stool when they contemplated hanging themselves. I found nothing noble in man's (woman's) mere existence without an end game. A pay off.

In general, I suck at waiting. I am impatient by nature. I set goals and go for them. If nothing happens in a reasonable amount of time (as arbitrarily defined by me), I adapt, move on, change my goals, and go for the new ones. I just cannot wait for anything, forever. I am not wired that way.

Looking back at it now, I think that was a defense mechanism, which kept me from ever having to admit I failed at something. If I made the decision to move on from some goal, I took away its power to reject me. I did that with people. I did that with school. I

did that with work. I did that with writing. Just couldn't wait around for it to happen.

When it came to the latter, I ran up against my own deadline, changed direction and became a lawyer.

All of the good psychics (and I am proud to be friends with some amazing ones - Kim Russo, Bobbi Allison) use the term "God's Time." That means that most of them can tell you something is definitely going to happen but they cannot tell you exactly when.

That is up to God. It has something to do with the fact that time doesn't operate the same way on other energy levels, chronological time is a human construct. Talk about frustrating. (And don't get me started on the concept of "Irish Time," which, comparatively speaking, makes experiencing WFG and God's Time and absolute pleasure.)

I mentioned in a past blog that an amazing psychic I used to visit in the Spiritual Community, Lilydale NY, named Rev. John White, told me quite clearly and definitely in 1992 (I have the tape recording) that I was going to leave NY and move out west onto a big property, like a ranch. I stopped visiting him then because that was so far off the professional map I had created for my life as a lawyer (or even a writer) in NYC that I knew he must be full of shit. Ask anyone who ever knew me in NY, from childhood up until 2017, if they ever saw me leaving the Big Apple. Especially for the rural, open spaces out west. Wasn't happening. Twenty-five years later, *voila*. Life on *Green Acres*. God's Time.

Now that I'm older, I have a different perspective, if only because most of my waiting is over (except for my final nemesis, that ominous milk truck).

"They who only stand and wait, also serve." *On His Blindness*, John Milton (1608-74).

As I look back at my life, I see that while I was waiting for my existential pay-off a lot of great things happened. I got married, became a lawyer, raised three amazing kids, and have seen magical grandchildren enter the world. I've met some incredible people along the way that have amazing gifts and personalities, and stories, and I have had some amazing experiences. I've watched people come into the world and leave it. I have fought, danced, sang, loved, laughed and cried, and I met Claire the Mule.

And I've gotten a wee bit more patient.

So that candid photo up above (I was actually reading from the galleys of the third, unpublished novel, KMAG, which drops in three weeks) was taken at Mike O'Shays during my reading at the fundraiser the other night. It captured a moment that my wife and I used to dream about over forty years ago while hanging together in Aunt Violet's Flop House, before life, with all of its distractions, took us on this long and winding road. And I would not change that circuitous path for anything, because it was during that wait that my real life happened. I could not have been the writer I am without the entirety of that life. Every single moment of it.

Thank you God. Everything in your time.

So, for all of you readers out there, set your goals and chase them, but don't forget to live your life while you are waiting, because even if Godot pulls a no-show, and - Spoiler Alert - he will, it's the wonders that happen during your wait that make it all worthwhile.

AND NEVER GIVE UP!!!!

Speaking of time, it's time to cuddle and feed Smokey, and set about my real life, which does not wait.

So the rest of your fine, five readers, go out there and knock Monday on its head.

But most of all, while you are waiting for Monday to come to an end, have a great day!

And a quick shout out to my BIL, Beau (who, along with his twin Victor, are the evil antagonists in KMAG) who is having surgery this morning. Good luck, brother.

Mary Wallen - The Angel Messenger

February 27, 2022



When I first started buying stone statuary for my home, I spotted a cherub sitting on the corner of a platform in one of the local nurseries. I knew the perfect place for her. We have this spot at a point where a retaining wall drops a few feet and extends for a few more. So this little angel was placed where she could keep an eye on the back property where Claire and Honey roam, and also over some cement flower boxes that Lisa likes to replant every spring. She also sits above our outdoor fountain, and can listen to its bubbly gurgling for most of three seasons of the year.

Unfortunately, this little angel can be bribed, as she seems to take a nap every time my mules decide to raid the lovely flower boxes and gobble up Lisa's floral artistry. I don't blame them because those flowers are usually thick and colorful, fragrant, and probably tasty, and the water in the fountain is always clean and cool, so this is one stop dining. This regular event is usually followed by C&H's immediate, though temporary, ban from our backyard, and me catching some serious verbal heat for allowing them free range privileges.

When Lisa's mother passed, I finally gave my angel her name - Mary Wallen. I did this because Mary was an extremely religious woman, who, upon our first time in church together during the Christmas season leaned over to my then fiance and said in a perfect stage whisper, "Are you sure you know what you're doing?"

And, being in church, I was on my best behavior, so I didn't respond with my usual (then and now) pithy reply:

[https://www.bing.com/videos/search?](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=FU+Gayle&docid=608047398012389171&mid=B87036C59A411B90687EB87036C59A411B90687E&view=detail&FORM=VIRE)

[q=FU+Gayle&docid=608047398012389171&mid=B87036C59A411B90687EB87036C59A411B90687E&view=detail&FORM=VIRE](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=FU+Gayle&docid=608047398012389171&mid=B87036C59A411B90687EB87036C59A411B90687E&view=detail&FORM=VIRE)

(By the way, I am decreeing here and now that this song be played at the end of any memorial service resulting from my impact with an extremely lucky milk truck).

I also gave my MIL's name to my angel because I know Mary would appreciate watching me getting the verbal stick from her daughter, and this spot provided that guaranty.

I really can't blame MW. I always tell people that if the late 1977 Tommy walked in the door to date my daughter he'd be met with my handgun. I was that incorrigible.

I, in turn, get to watch MW sitting outside in all kinds of inclement weather. I especially love the blizzards. A fair trade for two lifetime nemeses.

(The elf to the left of the photo is named BC, and he spends all of his time sleeping. But as an original member of the now OFC, who has spent time visiting Jamestown back in the day, I know his close proximity also annoys the hell out of MW. Wait till she finds out I've named the other elf, just out of the frame, after my other Aunt Violet Flop-Housemate, Joey, who made a lasting impression on her at my wedding.)

But given MW's certain solid ties to Catholic heaven, compared to my own lapsed version of the same, whenever I am burning votive candles for someone special I like to place them out by Mary to make sure they get a little more propulsion skywards. (if it were just me I would certainly get the Cain offering reception). I say to my angel, "But Mary, this candle isn't for me!" and she replies through gritted teeth, "Oh, all right then!" I burn my more pagan candles in a completely different spot, under the Bacchus wall relief (which bears a striking resemblance to Lenny. Go figure!).

I'm certain Mary is counting on my downward, post-life trajectory. I am counting on the Governor's reprieve. Satan could never handle the competition.

Anyway, when I set out the votive candle Friday evening for Michele, and Terry & Tyler, I made sure to put it out by Mary, because I knew she'd have a vested interest in ensuring the delivery of its entreaty to the Big Guy. After all, Michele really was her most devout daughter. When I went out yesterday to replace the candle with a back-up, belt and suspenders, I saw that it had burned clean down to the bottom without being extinguished by the occasional gusts of wind or flakes of snow. The sun peaking through the trees and that tiny orb in the foreground confirmed the outcome in my more mystical view of the Universe. Message delivered. Thanks Mary. I owe you (but if you ever want to collect, you better put in a good word for me when the time comes, otherwise, I'm welshing).

I see Shelly's smile in that sunshine, and even though it is winter, I feel her warmth on my face.

Well, Smokey awaits, so I'll end this here.

The rest of my fine, five readers, enjoy your day of rest.

But have a great day!

Rest In Peace Shelly Belly

February 26, 2022



Yesterday morning, my wife's younger sister, Michele Wallen Sacca, passed across the veil, to join, among others, her brother Mark, and parents, Norb and Mary, who were, no doubt, waiting for her. My prayers go out to her husband, Terry Sacca, and their son, Tyler, and all of her sisters, including Lisa. They have lost their Saint.

I know Tyler's message in the above FB posting is fuzzy, so I will repeat it here:

"Today is the worst day of my life. I lost my whole world. The strongest and at the same time most gentle woman I have ever met in my life. If you know her situation, then you know she has been fighting for her life for the past few years. Well mom, you don't have to fight anymore. I have no idea what I will do without you. I love you so much. This just doesn't seem real."

I have never known anyone who loved everyone, without question, the way Shelly did.

The last text I have from her talks about her attending the funeral of a young neighbor who had committed suicide, and the tragedy of a young life lost to such a thing. She was always out there supporting someone, somewhere, during their time of need.

I have known Shelly for over forty-five years, since she was a cute teenager. I remember when I first came to meet the family, who were then living on State Street in Jamestown, New York. She accepted me without hesitation, when my most lethal and magical charm couldn't win over her sisters (I don't blame them one bit, they were a great judge of character). She even gave up her room for me to bunk in during that stay. She was the sister who regularly came down to visit Lisa and me in NYC, and the first to get to know my crazy family. They loved her. So did I.

She had been suffering with diabetes since she was a young child.

It completely complicated her life every day, stopped her from doing a lot of things other kids did, and I never heard her complain about it. It almost killed her when, after a few years married to Terry, she insisted on trying for that baby, the now wonderful Tyler, and again when her kidneys failed a few decades back. If it wasn't for the selflessness of her sister Cathy, who gave her one of her own kidneys back then, I would have written this a long time ago. Later, she lost part of one of her legs to the disease, and again, did not complain.

She spent a good part of the last decade taking care of her mother Mary, who was in an assisted living program in the town by her. She

still visited that same facility to care for a number of Mary's friends, long after her mother died. As I said, she was the Saint.

The Wallen Witches made an annual pilgrimmage down to Shelly's home town each year during the summer or early fall, just so they could spend some extra time with her. It was like a pilgrimmage to Lourdes, very devout, with lots of alcohol. There was a lot of cackling going on.

And they had a group text that was often like listening in on lockerroom banter. I was thrilled to be the sole male member of that group.

Michele would sometimes surprise me with a bawdy line or two. All good Saints have a dark side.

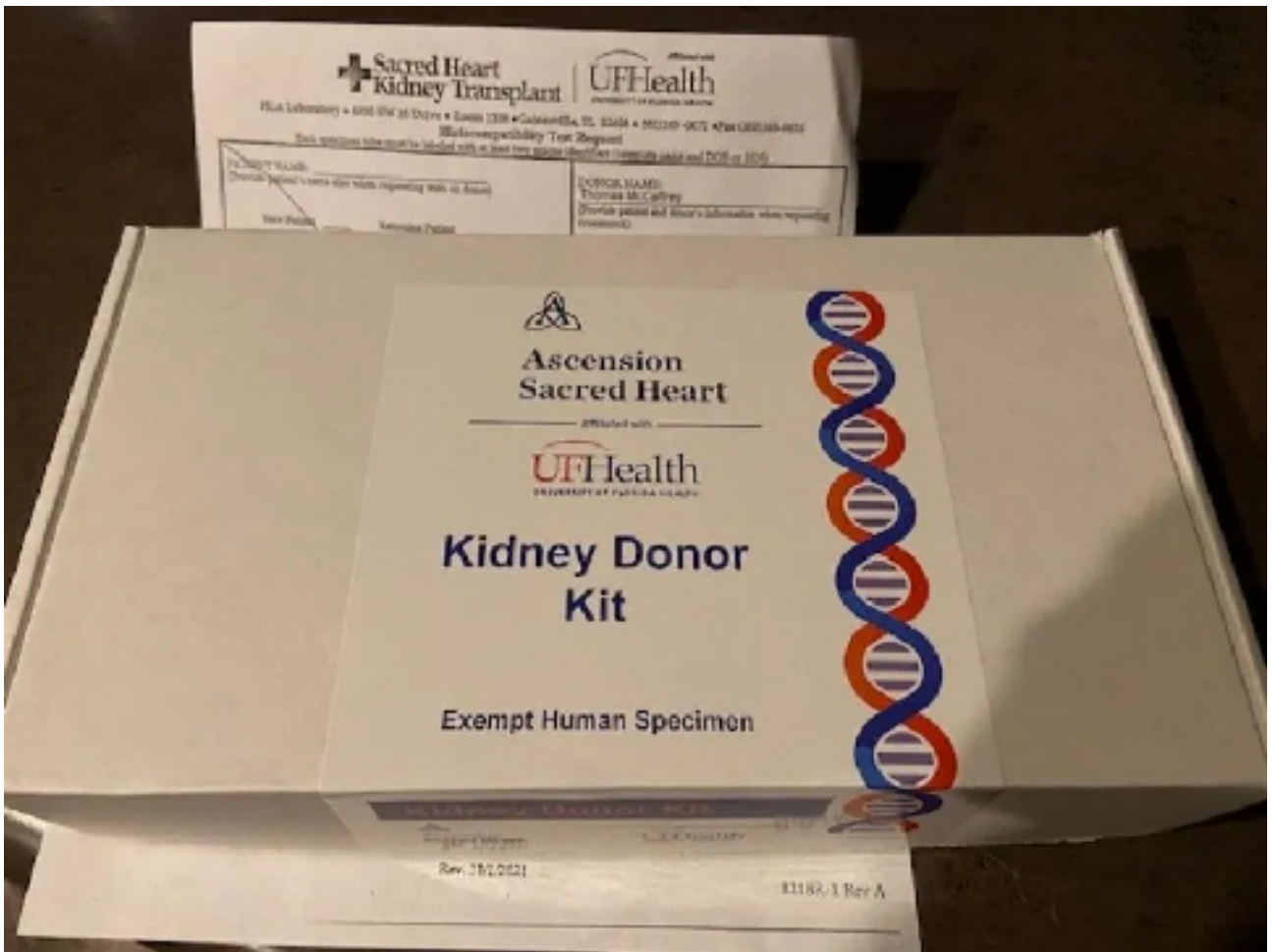
A few years back, Cathy's kidney, which had lasted twice as long as expected, finally gave out. Michele had to go back on thrice-weekly dialysis, but because of her declining general physical health, she had a battle trying to get back on the national kidney donor list. And then COVID hit and threw the medical world into the blender. Still, Michele never complained.

As things became more desperate over the past few months, everyone in the family who was close to a match threw their hat in the possible donor ring, but the testing was delayed because of COVID issues.

During the week, Michele's heart began to fail, and despite the heroics of the hospital staff, she coded. She was on a ventilator while her family prayed that she could beat the Devil one last time. Yesterday morning, I heard my wife wailing like a Banshee somewhere in the house above me. Keening. She had heard the news from my daughter Jackie, who is very close with Tyler, that Michele had passed.

When I went outside to feed Smokey, I found a package sitting on my porch. I did not see it when I came back with Lisa from the reading at MOS the night before.

When I opened it I knew I had received a parting message from Shelly Belly:



Rest in peace, you sweet woman. Keep an eye on Terry, and Tyler, and your sisters. You will never be forgotten.

A Good Time Was Had By All

February 25, 2022



Last night's fundraiser for the Longmont Theatre was amazing, but unfortunately kept me up beyond my bedtime so I actually slept in until 3 a.m. The mules were not happy. Anyway, I am now rushing to play catch up, and do not have the time to provide much detail beyond the fact that, acting like a lounge pianist, I performed my readings from all 3 books for a room full of diners - that included my dear friends Brooke from A&W and Doc Carmen and Danielle (the latter who was the third winner of the inscribed book set, see below, and all three woman looked stunning) from Berthoud Family Dentistry, while they ate and drank for a great cause. I signed a few copies of TWA and AAA that some of the attendees had brought with them and also inscribed copies of the three donated sets of TWA/AAA that were raffled off throughout the evening. The grand prize - the inscribed copy of Colin Broderick's TWIONY - went to a woman who had unfortunately already left for the evening. The Board members from the Theatre will be contacting her to come by and pick up her prize.

Lonnie Bell did an amazing job at MC and all of the raffle winners were wonderful to chat with and seemed pleased with their prizes. It was all a bit heady for me, so unfortunately I cannot remember the names of the winners beyond Danielle, and I am only able to remember her name because she is the one woman (besides my wife an Doc Carmen) who has had her hands in my mouth.

Anyway, I do remember some of the stories I was told as the prizes were awarded.

This handsome character - who reminded me a lot of the actor John Aston (from the Addams Family TV show) told me the most wonderfully poignant story of how he proposed to his wife on the West Coast of Ireland. Thank you for sharing that moment with me.



The next young man, told me how he had just returned from his wonderful family vacation visiting County Kerry in Ireland.



And of course, I was thrilled that Danielle was the third winner, but I didn't feel comfortable talking with her without her hands in my mouth, so we just smiled for the cameras. Maybe mugged is a better word.



As soon as my wife wakes up, I will get the first two winner's names and revise the blog accordingly. My apologies, it's really not you, it's me.

Brooke was disappointed that she was not one of the lucky rafflers, so at the end of the night, to reward her for coming out on such a bitter cold evening to support the cause, I inscribed the copies I had used at the reading, including the printed out pages from KMAG, and delivered them to Brooke, telling her that if she hung on to them long enough, they may be worth some money some day.

Who knows? It could happen.

Thank you Brooke. May all your dreams come true.

And of course, the board members of the Longmont Theatre Company were facinating and charming people, and just a pleasure to chat with. My hat is off to them individually and as a group for their continuous efforts.

As an aside, I spent the night in distracted terror given that the OFC members were threatening to repeatedly prank call MOS (think Moe in the Simpsons) during the evening's festivities, they even showed me they had the phone number, so every call that rang behind the bar sent shivers of terror down my spine. Mike Hunt indeed!

But one of the absolutely coolest moments was when I was shown the perfectly poured Guinness with a copy of The Wise Ass floating on its head. Pure magic.

Well, I must cut this short, but I do want to thank everyone who made the trip to MOS last night to support such a great cause. It was an absolute pleasure being the literary elevator music playing during your dinner.

And I want to thank Colin Broderick, for his donation of the grand prize of the evening, the inscribed copy of TWIONY. It was a big hit.

Now Smokey awaits and I must flee.

It's Friday, filled with potential and possibilites, so you fine, five readers push through the work day to the weekly reward for every responsible citizen.

But most of all, have an amazing day.

Curtain Up - Longmont Theatre Fundraiser - Michael Jubak, Jr.

February 24, 2022

12:24



Tweet



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Bestselling author Tom McCaffrey will be a guest at the fundraiser for the Longmont Theater Company on Feb. 24th! You can enjoy a special reading on "The Wise Ass" and then get a chance at winning a copy of his first two novels! [@wisecelt](#)
[@LongmontTheatre](#)
longmonttheatre.org



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Was reminded yesterday how important live theatre is to my Clan when I watched a video of Cousin Apple's nephew, son of his sister

Christina, Michael Jubak, Jr. (in legal parlance, my second cousin once removed) performing in the lead role of *Musidorus* in *Head Over Heels* at Long Island University this past weekend. He was incredible. Great voice, stage presence and a natural comic. Well done Michael. The rest of the performers were equally impressive. You see, actors in legitimate theatre fly without a net. No fifty takes to get the perfect shot (and I am NOT knocking film actors here - hell, I'm praying to see The Claire Trilogy on the big screen someday - and I am great at screenplays). You get a couple of weeks of rehearsal and then you are on stage, hopefully before a live audience (although I know first-hand that Vampires and ghosts are also big fans of the theatre) laying yourself bare before the crowd. You can feel the electricity in the air.

Before I left NY, back in 2015, Lisa and I saw a live production of David Hare's *Skylight* at the Golden Theatre starring the British actors Bill Nighy (Billy Mack from *Love Actually*) and Carey Mulligan (equally brilliant). Our seats were literally front row orchestra, and while we were waiting for the rest of the world to find their seats (chronically 15 minutes early to everything) I was so close that I put my Playbill on the edge of the stage in front of me next to a set stack of books, and forgot about it until the lights went down. Then I almost shit myself. But at the appropriate scene where Bill came to that spot in the stage and bent over to deal with those books, he just neatly stacked my play bill in with the books beside it. I could have sworn he winked at me, because I was the only one in the front row with a look of horror on my face. And that is when I fully appreciated just how interactive live theater was.

As a writer, seeing your work interpreted by someone you may have never met before, on stage, is a thrilling experience. They never really look like the characters in your head when you are writing, and sometimes they don't sound the same, but after a few moments watching the actor perform your lines you realize that they have transformed that character into something new and wonderful, often in ways you could not have imagined, because they have imbued it with their own experience and talents. They now own it. And that is the magic.

Then there is the director, who reads your work and applies his/her/their own vision to the story and characters. He/She/They

interprets your vision, again, sometimes in ways that you could not have imagined. But the director is the one hearing the cats every performance from the beginning to the end of the story. The director makes sure we see the big picture, and that when the lights go down each night, everyone in the audience is satisfied.

Pat Francis was the first person I watched carry out those duties for my play *Revelations*. He basically shooed me out of the room during auditions and said "I got this." And he did. Nailed it! Thank you Pat.

Of course there are also the producers, who are basically talent spotters. They come across a work they think should be staged and then work their skills to make it happen. They put everything together - work, talent, money - and then stand in the shadows while the actors and director listen to the applause each night and take their bows. But none of that happens without them.

And finally the venue. You can't stage a play without a stage. And if you want to truly embrace live theater in your community, you need a place for the actors to perform. And that is the service that the Longmont Theatre Company provides NoCo.

So, for all of you still sitting on the fence, stop in Mike O'Shays this evening between the hours of 4 and 8 pm, say hello to Lonnie Bell, and have yourself a drink and/or a meal, all for the great cause of seeing 25% of your bill go to fund the LTC. If you want a few laughs, either because I am either amusing or I bomb completely, stick around and listen/watch me perform my lines in front of a live audience without a net. I promise I'll stay "on book" but that isn't going to help because I can't blame the writer if the story doesn't move you, or if my Bronx accent renders it unintelligible. I can only promise you that I will do my best and hopefully it won't suck.

Smokey is upstairs and doesn't give a rat's ass about my reading tonight. She/He/They just wants some warm cat food and a cuddle.

The rest of you fine, five readers go out there survive this Thursday, like I will, because tomorrow is that magical day, Friday.

But have a great day. I know I will.

Longmont Theatre Fundraiser - Thank You CB

February 23, 2022



Yesterday, two packages arrived from the East Coast bearing inscribed copies of Colin Broderick's Books! The two memoirs, *Orangutan* and *That's That*, and the novel, *Church End*, are inscribed to Lonnie Bell and will take their places of honor on the Celtic Book Shelf on the back of the bar in Mike O'Shays. The copy of *TWIONY*, a collection of essays by some of the greatest Irish writers that ever called NYC their home, including the McCourt brothers and Billy Collins, is inscribed by Colin and expressly commemorates its soon to be owner's support of the Longmont

Theatre tomorrow night. It will be raffled off along with the three sets of *TWA* and *AAA*.

As an added incentive, for whomever wins *TWIONY*, I will inscribe p. 305, and include the actual winner's name(s), where my essay "Bronx Irish Born" appears (of course, I will completely understand if you would rather not sully the prize in such a manner). The offer remains on the table.

(If any other writer, from any race or culture, cares to send in inscribed copies of their own works for addition to Lonnie's growing literary collection, feel free to send them directly to Lonnie Bell at Mike O'Shays, 512 Main Street Longmont, CO 80501).

I cannot say enough about Colin's generosity and kindness in supporting the LT. Colin is one of the rising stars in Irish literary circles. According to Malachy McCourt, "Colin Broderick is in the front rank of Irish storytellers!" (<https://www.colinbroderick.com/>). I would kill for that endorsement.

In addition to his books, Colin has written and produced plays and films, so local theaters are close to his heart.

<https://www.irishnews.com/arts/film/2022/01/14/news/colin-broderick-home-is-where-the-heart-is-2558019/>

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/92027/colin-broderick/>

<https://cineuropa.org/en/interview/395758/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Broderick

As an aside, I am also the unnamed lawyer friend referred to in Colin's memoir, *Orangutan*, with whom he meets in his then Bronx bookshop, The Guitar & Pen. I knew him way back when, and everything he says in his memoirs is true. Definitely worth buying all of his books if you want to fully appreciate the modern Irish emigration experience.

But you have to be there to win this one of kind *TWIONY* (and my three sets), so come on out to MOS tomorrow afternoon between the hours of 4 and 8 pm, have some drinks and/or a meal, and take your chances. Twenty-five percent of your bill will be donated by MOS to LT. It really is for a great cause.

Now I would be lying if I said I wasn't a wee bit nervous about doing the readings from my three books (that's right I'm also previewing

two selections from KMAG, which does not hit books shelves until March 24th).

I haven't performed publicly since the mid-seventies, when Lenny and I took our exotic dance routine on the road under the professional name "Chip and Dale!" (I was Dale). We spent many decades tied up in litigation over the use of that name. Okay, I made that last bit up. Lenny was Dale. Serrano was Chip. I was their pim. . . , er. . . , ah. . . , manager. BC booked the clubs and college sorority houses, and made sure there were fresh batteries in the Boom Box. How the mighty (OFC) have fallen! Those closing number splits put way too much stress on Lenny's hips.

But I truly am a little nervous, and will have to force myself not to speak at NYC speed so that my thick Bronx accent doesn't sound like White Noise. Maybe I'll put marbles in my mouth. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alk2CEpC7Kc>

In between the actual readings I may tell some anecdotes like the one above, and some of them will be true. And I will inscribe every single book put in front of me and try to write something memorable. So bring those copies if you have them.

Anyway, I hope to see some of my NoCo neighbors and friends (I'll even take a few enemies) tomorrow evening.

It could be that one weird night that the people of NoCo will proudly refer to in the future with the opening line "Were you at MOS the night of. . . ?" I'm hoping it is something worth bragging to your grandchildren about.

But before that happens I need to finish working on a very important legal motion for a very important client. It's coming along marvelously and is proving to be a great distraction to keep my nerves in check.

Well, Smokey is waiting for cat food and a cuddle, so I must flee. You fine, five readers have a wonderful hump day, in all interpretations of that word.

But, most of all, make it a great one!

Snow at Zero

February 22, 2022



I never pay attention to the weather forecasts. So when the lovely Dr. Carmen at the Dentist's office - I was getting yet another permanent crown - asked yesterday afternoon if I had made provisions for Claire & Honey (who she knows through my books) because of the expected (by everyone else but me) snowfall and drop in temperatures, I confidently assured her that I had. And that is true. They both have very nice winter coats on and the heaters in the barn run 24/7 (you can imagine my electricity bill in the winter months). My dear friend and equine mentor Pam Ervin taught me (and reminded me by text yesterday afternoon - thanks Pam) that they must have access to plenty of hay in the freezing weather, and they do. They not only have the open bales in the interior racks, but Honey always helps herself to a new bale from the storage room just to torment me. Walking in the front section of my barn is comparable to crossing a wall to wall plush green shag carpet from the 70s.

I make sure that they have the heated outdoor bucket topped off with hot water and the ice on the other troughs busted open with a claw hammer (not as easy as it sounds). I would have tried to lock the mules in the barn for the duration, it has solid dutch doors I built myself, but Mike and Amy (Claire's prior owners) warned me that Claire hates to be confined and would literally kick down a wall if she ever found herself in that situation. I respect those wishes.

And I like the walls I built. So the two mules wander in and out as they see fit and usually don't hunker down inside the barn unless the wind, rain or snow makes it unbearable to be outside.

This morning, I put their feed bowls directly under the overhanging heat lamps inside the stall area to ensure that they could eat their meals of chopped pears, apples and carrots in relative comfort. My face and hands were frozen (the latter despite my gloves) after the few minutes it took to carry out a huge bucket of fresh hot water (you must be extra careful toting it, because if you splash it on your pants leg it turns immediately to ice) and their breakfast. But as the photo above attests, at first glance snow at zero is quite beautiful.

If I had paid attention to the forecast, I might have reconsidered getting Jeter sheared yesterday morning. Where he went from this:



To this:



(Note that we are a free range family so the only time Jeter wears a collar is when I leash him for the trip to the groomer. So he knows

something is up when he sees me holding the leash and usually makes a run for under the dining room table.)

Thank you Annie (Jeter's personal groomer and confident up in Loveland). I would highly recommend her but she is so damn popular already that it is almost impossible to book new appointments and her early morning openings are as rare as hen's teeth. So stay away.

The loss of his gnarly coat yesterday definitely curtailed Jeter's morning constitutional:



He usually wanders the entire back yard area each morning for a good half hour. I don't blame him. Sorry Jeter.

But there was an unexpected upside to my trip to Loveland yesterday morning because as I was returning from retrieving Jeter, I was pleasantly compelled to stop to allow a small contingent of magnificent elk to cross the roadway.



An event that I never experienced before moving out here to God's country. I cherish these moments. It's visuals like this that caused me to write Claire's mountain scene in TWA.

So the unpredictable weather is just another one of those unexpected gifts that one gets used to here in NoCo.

But now I have to go out and sweep a path clear from Smokey's lair to the porch so he/she can make his/her way their to eat his/her breakfast and sip some heated water before returning to his/her comfortably 24/7 heated black nuclear bomb proof Igloo (again my electric bill is always a pleasure - and it is worth every penny).

Must bundle up before going on my morning rounds. Then its another day of legal creativity.

The rest of you fine, five readers, stay warm - spring is right around the corner.

And have a great day!

A Sucker For Alliteration

February 21, 2022



What can I say? Saw this sign on one of those websites that cater to the Celts, especially around St. Patty's Day. Repping the Clan? Sign me up! (pun intended)

And of course I was attracted to the artful alliteration.

It now sits over the window in Lisa's office, which sits right off the dining room, through glass pane doors, so it is readily visible to anyone dining at my home.

Now, before anyone out there gets their knickers in a twist, I am not advocating violence. Ask any of the members of the OFC and they will swear that I have always been a gentle soul. But "gentle" is a relative term. Nor am I propagating an outdated stereotype of the Irish. But, with respect to my own Clan, and my own Clan alone, I am just reporting a truth. There, I own it.

And I am not apologizing for being a member of that kind of McCaffrey family, or my like minded friends, or for the neighborhood and time I grew up in, or for the life that I led there. And I'm not romanticizing violence.

You see, back in the day, from the moment most of the children in my neighborhood stepped into a schoolyard, you usually settled major issues with a fistfight. For some of us, given the siblings we grew up with, we were seasoned pugilists before we ever were enrolled in school.

Unfortunately (yes I chose that word carefully), that concept of socialization has been relegated to the dustbins of history.

You see, school yard dust ups taught the children of my world (and I do not say boys because that would be sexist, and there were some very tough girls in my neighborhood - Mary Jane Daugherty, Patty Perratini and even Rosemary McBride come to mind - I found them all attractive and indeed a lot tougher than most of the boys I knew) that our world is not fair and that there are consequences for your actions. If you had a fast tongue, you better have equally fast fists as a back up. Or you learned to control that tongue. It also taught you that there is no shame in getting knocked down. But there is shame in not at least attempting to get back up. It taught you to face your fears, and I never remember a fight when I wasn't afraid. Ever. And you never ran. And it taught you loyalty, you learned to step up

for your family and friends, or you quickly lost both. I rarely see that kind of loyalty any more in the citizens of this time.

And, win or lose, you never went running to your parents. Siblings, sure, but never parents.

I probably took a dozen too many blows to the head, and, as I grew older, some of those battles were alcohol related (never a good thing - I haven't had a drink in over three decades). It probably was not good for my long term mental prospects - although I'm still standing, and that's more than many of my contemporaries would say, if they were alive to say it. But wrapped around each one of those dust-ups is a story, sometimes a good one. Stories that will never be told authentically by today's generation.

If blows are traded today someone goes to jail. And I've seen too many of the younger generation's lives be ruined by an overzealous Assistant District Attorney looking to impose a quick plea deal and pad their stats, over something that wouldn't warrant an ice pack.

Making everyone a victim only makes it easier for all of the real predators out there. And bullies go unchecked.

But most important, we never fought with weapons, and both sides always went home. You fought with whatever God gave you as you came crying into this world. And you never fought to the death. You fought to the advantage. At some point, one of the combatants conceded, or the observers (there were always observers, because if there weren't observers, you were engaged in something much worse than a dust-up, and if you didn't already know how to defend yourself, or that this was a time that you had to, you were screwed) decided that the point at issue was made and the fight was over.

The combatants were separated and dragged in different directions by your respective supporters. The victor got bragging rights until they met their match, and the loser went home to lick their wounds, until they got big enough or strong enough to win the next battle. But most learned that they just didn't have a taste or the skills for it, so they adapted, formed their alliances with those that did, and moved on to being one of the perennial spectators of life. But they understood what they needed to know. It is just how it was back then.

No one pulled out a knife, or a gun, or ever entered the fracas to kill one another. I would argue that some of the young people today

who engage in marathon virtual violence through video games on the internet are in much worse shape mentally than I will ever be - given that they do not fully understand or appreciate the reality of an offensive physical act. Most have never suffered a slap to the face (which means they never were taught by old-school nuns). In the real world, there is no reset button on the kind of violence they perpetrate.

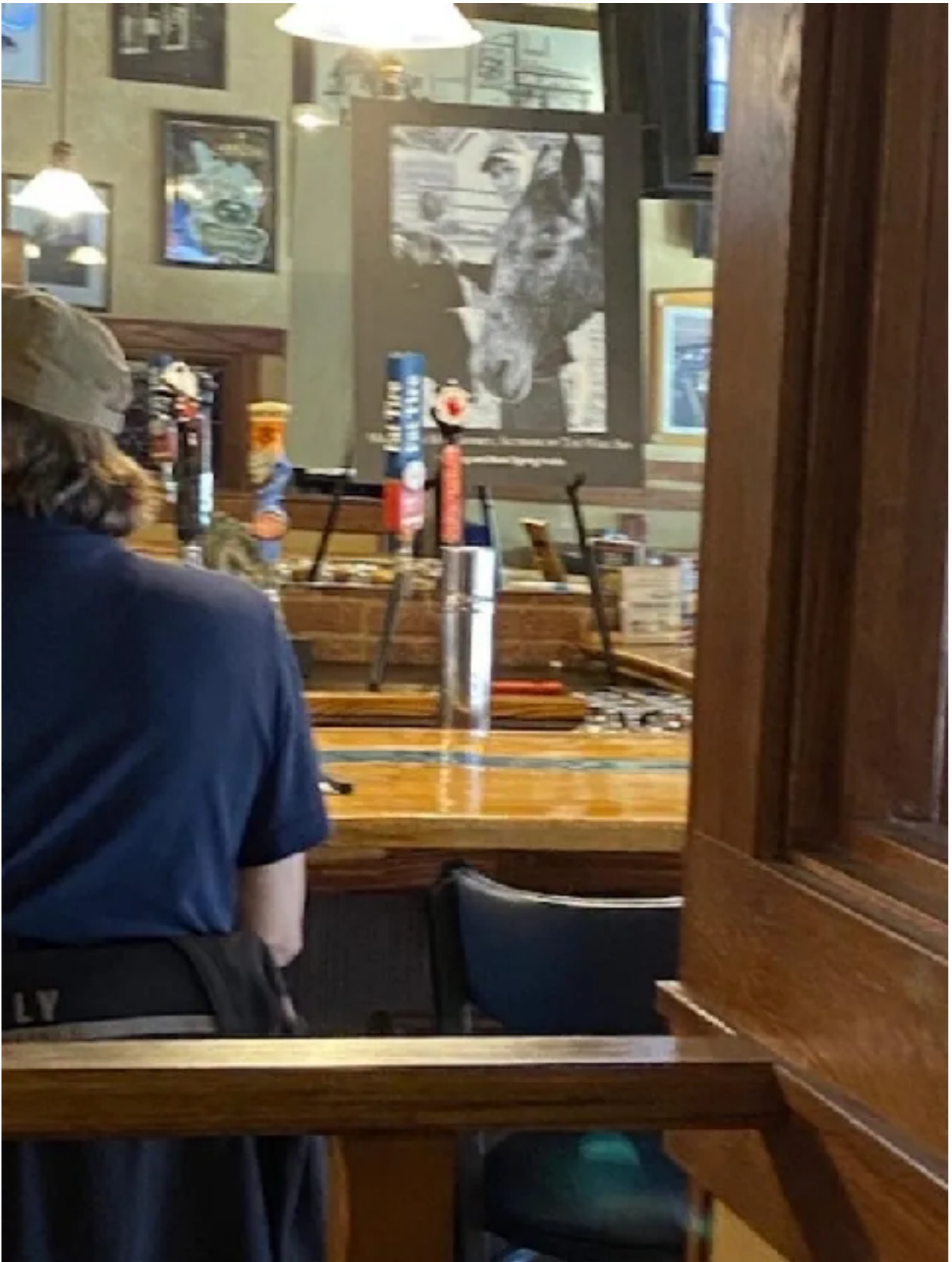
So yes, the above sign represents another time. And it may not be who I am now. But I won't apologize for it being a part of what I am today. And I am proud of my Clan.

Well the new work-week awaits, and I have cats to cuddle and rounds to make before I start my legal work.

I hope the rest of my fine, five readers have a nice, peaceful day. And make it a great one!

Mike O'Shays' Longmont Theatre Fundraiser- 2/24/22 4-8PM

February 20, 2022



Stopped by MOS for a late lunch with my darling wife. Had spent the morning going through TWA, AAA and KMAG preparing

selections for the reading. It's not as easy as it sounds because you want to provide the listener with selections that are naturally contextual and don't require too much explanation. Plus I always fear that my Bronx accent will make it sound unintelligible. And this is the theater crowd, they are used to actors enunciating beautifully.

But you play the hand you are dealt.

Lonnie Bell has gone full out telling all of his regular customers about the event. He's even set out the above Poster - that's me standing between Mister Rogers and Claire, before I sported the face fur. I hope it is a decent turnout. Not because of my books.

It's because I really believe that live theater is the cultural life blood of any community and I want to support it in any way I can.

I love theater and it is the one thing I truly miss about New York.

I have been maintaining my theater fix by attending summer performances of The Shakespeare Festival at CU Boulder. Brilliant productions performed by equally brilliant actors in an outdoor theater in the round. Highly recommend it.

My first success as a writer came through a one-act play I wrote in '79 (yes I'm that old) called *Revelations*. I saw it staged and performed twice in NYC in the early 90s - at The Village Gate (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Village_Gate) and The American Theatre of Actors (<https://americantheatreofactors.org>). It was produced and directed by a brilliant regional *auteur* Pat Francis. I'm hoping he can produce it in Florida this summer. Good luck Pat, and thanks.

Writing and reading a novel is a solitary endeavor. You work at you computer all by yourself and the novel goes off into the universe where individuals hopefully pick it up one day and like it. If they don't spend the time posting a review, you may never know how they felt about the work.

Writing for the stage is a completely cooperative, collaborative and interactive experience. Sure, you are still writing it alone, but its production is filtered through live actors repeating your words on stage - giving those words life and energy - and at some point a live audience will be sitting there watching the play being performed and reacting to it in real time. Everyone contributes to the experience. It is magical. Success has many parents.

I have no memory at all of the actual performances of my play. It involved a transgender love story and was way ahead of its time (1979). Who knew? I wrote it as literary therapy to my sister's coming out to me. I actually wrote it once I realized she was gay, and the tearful formal coming out occurred while she was typing my play for me as we both sat in her Upper West End apartment in Manhattan (I still suck at typing). Love that girl (and her spouse "b," the basis for the character "T.")

Anyway, it won a University wide writing contest called the Jacob Hammer Award (thank you Professor Clement Dunbar III, who tutored me through that experience while I was Lehman College.)

Anyway, I sat there each night of the performances in different spots in the theater, watching the audience. I cannot explain to you how emotional it was for me watching them respond to the performance of the brilliant actors (who I believe transformed my work to a whole new level - I have the greatest respect for all thespians). When the audience laughed, I laughed, when they cried, I cried. Seeing that response to your work in the faces of strangers is intoxicating. And the audience got more out of this through the shared experience.

You could feel the collective energy.

So that is why it is important for a community like Longmont to come out this Thursday and support this iconic theater. Art is what makes us distinctly human.

I hope to see my NoCo neighbors there.

Oh, and I want to thank the man sitting in the left of the above photo. He purchased paperback versions of both TWA and AAA while he was sitting at the bar. I promised him that if he brought them with him to Thursday's fundraiser, I would gladly inscribe them any way he pleased. That is a standing offer to anyone else who shows up with copies. Also, three sets of both books will be available for raffle - and I will inscribe them as well for the winners.

Anyway, it is Sunday, and since I spent yesterday focusing on nourishing creative juices, first preparing the readings, then at the Independent Gallery on 4th Street in Loveland where Lisa purchased a Billie Colson's original work "Proud" which now hangs in our dining area:



(thank you Billie - brilliant artist) and then at MOS nailing down the logistics for Thursday's fundraiser with Lonnie Bell, where I also snapped a photo of Lisa's Irish blessing permanently affixed:



AN IRISH BLESSING



*May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm
upon your face and
the rain fall soft upon your fields,
& until we meet again,
May God hold you in the
hollow of his hand.*

remember, if you are there, tap it for good luck - I now have a ton of Claire & Honey catch-up work to do. The piper must always be paid.

But the rest of you fine, five readers, relax, put your feet up, and most of all, have a great day!

Reviews Matter

February 19, 2022



When I was a kid, I never read a review as a basis to determine if I was going to read a book. Indeed, the only reviews that meant anything back then were those that appeared in magazines or the NYT's Sunday Book Section, and I didn't really read any periodical other than Readers Digest or Mad Magazine "What, Me Worry?" Well, that's not completely true, I also used to sneak a look at the pictures at my father's stash of an illicit magazine, discovered one nosy morning hidden in the back of his file cabinet in his home office, but that's another story.

My early reading selections were usually dictated by family gifts - The Hardy Boys collection (I also read all of Veronica's Nancy Drew collection) - school projects dictated by the nuns of St. Maggie's, from my family's own collection of books (my grandfather, Tom Burke, passed down a great collection to my mother, which I now own), and finally, from word of mouth from my friends. I remember Jack Vaughan turned me onto *Down These Mean Streets* by Piri Thomas and *The Basketball Diaries* by Jim Carroll. Jimmy Betz was the first friend I saw with a copy of *Lord Of The Rings*, by JRR Tolkien in his hand, and I went on to read everything that author wrote, including *Farmer Giles of Hamm*, which I spotted, strangely enough, on a kiosk in one of those small gift stores in an airport I was passing through. Years later, while she was an associate at GF&M for a New York Minute, during one of our discussions of great writers, Loretta Lynch recommended Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Thanks for that tip. Brilliant book.

And, when it comes to books, I love recommendations, but I hate when someone actually gives me a book as a gift. Because then I feel obligated to read it, and then it becomes too much like school or work. And worse, then I feel obligated to like it, because I don't want to hurt the feelings of the person who gave it to me (they always ask you if you liked it).

My nephew J-M (say hi to your lovely fiance Joyce) is a deep thinking serious reader, and once gave me a copy of *Blood Meridian*, by Cormac McCarthy, insisting that I had to read it. Now CM is a brilliant writer, one of the most brilliant, but this book almost killed my soul. I mean did they have to shoot the dancing bear? I

have to say that after reading it, I suspected for months that J-M was a serial killer in training, because it was that dark. Indeed, by the time I turned the last page, I could have easily murdered J-M for forcing that book upon me. But if you want to experience absolutely brilliant writing, this may be a book for you.

I like to think about a suggested writer or book, check out what other people say about them, and then make my selection. Often times I will reach out to a person who suggested a book and rave about it, long after I have read it.

Which is why I love the review section on the Amazon book pages. No longer is the life and death of an author controlled by the whims of the paid literary critics in the major periodicals. The Amazon system is so democratic, everyone who ponies up their money gets to voice their opinion. It's very simple to navigate, you can click a few buttons and bars and read what people who clearly liked a book - I approach all writers as an optimist - starting with the most recent 5 star review -- and work my way backwards chronologically and then down the star chart. I don't need a lot of reviews to make up my mind, just enough to get the feel of a book. And I can usually tell from a reviewer's comments if a book succeeded or failed for them based on a legitimate literary basis or just on an idiosyncratic pet peeve. And I also look for the expression of the reader's passion in their review. Passion is infectious.

Well, for this past year, I've gotten a real lesson in how important the review section on the Amazon book page is to an author. On-line purchasing decisions are made in an instant. So if you are a new writer trying to catch a shopper's interest, you need as many visual cues suggesting *indicia* of success as you can possibly find to act as that carnival barker that draws the fair goer into the tent to watch your show. I mean you are competing with the greats who have established masses of followers who are going to buy their books, no questions asked. As a newbie, you are just a soft voice in a very large chorus desperately trying to get noticed.

I did not know any of this a year ago. However, my more sophisticated writer friends like CCB and MRD were generous in sharing their knowledge of what indicators were important.

It turns out, that the number and level of reviews a book gets is one of the indicators that matter in this modern world. Indeed, it is so

important, that it appears directly below the Title of your book on the web page. For example, I just copied and pasted the lead information for TWA (out for a year) & AAA (out for 2 months) taken from their web pages just now.

The Wise Ass (The Claire Trilogy Book 1) Kindle Edition

by [Tom McCaffrey](#) (Author) Format: Kindle
Edition *4.4 out of 5 stars* [3,046 ratings](#) [Book 1 of
3: The Claire Trilogy](#)

An Alien Appeal (The Claire Trilogy Book 2) Kindle Edition

by [Tom McCaffrey](#) (Author) Format: Kindle
Edition *4.6 out of 5 stars* [588 ratings](#)

KMAG hasn't hit the market just yet, so there are no ratings for it.

Amazon even makes it simple for you to click on those numbers and go right to the review section of the book's webpage.

I've learned that these are good numbers for a new (and very old) writer, and I am so thankful for them. I am so thankful for those readers so invested in their books that they take the time to

formulate and write an opinion on these Amazon pages for these thousands and thousands of books.

Amazon takes the power away from those gifted few influential critics that love to laud the particular popular literary darling that is the flavor of the month, and allows the people who actually consume those literary works to have their say in the process. So all of your reviewers out there, keep up the great work. As one of the great unwashed that is trying to succeed in this brutal world of writing, I stand before you all asking only that you give me that chance of a fair fight. And I love a fight.

Avē Imperātor, moritūrī tē salūtant ("Hail, Emperor, those who are about to die salute you")

So read that book, and if you feel that passion, go to the review section and give it a thumbs up or down (but if the latter, try not to be mean, most of the writers are human).

And thank you BRW for the above shout out.

For those fine, five readers of this blog out there this morning, get those weekend chores done and then do something special.

Maybe finish that book you started and write a book review. But most of all, have a great day!

Happy First Birthday - The Wise Ass

February 18, 2022



One year ago today, my first novel, *The Wise Ass*, was published by Black Rose Writing. Thank you again Reagan Rothe for giving this old dude this break, and making his dream come true. Greatest present ever!

I really did not know what to expect with the book launch, and was hoping that all of my friends and family that said they were going to buy it, did so. Most did. Then I hoped that those same people went onto Amazon and posted decent reviews for me. Again, most did. And I believe that those wonderful people helped provide a momentum for the book. A magical core that started to snowball. And for that I am forever grateful. For in that first year that small TWA snowball continued to roll and slowly gather more readers, and a percentage of them, strangers from all over the country, and a few more overseas, offered their opinion on the book. In its first year, TWA ended up with 3,029 Amazon global ratings, most of them positive, which I have learned from my growing community of writer friends, is not too shabby. I thank each and every one of my readers who made the time and effort to read TWA and then tell me what they think. Good or bad. That means everything to this writer.

I have told you all before that I do read my reviews, and I admit, the bad ones sting. But then you get those good ones, the ones that seem to pick up on all the fine nuances and hidden messages that you thought may be too subtle, or too poorly executed, or just too much work, for readers just looking for a brief escape from reality in a hopefully well-written book. (I don't blame them, reading should never become work, if it isn't being done for work.) And those good reviews, no matter how short or simply written, are each like a shot of adrenaline, they release the endorphins. They each make you happy that you first put your fingers on the keyboard. It is the good stuff.

Well, yesterday, on the last day of its first year, TWA received what I can only describe as an amazing review from a farmer/rancher in the Ozark region of Missouri, who goes by the moniker "Rocky Macy," that literally made me tear up. Instead of describing it to you, I figured I would just share it.

Rocky Macy

5.0 out of 5 stars The Bronx Comes to Green Acres

Reviewed in the United States on February 17, 2022

Verified Purchase

Tom McCaffrey is a native New Yorker who spent his first working life as an entertainment lawyer in Manhattan before packing in the busy lifestyle and moving to a small town in Northern Colorado to try a second working life as a writer. His first novel, "The Wise Ass," was published last year. It tells the story of a mob lawyer, Jimmy McCarthy, who was also based in New York City and who winds up in the lethal situation of having to testify against his Mafioso boss. In return for Jimmy literally putting his life - and the life of his wife, Gina - in mortal peril, the FBI places Jimmy and Gina in Witness Protection and shuffles them off to . . . wait for it . . . a small town in Northern Colorado!

Tom McCaffrey has obviously mastered the first rule of writing fiction - write about what you know. But he takes his basic knowledge of things like life in New York City, lawyering, and the

complications that arise with relocating from the Big Apple to Green Acres, and embellishes it all with truly fine writing.

The description of Jimmy McCarthy, a rather idealistic and certainly pragmatic young public defender whose formal education began in a junior college, slowly being pulled into the heady and moneyed world of doing legal work for the Mafia, is detailed and engrossing. The transformation comes across as completely believable.

In fact, the New York segment of the novel is all hard-edged and authentic. That vibe, however, changes dramatically when the couple reach Colorado. There, in a suburban farmscape somewhere east of Boulder, Jimmy and Gina, step into a new world, one that is far different than anything they expected to encounter.

In Colorado Jimmy and Gina, whose last name has been changed to Moran, meet an oddball cast of characters who could have sprung from the mind of Tom Robbins or Christopher Moore. There is Lenahan, their FBI handler who himself has been exiled to Northern Colorado by his agency and who seems to make and follow his own rules for protecting his wards. Lenahan teaches Jimmy and Gina about personal firearms and he also introduces them to Helen, who owns a nice local restaurant, and her partner/girlfriend, Bobbi, who is on the ethereal spectrum somewhere between psychic medium and witch. Bobbi can hear the thoughts of others, and she communicates with the dead - including Jimmy's three brothers who were killed by the mob in a failed effort to keep him from testifying. Bobbi can also cast a terrifying spell when she needs to.

Eddie is Bobbi's older brother who fought in the wars in the Middle East, came home a hero but suffering from PTSD, dropped out of society for a while and lived on the streets, and finally wound up as a cook in Helen's restaurant. Eddie is a trained combat veteran and a good person to have on the team when the mob finds out where Jimmy and Gina are hiding.

Everett and Michelle are the cheerful and helpful next door neighbors who can do everything from fixing lawnmowers to helping manage large dinner parties. They are also extra-terrestrials with an amazing skill set.

And one final important member of the cast is Claire, a talking mule, the Wise Ass.

A talking mule is a bit of a stretch of the imagination, even for those of us who grew up in another time and laughed at the exploits of Francis, another talking mule, and Mister Ed, a talking horse. But again, the author is a clever and skillful writer who manages to make the outlandish seem possible - and fairly believable.

McCaffrey uses Claire and her backstory to pen some very poignant thoughts about cruelty to animals. Here is a passage that really stuck with me:

"I thought about the redneck I had dealt with who looked upon Claire as just some object to be tossed upon the butcher block when all other uses for her had been spent. Then I thought about all the other animals I had had contact with during my life, those I loved as pets, and those I had seen since I had arrived in Colorado. I realized that each of them, from the largest to the smallest, were sentient beings on this earth, and that their lives deserved the same respect and protection as any human did. I thought about all of those animals that gave birth to their young, which they love as dearly as any human parent can love its child, solely for the inevitable experience of a frightening death at the end of a chute in a slaughterhouse. And why? So that mankind can continue to enjoy the taste of their flesh, or organs, or to wear their skins, or feathers, or fur as an accessory. The worst thing for me was my knowledge that I was a lifetime offender. I vowed to change that."

That passage resonated with me. Another piece that had a strong impact was Michelle, the space alien, speaking about what happens after death - something a friend of mine calls the

"universal hum." I liked it because it meshed with my own thoughts, and my friend's, on the subject: Michelle explained:

"After all, not to bore you, but it's basic physics. We are all manifestations of energy, all remnants from that big bang about fourteen billion years ago. The energy can ultimately be converted, but never destroyed. It vibrates during different times at different frequencies and our respective reality depends on the frequency at which we are vibrating. When we pass, it's just another frequency." And after all of the characters are skillfully introduced and their stories told, there is the inevitable showdown with the Mob, and it, too, is handled skillfully as the whole crew use their special skills to defend Jimmy and Gina.

"The Wise Ass" deepened my concern and compassion for our animal companions on the planet, and it also validated my beliefs about the nature of all life. But, in addition to making me a better person, "The Wise Ass" also proved to be a very well written story that was highly entertaining. I suspect that I will, at least for the foreseeable future, spend more time talking to the animals that I encounter and hoping that someday before my frequency changes one of them will engage me in conversation.

I am certain that there is much left for me to learn.

Thank you for sharing your passions and vivid imagination in this exceptional book, Tom McCaffrey!

Well, I've had a long and decent career as a lawyer, still do, so I didn't go into writing at this late stage in my life for the money, or the fame. The world would have kept on spinning had I not done so. I've been reminded this past year that I butcher syntax and I am the master of misspelling and homophones. Rocky Macy's prose puts me to shame. And I have a face for radio. In short, I am the Terence Aloysius "Slip" Mahoney of literature. And that's just fine with me. I started writing this novel because I wanted to give that one forsaken dream a final shot, before the lights went out. I wanted to make people laugh, maybe cry, and maybe think about and

appreciate their own lives as viewed through my small lens (not a euphemism), that allows me to see, every day, that there is magic in this world.

There really is. Magic is everywhere. Never forget that.

This past year of watching TWA succeed (and seeing the remainder of The Claire Trilogy launch), punctuated by Rocky Macy's review, has proven that to me. Irrefutably. Thank you Rocky and all the rest of my readers for getting me here. I am forever in your individual and collective debt.

So Happy Birthday TWA. May you (and your siblings AAA and KMAG) live as long as the Centaurians. And then some.

Well, it's Friday, and the weekend beckons, but we must first all get through the workday. So let's get after it.

I can hear Smokey meowing for food and cuddles.

But all of you fine, five readers, and the others that have been so good to me this past year, have a great day!

And thank you all.

And thank you Claire.

Snow Moon Earns Title - The Island of Misfit Pets by Bob Korolus

February 17, 2022



Right on cue, it snowed last night during the final stage of the full Snow Moon. And the results were beautiful. Despite the cold, I had

to snap some shots on the way back in from feeding Claire and Honey.



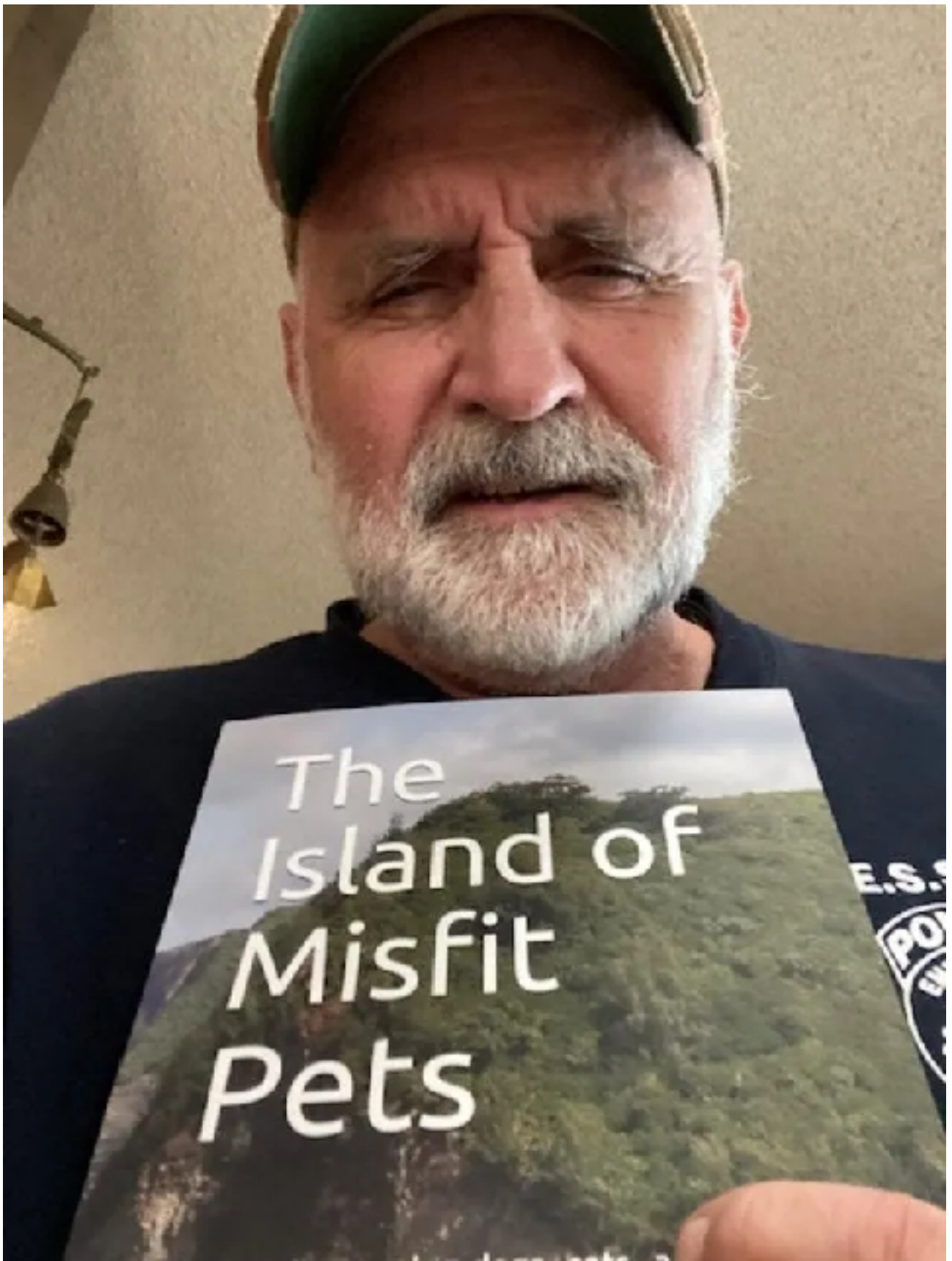
That one lit window is my office, where I do all of my writing, legal and creative, and usually stop to retrieve my coffee cup to put on the Keurig before I go out to visit with C&H, so a hot cuppa is waiting for me when I come inside. I often forget to shut the light (I also forget to put down the toilet seat, much to my patient wife's nocturnal displeasure - maybe she should leave the light on). That window is also where Claire stands, like a bank robber before a bank teller window, to extort carrots under threat of mule poop.

Luckily I scooped up the last pile during the wheel barrow round up this past weekend. I have been carrot cooperating since then.



I call that last fuzzy shot my winged moon. Anyway, it's nice to take a moment to stop and appreciate nature's display. There's no charge. So the next time you get the opportunity, take a moment for a good look around you. It will make your day better. Gather thee roses and all that jazz.

Speaking of making my day better, I got my copy of of Bob Korolus' *The Island of Misfit Pets* yesterday.



The
Island of
Misfit
Pets

I came across Bob K's work on Twitter. Given my own love of rescues, and misfits, I was intrigued by the title, so I bought a copy.

It's a short book, a quick read, less than 60 pages, and reads like Reader's Digest story (big fan of RD as a way to fill subway commutes - bite size entertainment - and you can roll it and stuff it in your pocket).

You don't buy a book like this because you are looking to be transformed by the writing. It does the job. But you do buy a book like this because you are looking to be transformed by the story. The author is on his own journey. There are moments of triumph and sadness. And this story, Bob K's story, as honestly as it is presented, is worth the read. People can make a difference, one animal at a time. And my hat is off to Bob K for taking his shot, in his own personal way, and then sharing his story with us. God bless the author and the animals in his care.

So if my five bucks for the paperback can help Bob K with his mission, it's money well spent.

Anyway, it's Recycle Thursday, so I have to dig the recycling out of the snow and drag it out front. But before I do that I need to clear a path for Smokey out front and share some food and a cuddle. Then it's my morning rounds and back to the legal mines.

But tomorrow is Friday, so hope springs eternal.

You fine, five readers get out there and have a great day!

Snow Moon - Book Business - and F*CK

February 16, 2022



Last night was the first of the three day cycle of the snow moon. It was clear and surprisingly mild when I went out to feed Claire and Honey. My intentions candle was well at work and should burn clear through the entire three day cycle.

This is a good time for intentions, because there are a few new things happening. Yesterday, I confirmed new marketing programs for the time leading up to the publication of KMAG, including a 10

book TWA give away on Goodreads during March and a BRW Grapevine email advertisement. Plus there is a Bookbub campaign coming up, and Face Book and Amazon ads that will be running over this period. This is the business side of writing that I really do not want to deal with - because it feels too much like my day job - but it turns out these decisions can be the life and death of a successful book launch. And with TWA and AAA continuing to do well, I don't want to drop the ball with KMAG. Luckily, I have a great relationship with the publisher, Reagan Rothe, upon whom I rely to guide me through this morass. (I also have the brilliant support of my dear writer friend Christy Cooper Burnett, who knows this stuff like I know the law). So far, so good. But just to be sure, I add in the intention candle. I'll probably add a second one tonight for the apex of the lunar cycle. Belt and suspenders.

A week from tomorrow (Thursday 2/24) I have that live reading at Mike O'Shays to support the Longmont Theatre (not a typo). I hope there is a decent turnout, because I believe in supporting the arts, and I am looking forward to enjoying a post-pandemic cultural Renaissance here in Northern Colorado. A strong, live theater presence will be at the heart of that revival. There is nothing more thrilling for a writer than seeing the words they have written being recited by others. So if you are reading this particular blog and live in (and/or visiting) NoCo, come by MOS next Thursday evening. I'll be reading from all three novels, sharing the blarney and signing any book that is put in front of me. Even if they have centerfolds. Selfies and videos are at your own risk.

The real trick will be making selections to read with the least number of expletives. I was considering bringing one of those aerosol starter horns to bleep out the curse words as I read. I'll put it to a vote before the audience, and they can decide what is more obnoxious, the horn or my Bronx potty mouth.

Growing up in New York, I've never understood anyone's aversion to "curse words." Indeed, I probably would be unable to communicate with most of my Bronx brethren if I did not understand the fine nuances in cursing.

Technically speaking, the real curse words include some derivation of the word "damn" in combination with a subject or object, or both. So "God Damn You To Hell!" (please don't God, I'm just using this

as an example) certainly falls into the realm of a curse. Then there lesser curses placed upon people by practitioners of the dark arts. Of course, the more wise among the practitioners of magick know that doing so never ends well for the purveyor, as whatever you put out there comes back at you with the power of three. So don't do that.

I don't understand how using an off-color word can be considered "swearing." I am not attesting that anything I am about to say is true. In fact, it rarely is.

My ubiquitous off color word is f*ck. In case there are any readers out there that have recently engaged in Rumspringa, there is a "u" where you see the asterisk..

I love this word. There are essays dedicated to its praises. For example: <https://the-peak.ca/2014/03/why-fuck-is-one-of-the-best-words-in-the-english-language/>

I was using this word before I hit grammar school. As a young child we were taught strings of foul words to recite by the older kids just so we would have the inflections down pat. I remember one particular time when I was reciting such a string out loud with the same fervor of my Saturday morning Latin lessons, when over the top of the hedgerow I happened to be passing through came the angry arm of my dear mother. I am amazed to this day at the strength of this woman, as this disembodied hand grabbed my collar lifted me over the hedges and carried me home for my first oral soap bath.

For those that need a visual.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KjxFDGFKhk>

And no matter how pure of heart the average person may be, we all curse. Most of the naysayers just attempt to hide it through substitution. "Jimminy Crickets," "Great Caesar's Ghost" "Dagnabit" or "Darnit" are some of my favorites. The old Irish like "feck." Who is kidding who.

There was a secretary in one of my old law firms who was a Jehovah's witness. She used to always call me out for my foul mouth. During one debate over the subject, I pointed out that her favorite expression of exasperation, "Bullfeathers!" was just a curse in disguise, like saying "merde" which is "shit" in french. I told her

that her intention was the same, just disguised. She never spoke to me after that. Not even in french.

Anyway, I promise I'll try not to curse/swear during the reading, although I may put it to that vote. I'm hoping I don't have to use the air horn.

Well its almost 4 am, and Smokey is waiting.

The rest of you fine, five readers go out there into the world and shout "Bullfeathers!"

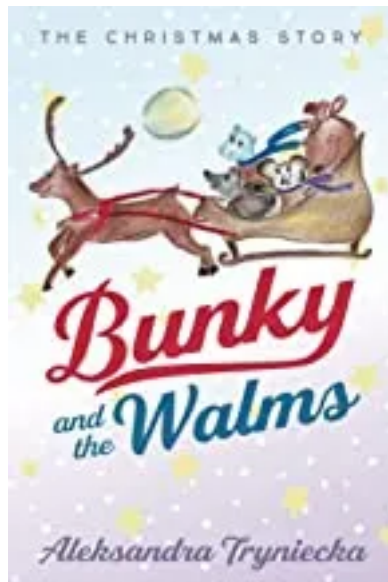
But most of all, have a great day!

Aleksandra Tryniecka - Children's Author & Illustrator

February 15, 2022



Yesterday I received the promised separate inscription and an additional Bunky and the Walms calendar from the wonderful children's author and illustrator Aleksandra Tryniecka. It traveled a long way from Poland to get here. I am going to affix the inscription inside the book:



and then my wife and I will deliver both book and calendar to Scarlett, Savanna and Stella. We are so excited and I know they will be too.

You see, not only is it important to me as a grandfather to instill an excitement and love for reading in my grandchildren, but it is important to me as a writer to do so. The only way writers can keep writing is if there are readers that can keep reading. And it is through the creativity and gifts of the writers of children's and young adult books that this is going to happen.

I must have read "Love You Forever" by Robert Munsch, illustrated by Sheila McGraw, a million times to all three of my children. I know it by heart.

So thank you Aleksandra for these wonderful and thoughtful gifts, they are instant family heirlooms, and thank you to all of the other writers out there for your creativity and effort so that old bastards like me can sit down and share a magic moment with our grandchildren.

Anyway, it took a little time to reboot the computer this morning (not a euphemism) so I have to end this here, with the spotlight on Aleksandra Tryniecka, and her thoughtfulness.

If any of you out there have kids or grand kids and you want them to love to read, read to them as much as you can. There are new and wonderful books being created by authors like AT everyday, so you'll have lots to choose from. So turn off that iPhone and pick up

a children's book, and lead those rug rats into the world of imagination. You won't regret it.

The rest of your fine, five readers, set your intentions and make your wishes, the first night of the full moon begins tonight.

But until then, have a great day!

Shucking and Mucking - Stewarding Mother Earth - Pictorial Essay

February 14, 2022



Yesterday was Sunday, a day of rest, for someone, somewhere. Just not me. So this morning I'm physically and mentally knackered.

Let's see if a picture is truly worth a thousand words.

Took advantage of the warming weather yesterday to shuck and muck. First I shucked my 5 gallon bucket of used Keurig containers so I could recycle its plastic and tin and reuse its coffee grinds

around the bases of my apple trees. Can't let my caffeine addiction impact the generations that follow.











Claire's tiny future apples source is called Big Eddie's Orchard, named after Spaghetti himself. So it's only proper that I apply my grandfather's secrets to arboreal husbandry. Screw Brooklyn, Spaghetti made his tree grow in the Bronx (again, not a euphemism).

But what goes in must come out. So those wonderful apples leads to the next subject.

By the time I was finished recycling, the sun had warmed the earth sufficiently for me to make a run at prying loose the mule muffins and depositing them all at Hadrian's Wall.











Of course Claire was there to supervise every step of the way. I'm sure she was thinking, "Dammit, do you know how long its going to take me and Honey to replace all of that?"



By the time it was all said and done, and I had finished channeling Spaghetti, I was beginning to look like the great man himself. Who am I kidding, Spaghetti never looked this old.



Not a pretty sight, but, after the appropriate dosage of Aleve, I'm still kicking.

And people wonder why I'm so full of shit.
But, just so I don't leave you with images of shit and shittier, let me close with a cute photo of Cairo and Blue, bedtime bookends.



So there you have it, my fine, five readers, visual proof that when man plans his day of rest, God laughs.
Now off to Smokey for some cat food and cuddling.
And just because it is Monday, don't let God have the last laugh.
You go out there and make it a great one.

Solitary Pursuits

February 13, 2022



I'm the type of person that if I see something during my daily rounds that I think looks cool, I'll stop and snap a photo of it. Unfortunately, my method of snapping those photos are with my iPhone 12 (I'll be upgrading to 13 soon). The above photo is of a hawk sitting on top of a very tall pole on the south side of Route 4. The second, a young coyote (you'll just have to take my word for this) in the middle of frozen lake, was snapped on the west side of 95th Street later that afternoon.



As is my overactive imagination's inclination, I had two different anthropomorphic responses to the scenes. In both cases, my mind immediately filled in the backstory to what I was witnessing.

The hawk was alone, but obviously in control. There she was contently perched upon her pole (don't go there OFC), comfortable, surveying acres of open fields. She was hunting for her next meal, some small rodent perhaps, that she would ultimately spot from her perfect vantage point, make her move and then probably return to her nest where there may be a mate waiting with an open bottle of red at the ready. Solitary by nature, she was where she wanted to be.

The young coyote, on the other hand, had ventured out onto this wide open space, fraught with unrecognized danger, crossing layers

of various thicknesses of ice over a very big pond. The reason I stopped was because I spotted the animal and at first thought it was a dog. My immediate reaction was, holy crap, I have to lure that dog off the frozen lake, because it's surely going to hit the wrong spot and go through the ice.

It was turning in circles out there in the center, obviously trying to decide the best direction to go. I, from the sidelines, was studying his surroundings, looking for any holes in the ice, wondering if I was crazy enough to go out onto the lake to save it if he fell through.

Luckily, I didn't have to make that decision, as he finally chose southwest and headed off towards the edge of the lake. I stood with bated breath, watching him until he had safely cleared land. I know that coyotes are pack animals, and I felt sad seeing this one out on its own, abandoned, like an orphan in a perilous situation. It turns out, that while they are pack animals, coyotes are often solitary hunters: <https://urbancoyotereseach.com/coyote-info/general-information-about-coyotes>

This one was probably in as much control as the hawk. They both knew what they were doing. They both assessed their risks and acted upon that assessment.

Anyway, it all made me think about the solitary nature of writing. To someone on the outside looking in, family or friend, it may evoke similar responses that I had to the two separate scenarios. If you are looking at a writer who has been published, Grisham, King, Patterson, you may think that they are confidently locked away in their comfortable solitary study working feverishly on their next best seller. Like the hawk, they are obviously in control, the lord of their domain, a meal at the ready, and should not be worried about. Indeed, they should be envied.

However, if the writer is yet unpublished and is off on their own struggling away trying to make it in the world, you watch them, terrified that they just don't see the dangers surrounding them, and you worry about their isolation and for their welfare. You think they should give it all up and come back to the safety of the pack.

But that's the way the world works, for both animals and humans.

The writer sits down in front of that keyboard and goes to work.

Alone. The writer does not know if they will be successful on any

given day. Or ever. And the observers cannot do anything to help them, but watch with bated breath, and hope for the best. Grisham, King and Patterson have been both coyote and hawk. So while it is my nature to impose my very human fears on the animals I observe, maybe, when it comes to observing the many struggling writers out there, I just have to step back and realize that, like the hawk and the coyote, a writer just does what they are hardwired to do. Alone. They are going to do it no matter what the risk. It's in their nature. And the others that may observe the struggling writer may never understand that. Well, enough of my imaginary wanderings. I have a very real cat upstairs that needs food and cuddles. For the rest of your fine, five readers, it is Sunday, make it your day of rest, at least until the Superbowl. But have a great day!

Lonnie Bell's Celtic Literary Bookshelf At Mike O'Shays

February 12, 2022



Always a man of his word, last night, Lonnie Bell (that fine Scot Celt) unveiled his Celtic Literary Bookshelf at Mike O'Shays. I am honored to have my books appear there along with other local and international literary luminaries. I absolutely love the Reading Gargoyle Bookends - the cherry on the cake. It is my honor to invite all other Celtic authors who may read this blog to submit inscribed copies of their works to Lonnie Bell care of Mike O'Shays, 512 Main Street, Longmont, CO 80501. Tell Lonnie that Tom McCaffrey sent you. With any luck, the responding Celtic Literary Diaspora will compel Lonnie to have to increase his numbers and sizes of the bookshelves until MOS starts to look like Longmont's version of Paris' Shakespeare and Co. And if you happen to pop in for a drink, ask the Bartender if they'll let you take a look at the books. You might see something you like.

The planned reading at MOS to benefit the Longmont Theatre (not a misspelling) on the evening of February 24th seems to be coming together nicely. That stack of three sets of TWA & AAA on the shelf in the above photo are to be raffled off (or silent auctioned) at the event. I will inscribe them right there and then for the winners. All for a good cause. Hopefully, some other fine Celts will have

delivered inscribed (and dated) copies of their own works to fill the space by then. If you are feeling particularly generous, throw in an inscribed copy to be auctioned off. C'mon now, my Celtic cousins, don't be shy! The play's the thing. . .

Speaking of once international Celtic authors, I would like to give a shout out to Colin Broderick, in his latest incarnation as a spanking new American Citizen. I have to say I was teary-eyed listening to his recent recounting of the entire emotional experience, which would serve as an amazing final chapter in a third act to follow his two prior memoirs *Orangutan* and *That's That*. Both of Colin's existing memoirs are told with the same brutal but compelling honesty found in works by American writers like Jim Carroll's *The Basketball Diaries*, Claude Brown's *Manchild In The Promise Land* and Piri Thomas' *Down These Mean Streets*. Colin's recently published novel (*roman à clef?*), *Church End*, adds its own patina to the experience (full disclosure, I make a cameo appearance in *Orangutan* as an unidentified lawyer/friend who meets with Colin in his then Bookstore *The Guitar & Pen* - I can attest to the authenticity of his story). I highly recommend these works to anyone who wants an unvarnished look at Colin's personal journey in the modern Irish emigration experience. I hope that, now that Colin is an American citizen, he will sit down and finish sharing the third act of an amazing life that propelled him to the pinnacle of the Irish Diaspora Literary Scene. Well done brother!

Well, its Saturday, and Smokey and the chores await. I must flee. You fine, five readers, take care of your weekend chores, but then have a great day.

All In The Family

February 11, 2022



The above attractive couple are two of my in-laws, Nigel and Sarah Moss, parents of Georgie (my lovely Aussie model d-i-l, *via* Luke - keep an eye out for his debut novel this August, *Lebanon Red*) and their equally wonderful, and very tall, son David. Sarah is an Aussie *via* St. Albans, England, and Nigel is an Aussie *via* Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Brits Ancestry). Whenever I hear their voices (a melodic Aussie-Anglo hybrid) I find myself hankering for either a pint of Foster's Lager or a cuppa Earl Grey. I really am quite fond of them, their children, and their respective siblings (Hi Aunty Liz - a

real pisser! Hi Aunty Anita - spiritually sympatico!). The entire family is very tall, indeed, I am reminded of my Hobbit roots everytime they visit. The good news is that those beauty and height genes have now permeated the McCaffrey gene pool *via* my lovely granddaughters, Scarlett, Savanna and Stella (all three central characters in The Claire Trilogy). In just a couple of generations we'll go from Hobbits to Elves (the tall, nordic, Tolkien kind, not the more diminutive Celtic version - been there, done that, have the magic wand)

So, of course, when I was first introducing the backstory of the alien characters in TWA, I mentioned how the then US first Space Station, Sky Lab, fell back to earth in a million pieces back in the late 70s. I decided I would work the real Sarah and Nigel Moss into the story as entrepreneurial Aussie characters, who made a killing selling back pieces of space debris to American collectors.

You see, when I sat down to write TWA, I never thought it would see the light of day. I wrote it as a challenge to myself to see if I could pull off (easy Lenny, no cackling) mastering the literary form. I wanted to see if I could tell a cohesive, novel-length, story, just because I had always dreamed of doing it. So, I also figured that since I was making the effort, I would also include as many family and friends I could work into the narrative, thinking they may all get a kick out of it when someone came upon the dusty manuscript while they were sorting through my things after my wake. Every real person included in The Claire Trilogy, and that's about 98% (may be as high as 99%) of the characters, meant something to me as I passed through this life. The trilogy is my homage to my friends and family.

Which is why the concept of family (loss and rebuilding) remains a dominant theme in my novels. It is the most important social unit and everything else in society expands from that structure. Even the mobsters are a prototype for family (keep that in mind as you venture into KMAG, Jimmy draws from those roots as well).

Family/Clan (blood and adopted) are those you live and die for, no questions asked. Anything short of that means you are orbiting on the social concentric rings expanding out from the true family concept - casual friends (true friends are family), colleagues, associates, neighbors, strangers. And that is just fine, you can go

through life quite happy and successful floating in those orbits, but then you just haven't experienced my version of family.

So I hope those that read The Claire Trilogy get that point.

Everything after that is icing on the cake.

Well it is almost four and Smokey need a cuddle. Time to go.

It's Friday my fine, five readers. Embrace the possibilities it presents.

And most of all, make it a great one!

Never Curse The Darkness (Or Anything Else)

February 10, 2022



“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”

Romans 13:12.

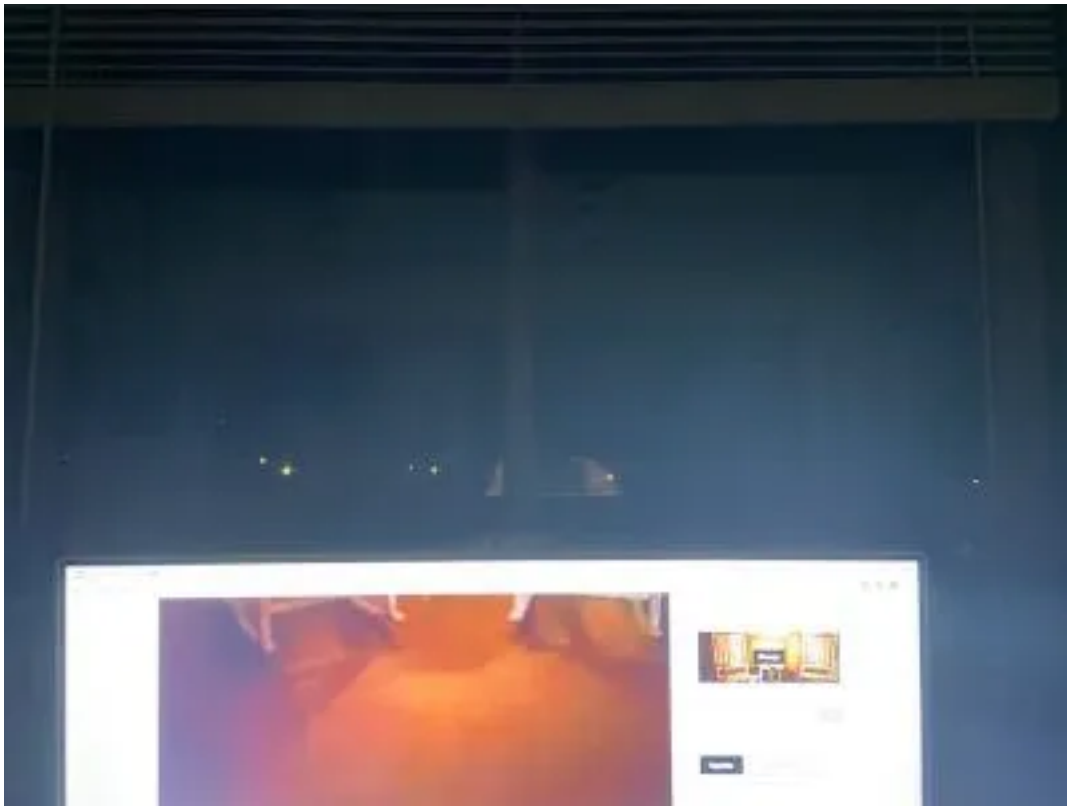
I'm certain that the old Roman in the Old Good Book was contemplating the religious sense of the term "darkness" as a metaphor for evil, and not the actual darkness of night, which is something I have become quite accustomed to and greatly appreciate since I moved out to Colorado.

It is suggested that Adlai Stevenson was the person to coin the phrase “It’s better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

I apply this latter approach to my own life, which allows me to embrace both darkness and light.

The darkness allows me time and space for contemplation, it narrows my world to that which is right in front of me. It helps me

focus on the important things. It is the time I am most prolific and creative as a writer.



I first embraced this concept of lighting intention candles while being raised a Catholic. Votive candles were the one thing in the Church that really made sense to me. Without the intercession of a priest or nun, you place that money in the metal box and got to select one small candle that you could place among the racks of the masses that carried your own personal prayers for those that had passed, for a specific intention or seeking a certain outcome in your life. It was your direct line to God.

No matter what our religion, we all do something similar with every birthday candle we have extinguished through the release of our temporarily withheld, wish-bearing breath.

So I light intention candles, and I set them to burn in hurricane lamps in special areas outdoors that are shielded from the winds and other elements and are cement enclosed and fireproof. I light them when I get up in the early hours of the morning, after I see to Claire and Company, while I am waiting for my first coffee to brew in

the Keurig, and I allow them to burn throughout the day while I am awake. Everytime I pass the candle area, my eyes and thoughts are drawn for a moment to both the candle and the intentions it burns for, reinforcing those intentions many times throughout the day.

Most of the time, the intentions are for the general health and happiness of my family and friends (human and otherwise), because without those two things nothing else matters. Sometimes, I focus on one particular friend or family member that may need the help of a specific intention to deal with a personal issue. These intentions are detailed and written with indelible markers on the outside of the glass containers enclosing the candle. I have learned that it is near impossible to write directly on the candle. I have learned over the years that this writing practice compels you to distill your intentions down to their clearest essence. Words matter.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1

Occasionally, my intentions are more selfish, and focus on my professional endeavors, both in writing and law. In those situations, I burn two candles, so as to not distract or corrupt the candle bearing my intentions for others. I don't want my own personal desires to inadvertently negate my desires for others. I buy these candles in bulk and burn them pretty much daily. I also burn special candles during certain phases of the lunar cycle. I often wonder if anyone looks at the words written on the spent glass tubes as they are processing them at the recycling center.

That's okay, as I never use last names and my intentions are always positive. Spiritual. The first and only rule to intention candles (and magic in general): harm none.

Anyway, the dawn is fast approaching so I have to wind these words down, to one final intention, for my fine, five readers.

Have a great day.

Do not go gentle into that good night - Dylan Thomas' Wisdom

February 9, 2022



I have grabbed that screenshot for purely transformative purposes, and make no claim to any rights to the excerpt, the company associated with it, or the commercial it was taken from. It is being used here purely for purposes of social commentary (and maybe a little bit of humorous parody).

My wife has the tendency of muting commercials, which means there are extended blocks of silence and flickering lights in my livingroom between lively bouts of shouting at the news programs. I try not to look up at the screen during these extended periods, for fear that the flickering may cause seizures (I'm kidding, it's really so

I don't get hypnotized by the subliminal messages). So, when I glanced up at the television last night from the book I was reading, I almost shit myself.

There, spelled out clearly in large white printed overlay, was a glimpse of my potential future. The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come.

A Place for Mom is a wonderful organization that assists younger people in finding the perfect care for their aging parents. It provides an important and valuable service for the community. I have nothing but praise for it. It is nothing but goodness and light. I highly recommend its services. Just not for me.

I get it. Trust me, having lived in a multi-generational home with aging grandparents and parents until the end (talk about a haunted house), I know how stressful it is to deal with those issues. I was blessed with the fact that all my siblings pitched in (and special thanks to my SIL, Tara [né Sullivan], who bore the brunt of providing medical treatment and medicating the old bastards), and that each one of the elders were hilarious in their individualist, stubborn refusal to make our lives any easier, right up to their respective ends. But what stories they gave us.

As WS once said, waxing poetically, getting old sucks:

Sonnet 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

And the Upstart Crow (brilliant show) certainly left us a wonderful roadmap:

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players,
They have their exits and entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then, the whining schoolboy with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden, and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice
In fair round belly, with good capon lin'd,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws, and modern instances,
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side,
His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide,
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again towards childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.*
Shakspeare's *As You Like It*: Jaques, Act 2 Scene 7

I'm not going to lie, my first step isn't what it used to be. If sixty is the new forty, you better enjoy your thirties.

Every day there is a new ache in some part of my body that reminds me of my misspent youth (sigh, it was truly wonderful, just ask the rest of the OFC). My knees and neck audibly crack on a regular basis. My eyes are weaker. I have touch of tinnitus. There

are those senior moments where the recall has a one-mississippi warm up. And the world knows this.

You are bombarded on the television with commercials providing you with the latest coping mechanisms to mask your increasing failings, throw-away clothing or supplements that all seem to be focused on my penis. And that's okay, because that is the last part of me that I want to lose the use of. There, I said it.

If anyone believes that this is shallow, I refer them to chapter 14 of Dalton Trumbo's 1939 classic antiwar novel, *Johnny Got His Gun*.

You can take away pretty much anything from a man, as long as you leave him with his memories, imagination and pecker. (Did you know that the main character, Joe Bonham, hailed from Colorado?

Six degrees . . .) And talk about senior moments, I just, in this instant, made true sense of the title.

Thank God I married a nurse.

Anyway, I digress.

One of my clearest memories of my paternal grandfather, Spaghetti, was travelling in the family station wagon (history's early version of the SUV) south on Broadway between Mosholu Avenue and 253rd street. Spaghetti always rode shotgun, filling the car with clouds of aromatic smoke from the smoldering Prince Albert tabacco that fueled his ubiquitous pipe, a haze which my siblings and I would happily suck into our pristine lungs, while my Dad, smoking his equally ubiquitous Marlboro Reds, drove. Well this one time we stopped at the light right in front of an old age home on Broadway (once upon a time it was a motel), and there, wandering along its front property, were old people who had obviously crossed into dementia. It kind of looked like George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*.

I remember Spaghetti staring out the passenger window for that moment at their antics. As the light turned green and my father accelerated through the intersection and under the Saw Mill River Parkway, my grandfather turned to me, pointed out the window with his thumb, shook his head, and then made a gun figure with his hand and mimed a discharge into his brain.

I got it, Spaghetti did not want to go gently into that good night.

Lucky for him, he lived life on his own terms into his mid eighties, whipping the asses of my most blessed of childhood friends, and

then went out in a massive circulatory system failure at home and was gone in three days. His own terms. I loved Spaghetti.

Anyway, if any of my children (or their children) are reading this blog, take note. I will never go to that place for Tom.

First off, I still have lots of writing to do.

Second, Claire would never allow it. She has detailed instructions on how to avoid it.

Third, I pray that, whatever ultimately takes me, it is quick, and has something to do with my favorite appendage.

And to tie this into my writing, one of the recurring themes of The Claire Trilogy, is that those of us in our sixties (and older) are not dead yet. We all have our second acts and we still experience all of the passions, needs and desires that are wasted on our youth. We still like sex.

We may not be as good as we once were, but we are as good, once, as we ever were.

Never count us out. Think *Cocoon*.

So having opened with the Bard, let me now close with the mystical Dylan Thomas:

**Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.**

**Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.**

**Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.**

And just so I do not end this on a maudlin note, let me make quick reference back to the McCaffrey members' obsession with their members, I remember that for Spaghetti's 75th birthday, one of the more rascally of his female cousins (I think it was wild Mary McCaffrey) gave him a knitted cock warmer. It was wrapped in a long box (I'm bragging) to look like a watch or piece of jewelry. The saucy cheek of that woman! Even Posie laughed.

So you fine, five readers go out there today and sail right over that hump. The weekend beckons. And keep those members warm. Most of all, treat today as if it is all you have coming to you, and make it a great one!

Snow Comes and Goes – Smokey's Prediction

February 8, 2022

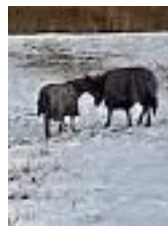


Smokey has taken over the Groundhog's job at Casa Claire. After all of this time, the Groundhogs just don't seem to have a handle on this weather prognostication. Recently, the PA and NY Groundhogs were at odds with their respective predictions. It's understandable to an extent, given that the NYC GH has been emotionally traumatized by the fact that its predecessor was dispatched by the last mayor. Talk about a high pressure environment. Smokey's method is simple. If, after the first snow melt in February (after Groundhog's Day), Smokey refuses to come out of her bomb

shelter, then that means more snow is on the way. And being a cat, Smokey is too aloof to be more precise than that.

Well, Smokey has refused to come out of the bomb shelter, so I am not putting my shovel away.

I have now received a confirming text from my dear friend and mule mentor, Pam Ervin (caretaker of Tique, Briggs, Wicker, and a new pup), who informs me that more snow is definitely heading our way on Wednesday. She does this to make sure I have the mules appropriately attired. Fear not Pam.



I really wish I had a better camera on my iPhone.

Well done Smokey, the job is yours.

Well, if this blog ever sees the light of day, it will be short because Go Daddy was useless when I messaged them for over an hour demanding that they fix the blogging thingamabob to allow my blogging to proceed. Finally, after many promises of a seven minute wait, some short-straw techie was offered up to fix the problem and it required that I opened something called an Incognito window, yada, yada, yada. Thank you techie.

But now the dawn awaits and I must move on.

The rest of my fine, five readers go out and have a great day.

Tattoo Parlor Extraordinaire- Laughs With Lonnie

February 7, 2022



As promised, here is the crew at Skin Labs Tattoo, left to right: Ethan (who did my ink), Shane (owner and Ethan's future F-I-L), me and Mario. They gave me and Lisa our own T-Shirts. That's Mopar the mix Frenchie, Pitty and Bull Dog fur family member and mascot. Mo is very friendly.



Missing is Alexis, the charming female Tattoist trainee, and powerful feminine energy, who just happens to be off on Sundays. Sorry Alexis, my bad.

Shane runs this place like the family operation that it is. Not only does he train and mentor each of the artists, they also kick in on family duty as adopted older siblings to Shane's younger son, Carter. Carter appears from the safety of Shane's attached house into the Tattoo shop at will, or, as in this moment, when summoned for the photo op. Carter is adorable and incredibly confident. He is also obviously happy with his life.



Shane has been tattooing for decades. I have seen his digital album of photos of his work and he is amazing. He is a self-taught artist and makes other's work look like stick figures. I always judge the Tattoo artist by the way they can do portraiture (which I think is the hardest thing to capture, and easiest to screw up), and his tattoo/photo comparison is incredible.

Shane personally selects and trains his other tattoo artists, and he is very discerning. That way everyone in the office works off the same page. And they all exude Shane's confidence.

I saw both Shane and Mario at work, and of course, had Ethan working on my tattoo. And I noted how Alexis appears to study everyone's technique while developing her own. They are all extremely careful in their keeping a sterile field when they work. And the vibe of this place is family, not business. They eat together, travel together, all pitch in to make sure Carter has everything he needs. Laughter is the common background music. That alone

helps dissipate any nervousness one has when they come into the place.

Anyway, if you live in the NoCo region and are anywhere near Loveland, stop into Skin Labs and get inked. I highly recommend it.

Lisa and I stopped by Mike O'Shays in the afternoon to have an early dinner and talk to Lonnie about the upcoming reading to support the Longmont Theatre. I'm so excited about being able to contribute to the local theatre scene. Art is what civilizes us. It will take place on the evening of Thursday, February 24th, for anyone who can make it. A percentage of every meal will go to the Theatre, so make sure you tell your waitress. I will read from all three books, tell backstories because, I like to talk (as Lisa likes to say, I never shut up), inscribe any copies that are placed before me, and, if you would like, take selfies. Depending on the PA system, I will try and move around while I'm doing the reading so I get to see everyone face to face.

Lonnie is on top of everything and his excitement over his plans for the event is infectious.

The food, as always, was great as well. Love the staff (who are now friends).

Well, its Monday (sigh) and the real world awaits. But I'm ready because I had a great weekend.

Time to cuddle and feed Smokey.

The rest of you go out there and fight through the week.

And have a great day!

First Colorado Tattoo - Opposite Day - Sylvestermouse - Rae Dawn

February 6, 2022



Tried a new breakfast place yesterday morning. I still have all of my first loyalty to Grandpa's cafe in Berthoud, but yesterday was more

of a spontaneous day since Lisa and I were both off and I managed to get my mandatory outdoor chores done early enough (I will do the veggie prep this morning) so we decided to give it a shot. So anyway, on the recommendation of Chris Goldesberry (Wolfman Jack), we figured we'd head North to seek out this new place in Loveland called "Doug's." (Side note, the coolest "Doug" I ever knew was BC's younger brother, RIP. He had an elven quality about him.).

Anyway, at first we almost left because there was a sign-in line to get in and it felt like we were back in NY.

But we hung in there and after about ten minutes we were led to our table by a lovely young woman named Paisley (who scored initial points by calling me "Hon"). In the spirit of spontaneity, I decided to go with what Lisa had ordered, Eggs Florentine over fresh veggies.

Now I never eat soft eggs. Never. But since I was acting as George Costanza and it was opposite day, I went with it.

[https://www.bing.com/videos/search?](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?pc=SL17&q=George+Castanza+-+up+is+down&ru=%2fsearch%3fFORM%3dSLBRDF%26pc%3dSL17%26q%3dGeorge%2520Castanza%2520-%2520up%2520is%2520down&view=detail&mmscn=vwrc&mid=0AB7C7CE71EBAE0220D60AB7C7CE71EBAE0220D6&FORM=WRVORC)

[pc=SL17&q=George+Castanza+-+up+is+down&ru=%2fsearch%3fFORM%3dSLBRDF%26pc%3dSL17%26q%3dGeorge%2520Castanza%2520-%2520up%2520is%2520down&view=detail&mmscn=vwrc&mid=0AB7C7CE71EBAE0220D60AB7C7CE71EBAE0220D6&FORM=WRVORC](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?pc=SL17&q=George+Castanza+-+up+is+down&ru=%2fsearch%3fFORM%3dSLBRDF%26pc%3dSL17%26q%3dGeorge%2520Castanza%2520-%2520up%2520is%2520down&view=detail&mmscn=vwrc&mid=0AB7C7CE71EBAE0220D60AB7C7CE71EBAE0220D6&FORM=WRVORC)

It was delicious. I mean perfect. It was also a heaping size portion. Highly recommend it. And the coffee was delicious.

The service all around was equally perfect. The staff appeared when you needed your water or coffee topped off and, despite the line that continued to form in the doorway, never rushed you.

And our server, Paisley, was an absolute delight. So of course, I dug into her business (I am naturally curious). It seems that she had moved to Loveland from Cheyenne Wyoming to be near her father. She lived a short walk away from Doug's with her fiance, Ethan Ware, who worked as an apprentice with her father in his Tattoo shop, also a moment away from Doug's.

Now being in a spontaneous mood, I asked if Paisley believed her fiance was up to the task of inking some letters on my arm. After gushing (it was so sweet) about how wonderful he was as a person and an artist (that is the kind of support one needs to succeed in any

walk of life), she immediately texted him and also gave me his card. This young lady's belief in her fiance was infectious, and I wanted to give this apprentice his shot (although I did not want to end up like the bald guy in the "no regrets" commercial). So I reached out via text and yada, yada, yada, you see the above results a few hours later. Now I am skipping the details of the event because I have to go back up there today for Ethan to change the dressing and check out his work (a follow-up I never received in my past tattoo experiences). So I hope to snap a few photos with the crew, including Ethan and Paisley's Dad, and report back tomorrow. I would have done all that yesterday, but I was so caught up in the tattoo experience itself, I zoned out of everything else. The endorphins were flowing. Stay tuned. Tomorrow I will give a full report.

But here is their website: <https://skinlabstattooinc.com>

I will offer that Ethan, his future father-in-law and the rest of the young crew at the shop were just so friendly and cool (an archaic term shared by cavemen).

In my defense, just before I entered the tattoo shop I got a twitter notice where Cynthia (*Silvestermouse*, so please follow her) had retweeted an official full blown review of TWA, by a reviewer who calls herself Rae Dawn on "Review This Reviews."

<https://www.reviewthisreviews.com/2022/01/book-review-wise-ass-claire-trilogy.html>

I have to say I was at first shitting myself, as this review was completely unsolicited and was published, not on an Amazon book review page where people are predisposed to already buying your book and are just checking to make sure it's not awful, but was going out to people who had no intention of looking for your work in the first place. And the wrong review would make that a certainty.

Every writer needs the genre converts the way every politician needs the voting independents.

Luckily, a quick scan of the article demonstrated that it was the best review ever. It really dug down, and openly addressed the reviewer's initial resistance to wanting to like it. It hit all the more subtle points in the story that I believe makes it special. And from the comments that followed, it showed me that it had the same impact on her readership. Thank you Rae Dawn. I hope you enjoy

the rest of the Trilogy as much as you enjoyed TWA. The same for your followers. You guys are the best.

Anyway, this put me into a trance-like state, and if it were not for the talent and completely calming presense of young Ethan Ware, and my wife basically moving me from place to place, I would not have ended up with this wonderful tattoo, which I had been wanting to get ever since I arrived in Colorado. Claire loved it.

Oh, and for those who have not yet figured it out, *Sapere Aude* is Latin for "Dare to Know," but is more colloquially translated to "Dare to be Wise."

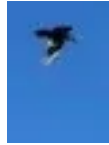
And as I have mentioned before, I would rather be wise than intelligent. The jury is still out, but I'm trying.

So you fine, five readers make this a day of rest. Pick up a book and get lost in your imagination.

But whatever you do, have a great day.

Love Crows & Superstition

February 5, 2022



Okay, I know. The photo sucks. Looks a bit like a black dragon - don't see too many of them these days. I was coming out of Grandpa's cafe early morning yesterday after having a tasty and hearty breakfast with my wife (and stopping off at the table where Grandpa's Boys were sitting together with their lovely spouses and exchanging some comaradic shit talk) when a Murder of Crows flew overhead cawing away at me as they passed. So I grabbed my iPhone and snapped. I know my feathered cousins recognize this bowling ball of a bald noggin, even with my wool hat. We exchange greetings on a regular basis, often during my morning walks.



I'll even caw back at them sometimes (I am a novice in their tongue but - like most Europeans - they understand English perfectly).

Ahhh, you're thinking Tommy is truly mad. But am I?

<https://www.nwf.org/Home/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2013/DecJan/Animals/Crows-Recognizing-Faces>

Crows are my true spirit guide (the bald eagle from my trip to the dentist was just temping - looking out for this bald brother - that afternoon as the crows had the day off). I have them all over my office.



THOMAS P. McCAFFREY ESQ



Ignore the dust and dead flies, I am so damn superstitious. I haven't cleaned my office since TWA was published (2/18/21) out of superstition, and I will not clean this office until KMAG is published (3/24/22).

It works for people who must win for a living: <https://cooldump.net/the-craziest-superstitions-in-sports/>

I know, it is disgusting, and my wife hates it. I mean hates it. But the crows don't care. (Side note, that last shot contains a photo of my dear sweet Bronx Beagle, Shorty, who I will miss forever. The prior shot has the desk nameplate Momma C gave me when I passed the bar, it has accompanied me to every office since then.) And this office is my inner sanctum, where I do all of my creative work, legal and literature. It is a place where I can look out and see foothills or Claire protest shitting, and the the occassional crow who has come by to deliver a message.



It is the only place in this world where I make the rules (Lisa lets me think I make the rules there). It is where I channel those voices in my head. It is where I win.

Anyway, today I won't be spending too much time here, as I have the weekly prep and outdoor chores to perform. But I am here now, doing that little bit of creating in this morning's blog, just to keep my hand in it, and my crows are happy I did. And that's a win.

The rest of you fine, five readers, carve some "me time" out of today and give yourselves a break after a long winter week. If you see a crow, give it a wave so it will remember you the next time you meet. And have a great day.

Vanity, Thy Name Is Tommy

February 4, 2022



That photo looks like I'm about to get a dose of electro-shock therapy. As I recall, that didn't work out too well for EH. Hide the shotgun.

It's actually me in the dentist chair yesterday afternoon, having the time of my life. Doc B had just grinded out over 50 years of toxic silver-mercury amalgam - I'm certain I swallowed some shards - where's Alice, I feel like having a tea party.

No laughing gas. Just a little novocaine to take the edge off. I wanted my wits about me as I was texting short videos and photos live from the chair to the members of the OFC, who were hoping to catch me under the influence, drooling and spilling dark secrets.

Lenny texted: "I'm waiting on the sodium pentathol confessions so my vault can be purged finally."

Remind me to have Lenny killed.

Joe S texted: "Tell [Doc B] the crown should be on your bald head."

Joe also texted something very racy with the word "pecker" in it, which I shared with Danielle, the talented dental tech (with a wonderful granddaughter named Neveah) who actually fitted me for the crown following Doc B's amazing drill job - indeed, when Doc was finished, the tooth looked just like ET - gotta admit that there's something special when a woman apologizes for having been drilling on you all afternoon - and Danielle had a hearty laugh. Didn't even blush. I told you I love this crew.



BC texted: "OH MAN!! LOL!! You have my vote for #1 in the Amazon category of Best Series of Videos of any of us has ever shared here. I'm hoping you're still in the chair so there is more coming! I was waiting to see one where you were unconscious and either the doc, a hygienist, or the janitor was using your phone to record the scene."

I wish I could figure out how to upload those videos. They were kinda funny. Quick aside, speaking of Amazon, as of this morning TWA remains in the top Kindle spots in both Dark Humor and Psychic Suspense (thank you readers).

So if it wasn't the fifty years of mercury poisoning, then my madness can only be blamed on the company I once kept back in the day, who are now members of the OFC.

On top of it all, I spotted a bald eagle sitting in a tree outside my window, staring intently in my direction. I had Doc B and Danielle confirm its existence just to make sure the mercury hadn't kicked in. I assume it was one of my spirit guides, just keeping an eye on me. We bald bastards tend to stick together.

I cannot wait to go back in two weeks for the final crown. I asked for the special kind with the microchip that talks to me.

Anyway, the temp tooth is in place and I had no problem eating dinner afterwards. Thank God it was soup.

And I no longer look like a meth head. Or maybe I still do. It's going to take a lot more magic than a few sitting in a dental chair to help this mug. What I do for vanity.

Well, this was fun, but I have to get ready to embrace my Friday. Smokey has decided to stay in his/her warm lair and not come out for a cuddle due to the sub zero temperatures.



But she did peek her head into the doorway when I left the food and hot water out for her last night.

Hopefully she'll pop out to see me this morning.

Oh, and a little bit of news for anyone of my fine, five readers that happen to live in NoCo. I will be doing a live reading of bits from all three novels at Mike OShays on February 24th. It's part of a fund raiser that MOS is putting on for the Longmont Theatre Company across the street: <https://longmonttheatre.org>

If you are in the area pop in and have a listen. If you have a copy of any of my books, bring them along and I will happily inscribe them, and if you want to punish yourself I'll even pose for a selfie as I sign it.

Live theatre is a mainstay of any town's cultural base. So this is truly a worth cause.

I'll post more details as they become available.

Anyway, I hope you all have a great day.

BEYOND HERE THERE BE DRAGONS.....

February 3, 2022



It is bitter cold this morning.

Yesterday we got lots of snow. Indeed, we got so much that I could not force my trusty Toyota (yep, that one) through it. And she can get through anything. That meant I was out shoveling the driveway immediately after I finished blogging, no second cup of java, or I would not have gotten the car out to drive Lisa to work.

[https://www.bing.com/videos/search?](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=l%27m+Getting+Too+Old+for+This&&view=detail&mid=D6636975C2EE59AD291ED6636975C2EE59AD291E&&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DI%2527m%2BGetting%2BToo%2BOld%2Bfor%2BThis%26FORM%3DRESTAB)

[q=l%27m+Getting+Too+Old+for+This&&view=detail&mid=D6636975C2EE59AD291ED6636975C2EE59AD291E&&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DI%2527m%2BGetting%2BToo%2BOld%2Bfor%2BThis%26FORM%3DRESTAB](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=l%27m+Getting+Too+Old+for+This&&view=detail&mid=D6636975C2EE59AD291ED6636975C2EE59AD291E&&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DI%2527m%2BGetting%2BToo%2BOld%2Bfor%2BThis%26FORM%3DRESTAB)

Anyway, when I got about 2/3 done, I turned around and spotted the above visual, which immediately invoked the Munsters' family' pet, Spot, and brought to mind the above warning that used to be printed on maps back in the day. And indeed, in my own over-imaginative mind, there are dragons, lots of them, protecting my home. I draw some comfort in that. For that is my creative fortress, where my real and imaginary worlds collide, and it should never be breached by force. Invitation only, or you better be dressed in Asbestos.

Note to myself. Must teach dragons how to shovel snow (or at least melt it).

And there is not just me in my home that I have to worry about, especially when it snows, I have to make sure that all of my fur family is taken care of:





And even my fur family guests:



Because that is what you do, you take care of your family first, no matter how broad a definition you apply to that term.

I am happy to do it, and in return, they all contribute to the magic that is my life, by firing up my imagination on a daily basis.

And it has been truly magical, as most recently demonstrated in TWA holding the number 1 spots in both Dark Humor and Psychic Suspense categories for more than a New York minute:

Product Details

ASIN: B08V9GR7FZ

Publisher: Black Rose Writing (February 18, 2021)

Publication date: 18 February 2021

Language: English

File size: 988KB

Text to speech: On

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: On

X-Ray: Not activated

Word Wise: On

Number of pages: 243 pages

Loan: Activated

amazon.com sales rank #402 in Kindle Store ([See Top 100 in Kindle Store](#))

#1 in [Psychic Suspense](#)

#1 in [Humorous Black Comedy](#)

#3 in [Action & Adventure \(Kindle Store\)](#)

About the Author

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Tom McCaffrey

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Tom McCaffrey is a professional retreat. Having successfully worked in NYC as an attorney in the entertainment field for decades, he moved with his [Read more](#)



Green to Go (Buck Reilly Adventure Series Book 2)



For the first 6 months after TWA dropped last February, I didn't know anything about these statistics or even where to find them.

My new author friends would apprise me of how the book was doing but ultimately got tired of spoon feeding me (I can be a needy bugger) and taught me how to read the websites.

Most recently, my dear friend, the talented author Margaret Reyes Dempsey (Mind Games -highly recommend), explained to me that ruling the Kindle subcategories is sweet but its the "amazon.com sales rank #" directly above that chart that really tells the tale. As she explained, that is the number your book sales falls in among the overall number of Kindle books being sold by Amazon in that moment. So as today's numbers reflect, TWA falls in line among the tens of thousands of novels in all genres of Kindle books vying for readers at number 402. And it continues to climb. If that isn't magic, then what is? I am truly blessed.

The second book in The Claire Trilogy, An Alien Appeal, seems to be off to a decent start as well. It came out of the gate late December as a #1 Bestseller and now is settling in to a descent position in the sub categories:

Product Details

ASIN: B098V1SCPD

Publisher: Black Rose Writing (December 23, 2021)

Publication date: December 23, 2021

Language: English

File size: 1402KB

Text to speech: On

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: On

X-Ray: Not activated

Word Wise: On

Number of pages: 241 pages

Loan: Activated

amazon.com sales rank #4,145 in Kindle Store ([See Top 100 in Kindle Store](#))

#5 in [Humorous Black Comedy](#)

#16 in [Psychic Suspense](#)

#56 in [Adventure & Fantasy Fiction](#)

About the Author

Follow the author to discover news and recommendations.



Tom McCaffrey

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Tom McCaffrey is a professional retreat. Having successfully worked in NYC as an attorney in the entertainment field for decades, he moved with his [Read more](#)

Amazon

Lib Dead (David Wolf Mystery Thriller)

Now, as I have said many times, this is all ephemeral, and can be gone in the next posting in the new hour. I have watched it happen this past year time and time again. What is important to me is that these statistics tell me that people are reading my stories, and, as a new (but very old) writer, that is where the true magic lies. All I want is for readers to pick up my books and escape from life for a moment. I want them to come along on an imaginary trip with me, to meet and love the fictional characters along the way in the same way I have met and loved the real people behind them (and they are all real). I want my readers to laugh and cry, both very cathartic.

I am macho enough to admit that I do both on a daily basis, especially when I'm writing. But most of all, I want the readers to get to know Claire, who is the most magical of all. She has changed my life. Again, its all magic.

So later today I have a not so magical appointment with my amazing dentist, Dr. Carmen Beckwith, who should be torturing me for a while as she puts on a badly needed crown.

[https://www.bing.com/videos/search?](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Little+shop+of+horrors+steve+martin+and+bill+murray&docid=608031111489671858&mid=F8B60F29A636EE0956B5F8B60F29A636EE0956B5&view=detail&FORM=VIRE)

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Of course I'm kidding, Doc B is phenomenal and never tortures me unless I beg her. I highly recommend the team at Berthoud Family Dentistry to one and all. I always have a lot of laughs - literally - with the all female crew. They treat me like the old crazy uncle at the wedding. And I'm just fine with that. Hell, I even put them in the acknowledgements for AAA.

One final shout out. I want to congratulate my dear friend, the author and auteur, Colin Broderick for having leapt all of the important hurdles in becoming a Citizen of this great country of ours. Well done Colin. Welcome. We are better for your company. So the rest of you fine, five readers, get through Thursday because the always magical Friday is one wake up away. But stay warm and make it a great day.

Humping Hay Before It Snows - TWA No. 1 in Two Categories

February 2, 2022



Usually, when I get my hay delivery from Hygiene Feed (21 bales every 8 weeks - those damn mules can eat), Gerami (his spelling)

drives it here on his flatbed truck and I open the large gate at the end of the driveway and he drives it into the paddock and down a long hill to a spot right outside the barn, where he tosses it down from the truck and I hump it ten feet into the storage area in the back of the barn. We have a great conversation during the unloading, have a few laughs, and then he drives back up the long hill and back out the gate. I enjoy the half hour of playing rancher/farmer, and it saves me the cost of joining a gym. Those bales are heavy and cumbersome. I'll match farmer strong to gym strong any day of the week. Thank God for Aleve.

Yesterday, because the snow from the last storm on my North facing hill was still thick on the ground, Gerami couldn't drive his truck from the driveway down to the barn. But he made sure he got Claire & Honey their delivery because he knew I was down to my last bale and a winter storm was going to hit last night (it did):





I'm not going to lie, it is beautiful when you see it at the witching hour. The snow is still falling. But I digress.

So we had no choice but to unload it on top of the driveway and toss it over the fence, right inside the gate. Below is about the first third, at which point I was seriously considering telling Gerami to take the rest back for another day.



The unloading took us a little less than half an hour. Gerami felt bad about leaving me there, but I knew he had to get back to the store (he is the manager and only personally delivers my order because he knows the unloading system and likes to visit Claire).

So I bade him farewell, sent him on his way and then looked at the stack and thought to myself, "now what am I going to do?"

I really felt like leaving the stack where it lay and maybe tossing a tarp over it. Claire and Honey were already up the hill and sampling the bales. The problem with that is once you remove enough hay from each of the bales, their binds loosen and they literally devolve into a loose pile of filaments which blow away with the wind, or is eaten by the rabbits and other creatures. Honey has literally carpeted the barn with loose hay just from pulling bales out of the storeroom, just to break my balls (although it does provide a soft, warm carpet they can stand on when they come in from the elements).

And then I heard Spaghetti's voice in my head. I was four years old again. "Ya wee pussy, man up and get that hay into the barn! The snow's coming."

I will tell you this, there is nothing worse than being shamed by a ghost.

So I channeled the old bastard, and one by one lifted each bale onto my back and humped it down the snow laden hill and then into the barn, where I stacked it in the storage room. That last part required additional effort as the stack got high enough where I had to flip the bale off my back in an upward trajectory. I'm not going to lie, after each bale, I wanted to give up. The bales shed as you carry them, and half a bale had already fallen down the back of my sweatshirt and had inserted itself into my favorite winter hat like a magician's sword box - never to be fully removed. But, finally, after another hour (during which the theme song "Green Acres" looped in my head), the last of the twenty-one bales was safely stored.



Just in time, as the snow started to fall softly on that rolling hill. I didn't care that Honey went inside and immediately pulled down the

leaning bale and started to dismantle it - despite the fact that I had just placed a fresh open bale in the rack inside the barn. Imp! To add insult to injury, I walked back up to the sliding back doors where I stripped off my hay covered clothing in the freezing cold with the intention of quickly hopping right into the basement shower, and low and behold, the back door was locked - and I never lock it.

I could hear Spaghetti laughing inside as I snuck around to the front of the house and slipped in through the garage door. If any of my neighbors thought they spotted BigFoot, it was me.

Switching gears, last night, I was thrilled to learn that TWA returned to No. 1 in Amazon Dark Humor, but then was totally amazed when I saw it had also landed at No. 1 in Psychic Suspence as well. I didn't know if it was a momentary BigFoot citing, but was thrilled to my core. I wouldn't even have mentioned it in this blog, but when I just checked on it, it was still holding steady in both categories this morning, so I took that as a sign to brag a little:

3:29



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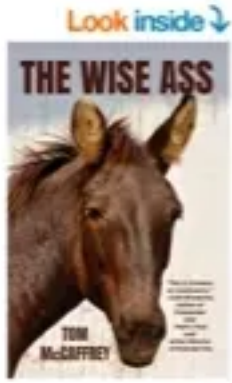
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Tom McCaffrey
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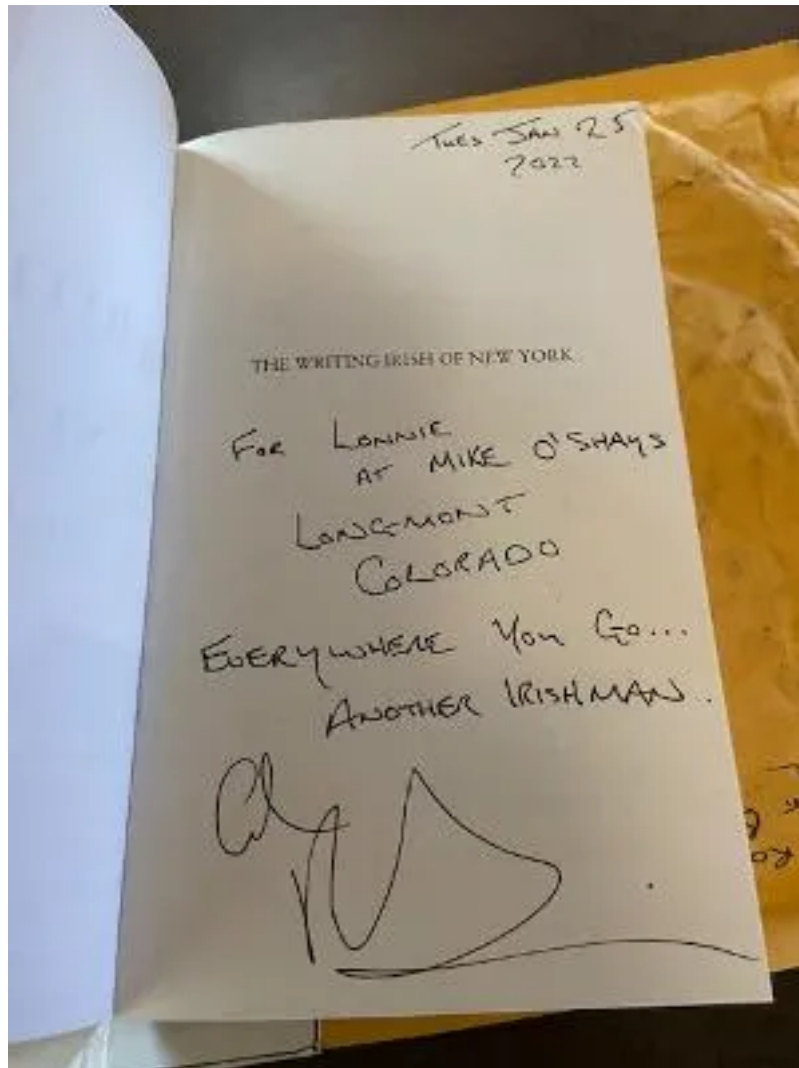
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Okay, well I need to go upstairs and clear a path for Smokey to get to my front porch for some food and a cuddle, and then I have to drive Lisa to work because she doesn't like driving in snowstorms. But the rest of you fine, five readers stay warm and get over the hump.

But whatever you do, have a great day!

Mike O'Shays - Lonnie Bell - Colin Broderick - TWIONY

February 1, 2022



Okay, if you read my blogs you'll know that one of the favorite local places Lisa and I like to eat is a Irish Pub restaurant in Longmont called Mike O'Shays (on the West Side of Main Street in Old Town opposite the Theatre). We try to get there once a week. It's run by a gregarious manager named Lonnie Bell, who may be, genetically, a bit of a human mutt (hybrid vigor) but within whom I can sense a strong Irish gene pool. He is a certified member of Clan McCaffrey. Lonnie's good nature is infectious, as can be seen by the bubbly

personalities among his bartenders and wait staff. They are each sweet and adorable.

I swear, going into MOS is like being Norm in Cheers. Everyone does know your name.

Anyway, Lonnie has been collecting books by Irish diaspora writers and is constructing a cool bookshelf (with gargoyle book ends) where he intends to display those works behind the bar. I have already donated inscribed copies of TWA and AAA (and will donate an inscribed copy of KMAG once the paperback is in hand).

Another patron, who is a brilliant photo-journalist from the Northern Irish Counties, has donated a couple of his beautiful books to the cause.

Well, I was recently speaking with my dear friend, talented Celtic author and auteur, Colin Broderick, and I mentioned Lonnie and his plans to increase representations of the Celtic literary culture in MOS, and wouldn't you know it, but yesterday, an inscribed copy of Colin's glorious literary anthology *The Writing Irish Of New York*, arrived in the mail. Well, I do not know who was more excited, me in delivering it to Lonnie yesterday evening, or Lonnie in receiving it. The collection builds.

An additional note regarding MOS. Yesterday, Lisa brought with her a hanging stained glass Irish blessing as a gift for Lonnie. She had an ulterior motive. You see, ever since we first dined at MOS, we like to sit at a raised, bar stool level table for two that is set in a windowed alcove in the front of the bar. Lisa always sits facing the closer Northern Wall, and I always sit facing South. Well, directly in Lisa's sight line is a framed copy of the owner's "Shea" Coat of Arms. However, it is askew, as, over the years the parchment has slipped down behind the glass. Well, looking at this drives little miss fastidious crazy every time we dine, so finally, we approached Lonnie and asked about it. In fact, that is how we were first introduced to Lonnie. Since he was relatively new as the manager of the establishment, he said he would take it down and fix it. From that point on it became a running joke for Lisa and Lonnie, and whenever he came to our table, Lisa would just point to the COA.

Anyway, Lisa finally brought the Irish Blessing with her to act as a replacement on the wall for the COA, which she intended to take it

back home and fix herself, and then return it to MOS on our next appearance there.

Anyway, when Lonnie came out to our table, Lisa presented him with the Irish Blessing along with her intentions regarding the COA.

Lonnie laughed and then showed me why he has not been able to correct the COA. Somehow or another, it is held onto the wall by magic. Neither he nor I could lift it off the wall. It was like Arthur's Ex Caliber in the Stone. Only a better man than we would be able to remove it.

Lonnie immediately found a better place for Lisa's gift, a tall wooden post over by the bar area. And all was right with the world.

But then Lonnie said the sweetest thing that appeased Lisa's subjugated frustration in not being able to control the entire world.

He said, in sum and substance, "And, anyway, I've become quite fond of that off-kilter COA, as it was the reason we were introduced."

Well played Lonnie. Who can argue with such a charming person. So, if you are ever visiting NoCo, and happen to find yourself in Old Town Longmont, stop in at Mike O'Shays and have yourself a solid meal with side orders of great conversations with the locals, Lonnie and the staff, and washed down with the libations of your choice.

But before you leave, make sure you ask about the off-kilter COA, and reach up and gently touch the Irish Blessing for good luck.

There's plenty of magic in it to go around.

One final note, a shout out to our waitress - new to us but not to MOS. Hey, Nicole, you are a sweetheart. Good luck on your new digs.

Well, that's it for me this morning, Smokey awaits.

The rest of your fine, five readers take on Tuesday.

And have a great day.