

# RIP CELIA (PIERRO) MELONI

January 31, 2021



Celia Meloni, the mother of my partner and dear friend, Robert Meloni, passed yesterday. From all accounts, it was a peaceful passing for this matriarch in the family home in Port Chester. Celia had a long and fulfilling life, living into

her ninth decade. I was blessed to have met her on a couple of occasions, some happy, Robert & Adrienne's epic Christmas party, and some sad, at the wake of her husband of then 62 years, Anthony Eugene Meloni (who for some reason reminded me of Vince Lombardi). She was a kind and beautiful woman.

She oozed class. Refined, talented - a classically trained concert pianist - and a loving mother to her four sons, Gerald (RIP), Anthony, Robert and Michael, and four daughters, Celia Meloni Taylor, Cathleen Meloni Potts, Lisa Meloni Ragusa and Barbara Meloni Halsey. She was also a loving grandmother and great-grandmother, to, I believe, eighteen grandchildren, one great-grandchild and an aunt and great aunt to several nieces and nephews. Her family defined her, right up until the end. My prayers go out to you all.

I knew Celia more anecdotally. Robert was always telling me stories about her. I can tell how much love one has for a person by the stories they share. And Robert loved his mother. I loved that he would make the weekly pilgrimage from Manhattan up to his family home for weekend dinners with his Mom and other members of his family who lived in the area, like his brother Tony and his family, and his sisters Lisa and Cathy, who were Celia's primary caretakers towards the end (God bless you both, that couldn't have been easy.) For the others who lived too far away, there was regular contact by the many modes of modern technology.

I also could see Celia's legacy in the genetically sourced, musical talents she passed down to her children. I love the old photo of the Meloni brothers childhood band. Tony builds, resurrects and repairs those incredible organs that grace churches throughout the country. A brilliant musical

heart surgeon. Lisa's husband, John (I hope that I got that right) is also a talented musician, who I've seen perform magically at the family Christmas party. Robert's love and interest in music has been displayed to me countless times in the work we do together. (I will share Robert's penchant for singing show-tunes before each day of trial for luck, and his one horrific rendition of a Happy Birthday I suffered in Chicago - Buffalo Bill meets Marilyn Monroe - indelibly burned into my brain - in a later blog.)

I'm color blind and tone deaf, and while I love music, I never get beyond a visceral response and emotional understanding of how that brilliant mixture of sounds makes me feel when I listen to it. The writer in me also appreciates great lyrics, that captivating turn of a phrase that sticks with you for decades. But I never break the surface. I am in awe of all of those artists who can create such accessible beauty in this world.

Robert, however, understands music to the point where he can listen to a song once and break down every note, and combination thereof. It makes him lethal in copyright litigation. When I hear him conversing with the music experts, I feel like they are speaking Martian. During those moments my contribution has always been limited to pointing at my brilliant partner and exclaiming, "Yeah, what he said!" And that talent is all down to Celia.

Celia's music gene has passed down to Robert's daughter Raff, who is a talented professional musician, lyricist and vocalist. Her amazing songs trigger those same visceral and emotional responses and her lyrics amaze me. I understand Celia and Raff were great at duets. Raff will carry Celia's musical torch safely and brilliantly into the future.

Given this wonderful family, I'm sure Celia is sitting up next to her loving husband, Anthony, both proudly beaming at the legacy they have blessed our earth with. My condolences to you all.

# WISDOM HAS MANY PARENTS

January 30, 2021



One thing I have learned from being a parent for over forty years, is that I just don't have all the tools necessary to answer all of the needs of my children. It is not that I didn't try. Its just everyone has their own perspectives and talents that they can bring to the table. My tool box had the basics - hammer, saw, screwdriver, all hand powered -- but none of the really cool tools, the fancy, power tools, that when you

see them employed by a professional you exclaim "Man, I wish I had one of those!"

As for me, when I look back I realize that I was blessed by having just the right people come into my life when I needed them the most. Someone always had the perfect tool in their bag to fix me. But I got the basics from my father.

My father was a good man. I called him St. Edward of the Strays. He was George Bailey from *It's A Wonderful Life*; every choice he made in life was for the good of someone else and a corresponding sacrifice of his own dreams. He worked his ass off his entire life (one of his early claims to fame as a child was delivering groceries to Babe Ruth), married young, served proudly in the Navy as a medic (you can time our births by his leaves from service - and he used his medical talents to keep us all alive), and upon his discharge, subjugated his dreams of being a doctor to work at a series of tedious jobs to feed his family. He was a dreamer, like Ralph Kramden (yeah, I have that same gene - trying to hit that high note with TWA) and a visionary, who, like Tesla, ended up a broken man.

My father was also the guy who started neighborhood sporting leagues for the local youth, and he spent most of his free time on weekends (when he wasn't tutoring his family of alter boys - sorry V, the Church wasn't ready for you, still isn't -- in the Latin mass for the Church - *Confiteor Deo Omnipotenti . . .* ) coaching. Funny thing was that - despite his lack of professional success -- he was great at teaching others how to win. (If there ever was a "Natural" who excelled at every sport and who came through my father's sporting stables as a kid, it was Marty McLaughlin, RIP). My dad loved competition and bred it into all of his children. We, his children, have bred it into our children.

There were no participation trophies on the family trophy shelf, and it was a really big shelf.

My family had an open door policy. Anyone in the neighborhood could walk through our doors, with or without an emissary McCaffrey in tow, and sit down at our kitchen table to seek counsel. Often it was Posey who magically appeared with a course of tea and toast for the visitor (yes, when the tea was too hot, we did sip it from the saucers like kittens). If it was a weekend or evening, or a major problem that needed solving, it was my dad who held court. He was great at listening to the problems of others, and many of the kids in my neighborhood often returned as adults seeking similar counsel, and many of those visited him regularly, in the family home and in the hospital, as his own body began to fail. MM was one of these folks.

But being a competitive son of a competitive man, I was too proud and thick to seek my father's counsel, especially since I got to see his flaws (and now know I share them). So I went out into the world thinking I could figure it all out on my own. And here's the strange thing. Despite my very best efforts at blind independence, the universe always forced someone into my life at various points, to make sure I received the paternal love and guidance that I needed to become a decent man (still a work in progress). Some of them stopped me from driving off the cliff. Big John O'Hara, Big Jack Vaughan, Denis "Dutch" Collins, Tom Farrell, my father-in-law, Norb Wallen, and Doctor Mel Amsel, are some of the heavy hitters that played some life changing fatherly role at just the right time in my life, from my teens well into my adulthood. (There was also Momma C Collins - that's her and Dutch in the photo above, with me on the far left -- who stepped in to mother me just when I needed it, but that's a longer story for another blog.) I never sought out

their counsel, they just showed up when I needed them most and insisted on helping me, whether I wanted them to or not. And that has been a blessing in my life that continues to pay dividends to this very moment. I carry them all in my heart.

When my father passed (at an age younger than I am now -- but then again, so did Hemingway) I was provided a final lesson as to who he really was to so many others. Every person he touched or mentored, personally and professionally, showed up at his wake and funeral. There were hundreds of people there, for all three nights of his wake, many of them repeaters, all with their stories to share of how my father had changed their lives. I felt like the son in the movie, *Big Fish*. I'm weeping now as I write this (but will deny that it happened if anyone asks).

During the last night of the wake, a group of these men were standing around the back in a large circle with the siblings, laughing and joking (that's what we Irish do at wakes), and one of them mentioned how my father had taught them Teddy Roosevelt's "Man In The Arena" Speech. My father loved that speech and often recited it from memory to us as children. I can still recite it rote (Indeed, its now tattooed on my back). But anyway, my father had the speech printed on small business cards which he liked to share with others whom he felt needed that message. In this instance, the person raising that memory at my father's wake, pulled out his wallet and fished out one of those, now old and tattered, business cards. Then one by one the other men in the circle retrieved a similar, equally worn copy of that card from their pockets or wallets, although one of theirs was actually laminated, and shared their accompanying stories of how he gave it to them, and how it changed their life. I realized at that moment that my father was their father as well, and



showed up in their lives when they needed him with his simple bag of tools, to fix whatever he could and send them back out into the world, so they may repeat that process.

So, if my father taught me anything in this life, it was to be ready to step into that surrogate role should the need present itself, and I have. I don't have a lot of tools, but I can use the few I have fairly proficiently. I wonder who will show up at my wake.

My final wish in this missive is that my own children receive the same blessings that I did from those other people who have all the really cool tools that I didn't have, and then to pass the surrogate mentoring process on. That would indeed be my father's greatest legacy, passed down through his descendants. And for all of you out there who may read this (I'm not kidding myself, I know there's only five) dare greatly.

# HINDSIGHT IS 20/20 FOR A REASON

January 29, 2021

When you get to a certain age, you gain perspective. For example, as you live a longer life, you understand and appreciate the relativity of time itself. It appears to speed up as you age because the concrete measurement of time becomes increasingly smaller as compared to your entire existence. Thus, the summer holiday after Kindergarten seemed like forever to the five-year old Tommy (yes, I started a little early - and friends and family still call me Tommy), because those two months were a relatively larger part, percentage wise, of the paltry sixty months of perception I then had to measure it against. Now, as I rapidly hurtle towards my mid-sixties (remember when we all thought 30 was old?) those two summer months are like specs of fly skat compared to the 780 months they are now stacked against. So, now my summers appear as just a couple of slow blinks of my eyes between Memorial Day, the Fourth of July and finally Labor Day. The lesson I've learned is that there is no more time to waste, which is why my sequel is complete and the third novel in my trilogy will be written this Spring. Otherwise I could be forced to monopolize the time of all my psychic friends giving dictation, like Milton, from the other side of the veil (and the lawyer in me hates dictation and appreciates all of the copyright issues that will present).

Looking back over one's life can be disconcerting (especially as you sit in front of your computer at 2 am). You realize that the older, wiser you would probably not make so many mistakes - and I've made too many -- not out of any inherent

evil in my genetic makeup (although Dante may be right and there is that special ring of hell for lawyers), but because, at the time of the infraction, I lacked perspective and the empathy to see how my actions impacted others. Pure unadulterated selfishness. I walked away from many opportunities others, like my parents and mentors, had worked so hard to provide for me - got myself kicked out of high school (lots of JUG and a short-haired wig) and college (PWWC) - squandered professional employment opportunities that should have led to the partnership brass ring - and, going way back, in my teens, probably hurt a lot of feelings (God, teen males are incredibly dense and they do think with just one appendage). I also know that I've said hurtful things over the years because I am a wise ass, and was probably just trying to sound witty, or smart, or make people laugh. My family members and close friends can all attest to this (and will, for the right price). I'm sure I am not the only person with this track record (c'mon guys, be honest, we are default assholes - and God, if you're listening, why are females nicer and more fully formed -- like Botticelli's Venus -- on all levels at birth?), but that's no excuse for not doing the right thing now when the thought occurs to you. So this is my sincere apology - my mea culpa - to anyone out there to whom I've been an asshole, or for any others during this long life for whom I've come up short, personally and/or professionally (understanding that there is a lot of overlap here). I mean this.

And I'm not finished making these mistakes. As I transition away from the the role of parent (but does that every really happen?), to grandparent, I realize I have left some roadkill along that highway as well (God, when are you going to publish that parenting manual?). So, to my children, my

sincere apology for my shortcomings. Must do better.

Learn from my mistakes.

That being said, I also realize that I would not be the person I am right now, if I had not made all of those mistakes. Each one of those events in my life, positive and negative, have fed the collective creative Kitty (how did you like that alliteration?). Rick London, a man I once got to know during my professional life (and a really wonderful guy), once told me that success is not defined by material acquisitions. He summed it up as follows: "The man at the end with the best stories, wins!" I've been collecting those stories ever since.

So while I may be using my writing to try and polish a turd, I will be giving it my best shot (I'm preternaturally proficient with a shoe-shine box)[God, I love alliteration], using the gifts I may have squandered in the past, and drawing upon a lot of my failures, and some of my successes, to try to entertain my readers and bring a little fun and happiness, however briefly, into their lives. I hope I get this right. Stay tuned.

# TWENTY DAYS OUT

January 28, 2021

When I submitted the manuscript for TWA to Black Rose Writing (thanks again Reagan Rothe), I remember having to answer some questions on the accompanying submission form about what kind of social media presence I had at the time. I'm a Luddite, one of the first dinosaurs to fall into the tech tar pits during the last century. My social media presence was non-existent. I could barely handle email, and last time I checked, my photo didn't even appear on the law firm website. It took me forever to trade in my orange juice can with a string sticking out of its bottom for a smart phone.

Thank God my law partner, Robert Meloni (yes that Robert Meloni) was technically savvy enough for the both of us to make sure we can run, efficiently in a guerilla kind of way, as a law firm with the big boys in the modern day entertainment field. He is rightfully the face of our firm, and I am the back room guy. Thank you Robert. I love you. (He really is like the lead character in My Cousin Vinnie in a Court room. I'll tell you a story about how his metronome leg hypnotized a jury in some future post.) But I digress. One particular question on the BRW submission form was something along the lines of "What will you do to help in the marketing of your writing?" I answered without hesitation: "Whatever it takes!" A brave statement indeed. But given that -- at that time -- it was a million-to-one shot that a publisher was going to take a chance on this old dog, I figured "what the hell" and hit the submit button.

Once I got over the glorious shock of landing this publishing deal (TWA is really a wonderful novel - ask my dead mother) the panic set in. As I said, I had no on-line presence. So

last summer I went around signing up for the various social media accounts. But it was like leaping into a raging river.

Everyone, all younger of course, were posting at light speed about a whole lot of crap I either knew nothing about or, with no disrespect, could care less. I think that as of right now, I have about 5 followers total in the various social media accounts (those same five people are probably the only ones reading these blogs). I couldn't even land a troll. Anyway, as fall rushed in, my anxiety blossomed. How was I going to get the word out about my novel?

Then I thought about all of the people I knew in my professional life, among my extensive family (the Irish know how to procreate) and even those people I ran with during my wild Riverdale years, and decided I would start reaching out to each of them, one at a time, and basically beg for their help in spreading the word. Thank God I had at least mastered email!

I wasn't sure how this was going to work out. My family, of course, was going to help me (there are way too many secrets spread among us to risk pissing each other off).

This was particularly true of the next generation of McCaffreys who have grown up immersed in this technology like its another appendage. Luckily, that next generation are a truly diverse bunch, so their respective reach landed among different potential demographics. My brother John (the "youngest" in TWA) is a Linked-In Maven, and posted something about the novel that at last count has had over 11,800 views among the construction industry and trades - a wonderful demographic for the novel (thank you brother).

My other siblings and cousins have sworn they have been posting (there will be an investigation when this is all over). Then there were my existing friends, past and present, who I have been hounding shamelessly and relentlessly to

spread the word. (I have to admit, given that my technological deficit was a self-imposed wound, it felt like I was the only one who didn't study for an exam and was begging my friends to let me cheat off them during the test - again kiddies, don't ever do that). What was really wonderful about this experience is that most of the people I have reached out to, some of whom I haven't spoken to in years, have been so wonderfully accommodating and helpful. The process has restored my faith in humanity.

Thank you one and all from the bottom of my tiny heart for helping me. Special thanks to Margo Scott for spreading the word among the GFM alum and the legal community, Kim Russo (I am truly blessed) and Bobbi Allison (yes, that Bobbi) for spreading the word among their legion of paranormal friendly followers, and Helen L (yes, her too) for basically reaching out to everyone she knows - and she knows everyone -- to get the word out. Jim and Kathy Fronsdaahl, my dear friends, editor and cover artist, respectively, have been handling my person-to-person whisper campaign here in NoCo.

My longtime friend and incredibly talented Irish author and film maker, Colin Broderick, has been invaluable in his help and advice throughout this process, and indeed, suggested that I overcome my technophobia, build a webpage and start blogging (thanks GoDaddy), so for all (five?) of you who keep coming back to read these blogs, thank Colin (and buy his latest novel Church End and/or his memoirs, Orangutan [I am an unnamed lawyer friend in that memoir] and That's That [I still don't know how this talented man is still here walking among us but I'm glad his stories have made it to print and screen]).

I have even enlisted the help of my adorable grand-pups, the precocious Frenchies, Jackson and Ella, who have

given TWA and their cousin Claire, shout outs on their very amazingly successful Instagram page.

Finally, there are a couple of other notorious folks who have promised help getting the word out, and I will giddily share their names if and when they pull the trigger.

But I have to say, some of the most satisfying marketing I have accomplished is completely Old School. I started by printing a few flyers - like the Lost Cat kind - and posting them in various establishments throughout my wonderful new hometown, Berthoud Colorado. Those flyers now appear in Hays Grocery, HomeTown Liquor, Grandpa's Cafe, A&W (see my earlier post) and even outside of Habitat for Humanity, so please, when you visit these establishments, and I highly recommend you do just because they deserve it, whether or not I even existed, check out their bulletin boards and look for the cover photo of the magical mule Claire. Just snap a photo of the flier, everything you need to know is there.

But I didn't stop there. Back in Riverdale, NY, there are two food establishments that have fed my family (and all of Riverdale - North and South) for generations: Dino's Pizzeria and Riverdale Bagels. Not only is their food delicious -- I would, as they say, surrender my left testicle for a delivery from either one at this moment -- but also I have long (and I mean long) standing friendships with their proprietors and management. So I reached out to those wonderful people -- Chrissy T (bagels) and Flor (pizza) -- and, voila, my posters now grace the windows of those stores. Thank you ladies (and please, I use that term with non-patriarchal endearment)! Love you both. Shout outs to Enzo, Kathy (bagels) and Sal (pizza) as well.

I just checked TWA's standing on the now dreaded Amazon list, and we are holding steady at #29. So get out there and



buy your food and liquor (and some really cool reusable furniture and home goods), and while you are checking your lists to make sure you've remembered everything you've came for, check out those flyers. You may help find a lost cat.

# FARMER STRONG

January 27, 2021

Spaghetti (yes, that Spaghetti) loomed larger than life throughout my childhood. He was my father's father. He and one of his brothers (of the many siblings raised on the family farm in the North) involuntarily left Ireland at night under questionable circumstances during a difficult time at the beginning of the last century to come to America. For the record, I don't fault the present day British people, it was a different time and a different world, indeed, BBC TV has converted me into what one might call an anglophile. But oppression had crossed the pond, so Spaghetti worked at many menial jobs upon his arrival here ("No Dogs or Irish Allowed" and "No Irish Need Apply" were still a thing - again, we got over it) finally finding a spot as a laborer in Todd's Shipyard on the Brooklyn waterfront. You see, the Irish were the broad-backed, sod-carriers. They never needed to work out in a gym, because growing up on a farm, before modern industrialization reduced the need for 18 hour days of manual labor just to feed a family, created tough and strong men (and women) with sinewy muscles and leathery callouses.

Spaghetti was built like a lowland gorilla. He had broad shoulders and a barrel chest with long arms on a short and stocky body. This gave him a naturally low center of gravity, which made him impossible to shift. His forearms were larger than his biceps, like Popeye, but his biceps were larger than was found on most men of his time.

During his younger days in America, Spaghetti fed the Irish stereotype and drank. A lot. Some of his brothers (he had many) came to this country and scraped enough money

together to open a bar in the west side of Manhattan, and Spaghetti bartended there. Given his naturally rowdy clientele, Spaghetti's gorilla strength and toughness proved an asset and kept the peace. But rumors (often shared by my great uncle Barney, and the "three sisters," Jane, Rose and Bridey) of Spaghetti's hell raising exploits carried down through the generations.

By the time I really came to know Spaghetti, he was that quiet but stern, white haired grandfather that lived with us in what was then a multi-generational, Irish family. His wife, Posey, a small, quiet and gentle woman with a spine of steel, was the family matriarch. Spaghetti was her muscle.

I never saw him take a drink.

To feed our small in number (by Irish standards) family of five required two working parents (a necessity before it was fashionable) so my grandparents ruled the roost. At that time, Spaghetti still worked as a doorman on the night shift at one of the exclusive Fifth Avenue buildings. He was already in his seventies, but he never missed a day of work. His money helped feed the family kitty. But his working hours required that he sleep in later than the rest of the world each morning, and regularly led to contretemps with his boisterous grandchildren, who never let a sleeping dog lie.

Posey had retired from her final paying job as a cook for a wealthy Investment banker family in Manhattan. But she remained the cook for our family, and ensured that we were all properly fed. And given the size of my brothers, she must have done something right.

Once Spaghetti woke up, he handled all of the chores around the house. He fixed anything that needed fixing, painted anything that needed painting and built anything that needed building. He could do it all, and he did. His one

constant battle was with the family furnace, but he fought it bravely and kept the family warm at night.

He also kept the garden. There wasn't a lot of property, 1/5 of an acre, but anywhere there was dirt, there was grass and lush vegetation. Spaghetti had a green thumb. He was also very protective of his work. My friends on our block and my brothers spent lots of time testing Spaghetti's resolve by cutting across his lush green lawns and forcing ourselves through his cultivated thickets of shrubbery.

Sometimes we got the hose - water not rubber - but sometimes, when he was really angry, we were chased by a very long and sharp set of garden shears with the very loud and repeated promise to "cut your feckin' heads off". One of my friends at the time was actually pinned to the garage door by these open shears, eye to eye with their angry master, and fainted. I know, not PC (don't try this at home kids), but it was effective, and our troublesome gang turned our attention to less threatening fare, like hassling the Junkie (yes that Junkie).

Spaghetti was also not afraid to take us on physically when we challenged him, and we did. After all, we were young bucks in the prime of our lives and he was, well, a grandfather, who was tough as cat shit.

The nicest version of these stories involved our annual summer pilgrimage to Bangor Maine, where the entire family, including all of our pets, survived the thirteen hour drive crammed into the family station wagon, and then spent two wonderful weeks in an isolated farmhouse surrounded by dense (and scary - more on that in a later post) woods with private access to Long Lake.

Upon our arrival, while Posey and my parents unpacked, Spaghetti led the boys down the long hill to the lake and then stood out on the end of the wooden jetty, spit into his

fists and then signaled for us to come and get him. There was always a lot of jostling among the brothers to see who would be the first to take the challenge. I was never that guy, because I knew what fate awaited that person. My older brother and I usually goaded one of our two younger brothers to be the first challenger, and whomever it was - usually the Ginger - was quickly dispatched by a couple of solid blows to the body and then hurled howling off the end of the jetty into the icy waters of Long Lake. This went on repeatedly for an hour until the grandsons were all bruised, sore and soaked, and we finally would rush Spaghetti en masse and drive him as a hoard off the end of the Jetty. He always took us all with him.

One other Maine memory just popped up. When we were all in our teens and beginning to really feel our oats, Spaghetti was left to watch us at the farm, while Posey, my parents and my sister went into town to shop at the general store (yes there was one). There were a couple of apple trees on the property, so my brothers and I decided to have an apple fight. The Ginger and I versus my eldest and youngest brothers. The Ginger at this point was a star athlete, pitcher and quarterback. My eldest brother had recently morphed into an equally imposing figure. My youngest and I were the smaller monkeys who climbed the trees and tossed down the apples while the two larger brothers remained earthbound and hurled the apples at each other and at us in the tree, like titans and their thunderbolts, trying to knock us loose (again kids, don't try this at home).

It remained an even battle for a while, but then the Ginger's athletic talents kicked in and he landed a rapid salvo of well placed and stinging apples on my eldest brother to the point where he was unable to return the fire. Dropping his apples,

the eldest rushed the Ginger and before the latter could unleash the last of his projectiles, caught the Ginger with a blow to the jaw which dropped the Ginger to the ground, where he spit out a back tooth.

Spaghetti, who was sitting on the side porch enjoying the battle while puffing away on his Prince Albert in a pipe, decided it was time to intercede, so he raced over to the eldest and dropped him with an equally well landed shot to the jaw. I made sure that I stayed in the tree that day until my parents returned. That was the last time we ever had an apple fight.

# HAPPY NEWS

January 25, 2021

I am happy to report that my wife and I became grandparents again this week (I told you, I am old - but I'm not dead yet), with the addition of a beautiful new granddaughter, Stella Anastasia. With any luck, she'll be able to join her two sisters, Scarlett and Savanna, and cousin, Lucian, whose names have already graced regular characters in the first two books, as a character in the third book of the trilogy. I also have two grand-fur babies (adorable Frenchies), who are of my NYPD bloodline, of whom I am also very proud, Jackson and Ella, and who were kind enough to give TWA and their Luddite grandpa (I actually require all grandchildren - even the Frenchies - to call me "The Dude" because I'm too damn young to answer to any title that starts with "grand") a shout out on their very successful Instagram account. This promises to remain a very interesting family of whom I am very proud. Stay tuned.

# FAMILY GHOSTS

January 24, 2021



In 1960, our multi-generational family moved from the apartments on Gerard Avenue in the Highbridge section of the Bronx (a virtual baseball's throw from the old Yankee Stadium), and settled in a multi-family house in the



Riverdale section of that same Borough. As an aside, there has been a long standing debate as to whether Riverdale is indeed part of the Bronx. It was, and remains, a beautiful area in the most northern/western part of New York City, bordering Westchester, and is nestled along the shore of the Hudson River. Indeed, it admittedly shares the bucolic feel of those more tonier Westchester towns. But Riverdalianians are proud of our Bronx roots, and many a battle over the decades, verbal and physical, have been fought over the opening line, "that's not the Bronx. . . ." But I digress.

My grandparents, Posey and Spaghetti (I'll explain that name in a future post but lets just say it was an enunciation issue that went viral) lived on the main floor and my parents and their rambunctious brood had the run of the rest of the building. It was an open access plan, and the family members flowed among the three full apartments freely, unless a mysterious Irish relative needed a place to crash, and stayed in the basement for a stretch. We ate communally. Indeed, my sister took up residence in a large beautiful bedroom on my grandparents' floor, while the boys doubled up in various spots on the other floors. When the boys were in their early teens, we (along with a precociously trades-talented neighboring friend Billy Young) helped our father and grandfather build a dorm in the attic, and then we all shifted to our own separate four bedrooms, two larger bedrooms on the east and western ends of the house for my older brother and me, respectively, and two smaller ones on the northern and southern sides of the building for the two youngest boys. There was a long hallway that ran the center of the dorm connecting the rooms. In true McCaffrey fashion, none of the bedrooms had real doors. We just never got around to it. We made do with curtains or beads

or whatever we could fashion into the next best thing. They were never closed. Privacy rules were enforced on pain of a beating.

From the moment we all moved into the dorm, we felt a strange energy to the place. Over the years, many a visitor (our dorm had quickly become a flop house for all of our friends) would describe some unexplainable event, or sighting, during their stays there. [Those that know my family are free to share those stories in the comment section of this website.] For the McCaffreys, these strange occurrences were a daily part of life. We were, by cultural and religious birth rite, believers in all things supernatural, so shifting personal items, an unexplainable shadow or creaking footsteps where there should not be any were never given much thought. We just accepted that it was an old house with a long history of occupants, and that some liked to hang around long after their bodies had shed Hamlet's "mortal coil." Their numbers only increased over time.

At some point I will share some of the more memorable occurrences with you, but let me start with what is for me, the most interesting. When I was in my late teens, one of my older brother's closest friends, BJ (yes, the Coors BJ, that's him standing behind Mike Augustyni and Delia Heck - whose own love story is worth a separate blog), temporarily squatted in our attic as he tried to resolve some personal issues (lets just leave it at he was the first among our group to get married to a very interesting young lady). My parents loved BJ (get your minds out of the gutter - but I really can't blame you) as he was one of many of the strays to crash during various points in their lives in our home, to be treated

as part of our extended family. They all stayed as long as they needed to, and ultimately went back home to their loving families. During this particular stay, BJ slept on an extra bed in my room, where, for some unexplainable reason, he often enjoyed typing some of my papers for school (yes, I'm old, and we had just converted from quill and parchment to mechanical type writers - I'm sure you have seen one in a museum somewhere). The first time BJ typed a paper for me, while I dictated my thoughts, it turned into a Joycean stream of consciousness affair, which incorporated not only my erudite thoughts on the relevant English paper, but also every bit of gossip we exchanged during that evening. And while his oversized hands could type faster than anyone else I knew, he acted more like a court stenographer than a discerning personal scribe, recording everything he heard. He also did not worry about whether the paper fed into the roller correctly, so that the final product was often at an angle with unexpected gaps among the sentences caused by the occasional fold in the roller feed. But beggars can't be choosers, I could not type at all and he was always willing. I received some of my best grades on those papers. But, again, I digress.

I was the first to move out of my family house, not because I was mature and ambitious, but because I was - in hindsight - stubbornly rebellious. Anyway, not long after I had left home, BJ tragically died in an unexplainable fall from a very tall building. The neighborhood was gutted. BJ was a beloved figure and one of the first among my generation to pass, shattering our concept of our own immortality. My parents and older brother were crushed. The rest of us, expectedly sorrowful. Since we all tend to gravitate to our comfort zones during times of emotional trauma, I returned

to the family home during BJ's wake and funeral. I took up roosting in my old room in the attic.

On my first night home, I was woken from my sleep by the feeling that someone was in my room. My bed's headboard abutted the Western wall of the bedroom and because of the lack of doors on the dormers, the street light outside my home on Mosholu Avenue flowed through my older brother's window on the East side of the building and down the long hallway to my end of the house. By the time it reached me, it was no more than a soft night light.

Anyway, I felt someone standing at the foot of my bed, and as I cleared the cobwebs from my eyes, I looked down and saw a large figure obscuring some of that soft light. From the size of this figure, who I could only see as a silhouette, I thought it was my oldest brother returning from a night of drowning his very real sorrows, coming to wake me to drunkenly commiserate over the tragedy.

Given my then limited emotional empathy, I muttered something sharply about him being drunk and ordered him to go to bed.

But the figure didn't move. So now I was angry that I was forced to come to full consciousness by sitting up in my bed with my back leaning on the headboard. I rubbed my eyes to get them to into focus and snapped "Go to f\*\*\*\*\*g bed will you, you are going to wake everybody!"

And still the shadow silently stood. And now that I was fully awake, I saw that this figure was not as tall as my brother but it was wider, stockier. Then the figure turned slowly to

its right, and for the first time I could see its very large hands in the outline of the silhouette in the faint light. I recognized those hands anywhere. I had seen them dancing across the keyboard of my typewriter many a time.

Realizing that I was now faced with the apparition of BJ, I did what any brave teenager would have done, almost shit myself while I gathered my blankets before me as I attempted to climb the headboard behind me in an effort to create space between me and this shadow figure.

Then the weirdest (and that is a relative term) thing happened. The shadow began to expand as if you were enlarging a negative on a piece of celluloid film (you young people can look that up) until the silhouette had become a shadow wall that extended across the room before me and muted the last of the light coming down the hallway. With no other option and no real thought, I hurled the gathered covers as a ball towards the fuzzy wall and followed them through the gap they created down the hallway and descended to the top floor of the house, where I arrived, wide eyed and hyperventilating, to find my mother sitting in her favorite chair doing some sewing.

Without a word, I leaped into the closest chair and began to rock, curled up in a fetal position. My mother appeared to ignore me while she finished the matter at hand. Finally she looked up, studied my terrified figure and then calmly said "I see you've met BJ [only she used his Christian name]."

She then explained how she had been feeling his presence throughout the house since his tragic passing, and provided a few examples. I wasn't sure if it was her nonchalance or her message, but I must have calmed sufficiently to fall

asleep in the chair, where I awoke the next morning wrapped in a blanket. I didn't stay in that room for the rest of my time there.

Over the many years that followed, five generations of my family have lived and died in that house, both my parents of natural causes in the same bedroom, and BJ remained a regular visitor to family and friends. He wasn't quite Casper, but he was never threatening, often helpful, and always a lot of fun. If you come back to these blogs long enough, you'll encounter some more of his stories.

As it is, I offer this as my explanation as to why I make a brief reference to BJ in the novel, its a matter of respect to those living and dead, who always remain only a thought away, so pick up a copy of TWA and enjoy.

# A&W

January 22, 2021



I mention the Berthoud A&W in my novel, during the protagonist's first time passing through this quaint little town.

There were no A&W's where I come from, so I had never been inside one, even before I became a vegetarian. The A&W in Berthoud caught my eye because it is an architectural remnant of a simpler time, with its order from drive in parking spots. Small-town Americana. It is a visual anchor for a reader. It's presence captures the feel of the scene I was going for in my novel. It defines Berthoud in one shot.

But, being a vegetarian (more on that conversion in a future post), during my first three years in the area, I never had the inclination to order from A&W. It remained a visual novelty I would pass and gaze at, like a cigar-store Indian (and please, don't cancel me, I'm not being racist or insensitive here, I'm from another time, and that is what those tall, intricately carved, wooden representations of Native Americans were called back in the day, when they stood outside the many cigar stores found throughout Manhattan). As my penitent PSA, let me warn all of you kids out there - don't smoke!

Then one day, as I was passing by in my car, I noticed a sign that said A&W was now carrying Beyond Burger products. I did a double take. I really could not believe my luck.

You see, BB is the True Blood of Vegetarians. I challenge anyone to have one and not be convinced that it is the real deal. The product -- including its sausages - literally saved me from a life of eating boring vegetable sides with lots of cheese (I just cannot kick dairy, especially ice cream, so will never be a vegan).

Anyway, BB may be what brought me through the doors of the Berthoud A&W that first time, but what keeps me coming back, regularly, is their incredible staff. There is a rotating group of wonderful young people who are sweet and funny and charming. Some I have come to know by name like Jordan (congrats on the wedding - hi to Nick), and the two South American roots sisters Rachel (who has the perfect



personality to run a crime family back in New York City), and her sister Brittany, who may be the sweetest person ever!

The staff - including many more I know by sight (tall blonde with lots of long wild ringlets sprouting from her cap [now I know its Brooke], shorter haired brunette with very cool dark eye make-up [now I know its Chloe], smaller young woman with crinkly eyes that always appear to be smiling - mandatory masks make the eyes a focal point [now I know its Tea - pronounced Teya]) - and finally a new one named Jasmine -- go out of their way to make you feel at home - like Norm on Cheers - and engage you with friendly banter during your order and while you are waiting. Some even remember what you like to order and other bits of information you may have shared during earlier visits. I've found that, over many years, during my travels, that kind of personal attention has become a lost art. It comes from actually listening to the person on the other side of the counter, making that human connection, and not treating them like a fungible good. At a time where we have been dehumanized by the mask mandate, these personal interactions provide an emotional lifeline. So to the owner (and management) of the Berthoud A&W, well done!

# IT'S GETTING REAL

January 21, 2021

I managed to avoid checking TWA's position on the Amazon list yesterday, not because I have gained control over my charting addiction, but because I received my copies of the novel from the publisher. I became sufficiently distracted by the tactile experience of holding an actual copy of the book in my hand that the delirium tremors dissipated. Yes, I did smell the book. Then I enjoyed the humbling experience of going down my list of family and friends, including other writers (God that sounds nice) that have been instrumental in keeping me on the creative path, and inscribing their copies. In each case, it took a while before I could actually write something down, because you want it to be a phrase, sentence or paragraph that actually means something to each person who helped get you where you wanted to go.

And everyone on my list played their role. Luckily, I've incorporated so many of them into the novel, by name or description, and even profession, that once I started to write, my heart-felt thanks for feeding the creative kitty just flowed.

That's right, 90% of the characters that appear in the novel have real life counterparts, including the animals. Luckily, I have been blessed by growing up surrounded by many characters who are larger than life, some of whom required no creative embellishments at all. For example, "Spaghetti" is one of them. And once I landed in Oz, forgettaboutit (phon)! I'm giving a special shout-out here to Everett and Michele, but that's all I can say. Claire, of course, who also graces the cover of the novel, is very real and very magical. She told me she doesn't care if I out her. The rest I'll leave to the reader to figure out.

Fun over, I had to turn back to my day job, which always requires enough concentration that there is no time for daydreams. Another welcomed distraction.

But my flesh is weak - #16 this morning. In my defense, I only peeked because a certain Justice who is very dear to my heart sent me a text which asked what the number was, and I was back on the horse. Thanks so much to anyone and everyone whose continuing support got me to that position. I really appreciate that you are willing to risk your hard-earned money on something so unproven as a first novel, but I promise that TWA is worth the risk and you'll receive an enjoyable ROI.

# AMAZON ADDICTION

January 19, 2021

Woke up this morning at #23 on the Amazon Hot New Releases - Legal Thrillers List. I realize that a week ago, I was over the moon just appearing on the list at #43, but having breathed the rarified air at #10. . . . I'm now a list junkie. I may have to go cold turkey and "just say 'no!'" But my battles with my addictions should not stop those of you still singing in the chorus to step out into the spotlight on center stage and buy a copy of TWA. Amazon is like the proverbial bear in the woods, its going to shit its lists whether anyone watches it or not. So buy my novel and I'll watch the bear shit!

What other backstories can I share to juice your interests?

A writer draws upon his/her own experiences when creating his/her fiction. Luckily, growing up, my siblings provided me with a wealth of gold to mine.

I am the middle child (go figure) in a brood of 5 siblings, 4 boys and one girl, who is the oldest.

My male siblings are all above average in size. My oldest brother and next youngest brother (the Ginger) have the marauding Viking genes that made them naturally broad of shoulder and placed them easily over six feet in height. It also gave them a bit of the blood lust, which, growing up where and when we did, and later working in the NYC construction industry, worked out just fine for them (and for me, because one never just fought one of us). My youngest

brother and I got those black Irish genes that allow us to tan (to this day, after a few hours under the golf course sun, my youngest can pass for a blue eyed Italian). I'd love to say we also got the looks, the youngest certainly did, but anyone who knows me knows that is truly fiction. My youngest was the nicest of the boys, the consummate diplomat, but I've witnessed when his marauder's switch has been thrown, and he could easily don the horned helmet if pushed. Out of the four boys, I am the smallest (at 5'10") in stature. I realized, once the two younger brothers grew larger than me, that I needed to supplement my training just to survive in my home. And I did, but it didn't come natural to me.

From a very early age, despite there being plenty for all of us, the McCaffrey kids fought amongst themselves for just about everything they wanted. My sister, the eldest, was the first of us to breach the five-foot height marker on the door jamb, and for the brief time she held that title, she regularly gave her brothers a good thumping if we crossed her, which we did regularly. Once we all physically caught up to her, family rules (we didn't need society to teach us this) prevented the boys from returning the favor, so there was never a reason to test that never hit a female rule. Luckily, she quickly evolved into being a Saint (I'm not being sarcastic here, I love that girl to death), but her holy title was relative, given her siblings, and her later fleeting fall from grace was all the way from Catholic heaven to Catholic hell. Being a McCaffrey, she, of course, survived that fall. It made her stronger than her brothers. She is now our family matriarch. I bend my knee to her. But given her influences, I take pride in the fact that the female characters I create are equal in every way to their male counterparts, and, in many cases, especially Claire, are serious bad asses.

Now, for the record, I am not condoning violence of any kind, either here or in my writing, and I especially abhor violence against women. Men who commit any violence against women (physical, emotional, psychological) are not really men at all. That condemnation applies equally to anyone (male/female) who commits violence against children, the old, the infirm, the innocent, anyone (or anything, including animals) over whom the perpetrator maintains an unfair advantage. I would say that those that do such things are all themselves animals, but I have too great a respect for animals. Let's just agree that the miscreants are seriously defective humans. While I believe that boys, in the first instance, should avoid, where possible, violence at all costs, I also believe equally strongly that girls should be raised to be able to handle themselves should the need arise. Equal opportunity applies across the board, including being able to take care of yourself in a pinch. Self-defense training is the antithesis to sexism, and teaches the student the ultimate defense, which is controlled confidence and clear-headedness. But, no matter how many non-violence, in-service training modules or PSAs are repeatedly delivered to law abiding citizens by society, the bad guys don't get the memo, and the world remains a dangerous place, so plan accordingly.

But I grew up in a different time, where different rules applied from the schoolyard to the jobsite. So the things that my main character's fictional siblings did or did not do, were formulated in that setting. And that's the real beauty of well written fiction, one never knows where reality crosses over the line into make-believe. So buy my book and draw your own conclusions.



# ONE MONTH OUT

January 18, 2021

Just saw the 1/18/21 date on the computer screen and realized the publishing date for TWA is one month away. Thank you Reagan Rothe and Black Rose Writing! For all of you readers that already have purchased the novel from Amazon - #12 as of this morning on the Hot New Releases, Legal Thriller List - I am eternally grateful. For those of you who have not yet purchased the book, or are otherwise sitting on the fence, let me share that this novel is not your run-of-the-mill legal thriller. Hell, the Irish author Colin Broderick - who leaps boldly out of the shadows of the McCourt Brothers - described it as "Grisham on mushrooms." There is murder, mayhem, mafia, ghosts and paranormally gifted animals, humans and other magical entities behind door number three. It is told in the same manner as if we were sitting in an Irish pub, drinking whiskey, and sharing fantastical stories. You'll wake up the next morning, feeling a bit fuzzy headed, and thinking, wow,



could that be true? Take a chance, it will be fun.

# BOBBI ALLISON HITS IT OUT OF THE PARK

January 18, 2021

I had intermittent contact with Bobbi A after our introduction at the LI gallery in 2014, usually at an occasional social gathering hosted by Helen L. There are a few related stories to tell, but I'll save them for a later blog. When the cosmic tornado tore my very deep roots from their Bronx bedrock and carried me off to Oz in 2017, I lost touch with Bobbi completely.

In early 2019, I received word from Helen that Bobbi and her husband, Eddie Roell (yes, the basis for the character, Eddie, in TWA), had moved out to the great State of Colorado to be closer to some family they had out here.

Helen gave me Bobbi's contact information and I called and arranged to take them to a "welcome to Colorado" breakfast.

During this time, I had been secretly working on the first draft of the novel, TWA. I say "secretly" because I wasn't sure I could pull it off, so I didn't tell anyone I was writing it, except my wife, and, of course, Claire.

Claire, the magic mule, had taken up residence in "Claire's Wee Laire" (signage symmetry, not spelling rules) the prior November, and I was spending most of my free time since then getting acclimated to all things Claire -- feeding, grooming, telling stories, cleaning up massive amounts of mule dung, and otherwise solidifying our bond. It was a work in progress.

On the morning of our meet up - I'm pretty sure it was at the restaurant of a local golf club near the town of Firestone -- after exchanging our hugs and "catching up" pleasantries, and before our breakfast orders arrived at the table, Bobbi, as she is prone to do, started to spontaneously "read" me from across the dining room table.

Anyone who has been in a social setting with psychics/ mediums knows that this can be a common occurrence. It really is like having someone else unexpectedly approach the table or walk into the room you are in and introduce themselves, through the paranormally gifted, to the rest of the guests. I am always respectful of another's gifts and never want to make anyone feel as though I only socialize with them to get free news from beyond the veil. So I try not to encourage these impromptu readings. It's like asking the doctor at your dinner table to check out the weird mole on your neck.

That particular morning, Bobbi looked up from her cup of tea and spontaneously announced in her normally excited fashion that my deceased grandmother, Posie, (Spaghetti's wife) had appeared -- Bobbi addressed her by her formal name, Rose, and described Posie's unique attributes to a T - and told me she was standing directly behind me, with her hand on my left shoulder (try eating your breakfast knowing that). Bobbi said, "That's weird, she's not saying anything, she's just staring off into the distance," and then Bobbi blurted, "You have a mule!" I admitted that I did and then Bobbi continued "She's going to change your life." I politely countered that she already had and explained how Claire had grounded me, centered me, and brought me much

happiness during our brief time together. (I didn't mention that she also inspired and collaborated on the novel I was working on.) Bobbi listened patiently for a moment before dramatically cutting me off: "No, its not just that! This mule is going to change your life in a major way! I'm not sure how or when, but whatever it is, your life is never going to be the same."

At that moment our orders arrived at the table and Bobbi and Eddie -- completely unfazed by these kinds of episodes -- tucked into their meals like nothing had happened.

Message delivered, life goes on.

I cannot tell you what I had for breakfast that morning, but I will never forget that prognostication.

# Fueling The Imagination

January 17, 2021

Having lived a decently long life, and being a bit of an inquisitive extrovert and a dabbler in all things that go bump in the night, I have been blessed by meeting many wonderful people, some of whom formed the basis (with permission) for my characters in TWA and the other books in the trilogy. For example, the characteristics of the powerful psychic-witch-medium character, Bobbi Angelini, in TWA, was lifted directly (with some **minor** adaptations) from my dear friend and powerful psychic-(witch?)-medium, Bobbi Allison, who can be found at:  
<https://www.bobbiallison.com/about;>  
[https://www.facebook.com/PsychicMedium.BobbiAllison.](https://www.facebook.com/PsychicMedium.BobbiAllison)

I first met Bobbi Allison at a psychic gallery out on Long Island in 2014. It wasn't my first psychic rodeo - I had made many a pilgrimage in the 80s and 90s to the psychic community in Lilydale, NY (shout out to the amazing Rev. John White - another story to tell), which is not too far from my wife's hometown (more stories on that will be shared) -- but this was the first time I had engaged the powerful psychic community out in Long Island (shout out to the amazing and wonderful Kim Russo - must be the water out there). I attended the gallery as a last second plus-one with my dear friend Helen LaLousis (yes, that Helen) who was friends with Bobbi. I knew little about Bobbi, other than what Helen shared with me on our drive out to Long Island. We had never met or spoken, and she knew nothing about me.

There were at least 80 people in the gallery by the time we arrived and I sat right in the middle of the crowd. We arrived

there just as the event was starting so we had to quickly grab our separate seats from the few left open in the middle of the pack, just as Bobbi was introducing herself to an entranced crowd.

About twenty minutes into Bobbi's reading of various members of the gallery, where she went from one side of the room to the other, from the front to the back, to the middle to the corners, hitting her readings of this very normal looking crowd with dead centered messages from beyond the veil and/or the future, much to everyone's amazement, she walked over to my side of the room pointed in my general direction and said, "who here is moving to Colorado?"

I can tell you now and swear on the lives of my children that Colorado was never on my radar before it came to be many years later. My profession is working as a litigator in a law firm that specializes in entertainment. While our clients have come from all corners of the country and the world, the business itself gravitates to the two US coasts. That meant that I should be there too. There was nothing at that time (2014) that would have even made me think of the word Colorado, never mind consider moving there.

I reflexively turned to my left and right, and then looked behind me to see who Bobbi was pointing at.

"No, sir. You, looking behind yourself."

As I turned back to the front of the gallery I realized that the crowd was now all turned towards me. I continued to look to

my immediate left and right to see what lucky person was the next subject of Bobbi's attention.

"No, sir. You. Are you moving to Colorado?"

I did the expected finger pointing directly at my own chest and answered, "Who? Me?"

"Yes," Bobbi replied, with just a hint of exasperation in her voice. "You sir. You, or someone very close to you, are moving to Colorado."

"Nah," I replied softly, in respectful Bronxese, almost feeling bad to challenge her amongst her acolytes. "I'm going to die in New York."

"Maybe," she said, "but not before you make it to Colorado."

And just like that she moved on to the next person in the crowd on the opposite side of the room.

(more to come on Bobbi A, and some of the other wonderful, real-life persons who populate the TWA universe).

# FUN WHILE IT LASTED

January 16, 2021

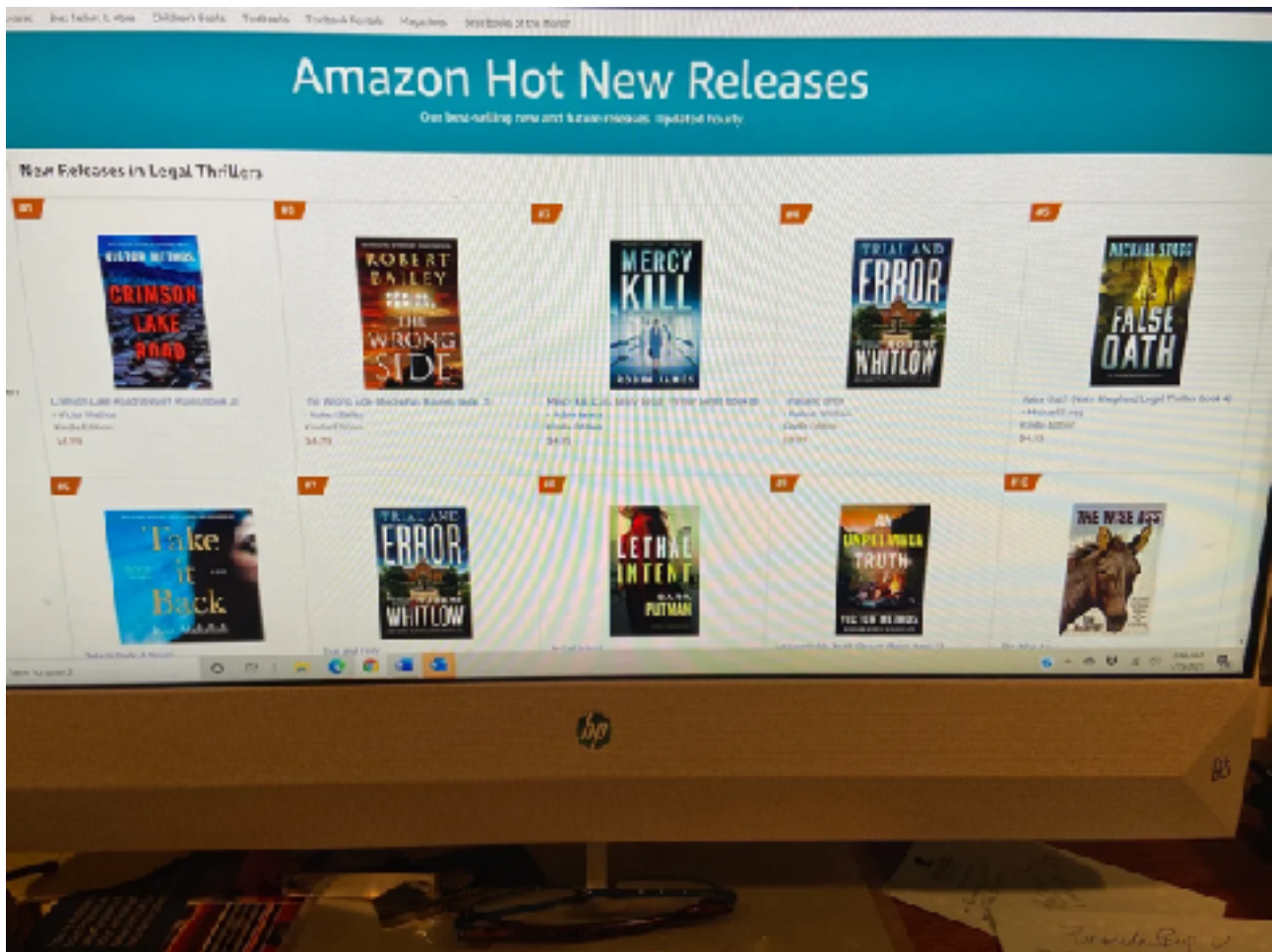
Okay, I get it, fame is fleeting, lol. I've been knocked back to #18. But if I were the kind of person who just gave up, I would never have published TWA in the first place. I'm about a month out from the publishing date, so I'm asking (hell I'm not beyond begging) any of you who have read these posts, or looked at these photos, or read a little about me, and have not yet purchased my novel for pre-sale, to really think about doing so over this next month, the sooner, the better (I'm addicted to that list)! The stronger TWA does coming out of the gate, the sooner and more likely it is that the sequel, An Alien Appeal, will see the light of day (and don't forget there is a third and final book to this trilogy in development, so stay tuned)! I promise you all that TWA (and the rest of this trilogy) will be a mini-vacation for your mind with lots of twists and turns, excitement, and fun. To those of you who are more the movie watching type, if I were pitching the trilogy to Hollywood (and I fully intend to do just that) TWA would be Goodfellas meets The Wizard of Oz meets Green Acres meets Mr. Ed meets Alice Through The Looking Glass meets My Favorite Martian meets The Craft, all told with a authentic Bronx accent. Now if you can't find something that interests you there, I give up. Wait, Claire just told me to "man the \*\*\*\* up." So I better leave it there for now. Have a great day! And buy TWA.



# SOMEBODY PINCH ME

January 15, 2021

Woke up this morning to find TWA at #10 on the Amazon Hot New Releases - Legal Thrillers List:



I've never been on anyone's "Hot" list - except maybe their "Hot Mess" list - so I would be lying (and I only do that for money) if I said anything but I am absolutely thrilled. Hold on, that was Claire - she says she is thrilled as well, but more for her cover photo getting all those looks. She's very vain. Anyway, to any and all of you whose Amazon pre-sale purchases have gotten me here, I am forever in your debt.

To anyone who has at least taken the time to read this blog, trust me, my novel is far more entertaining. Pull the trigger, you'll enjoy it.

# Amazon Likes Me (at least for a day)

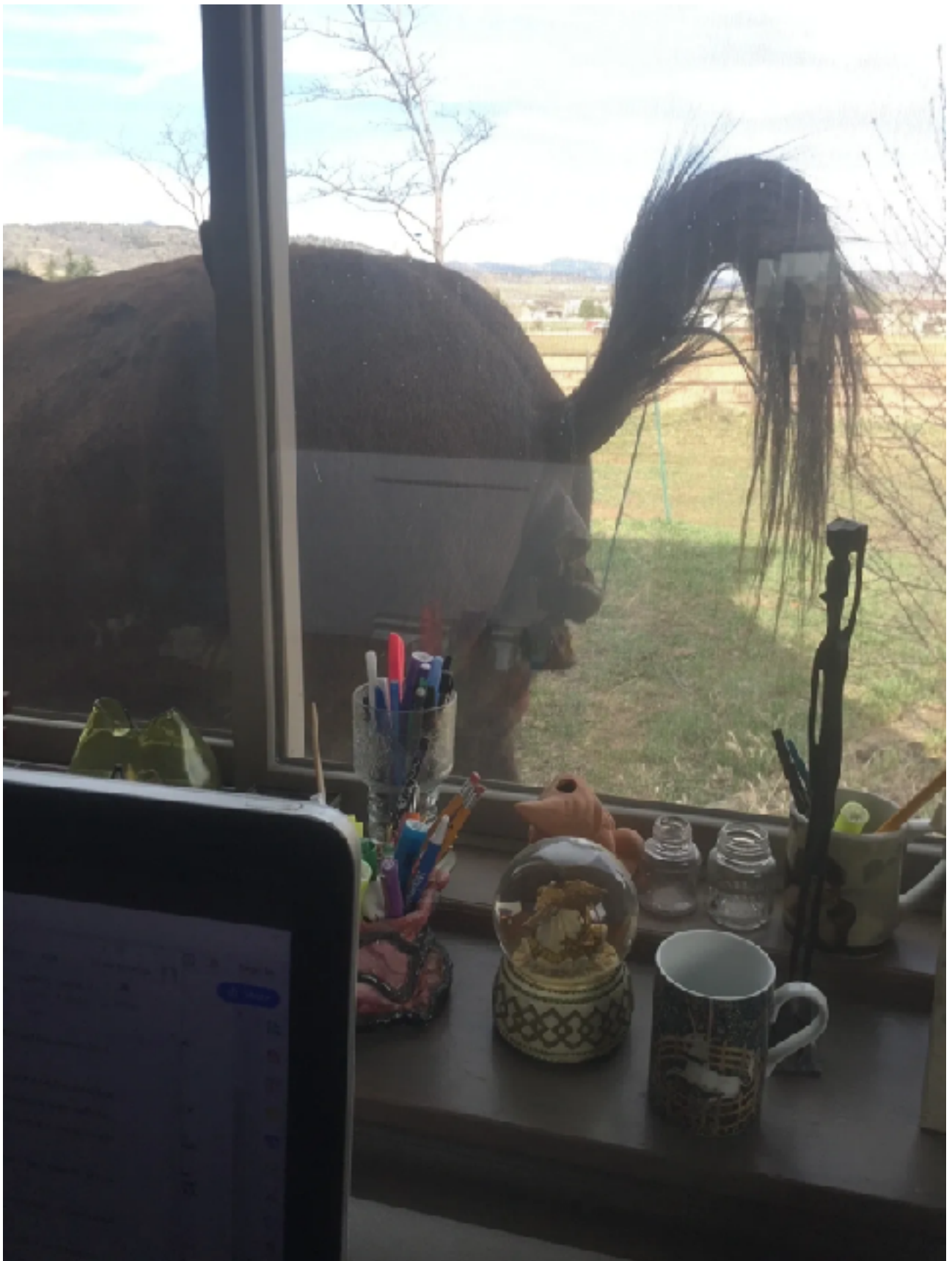
January 14, 2021

Yesterday morning, I was absolutely thrilled in learning, completely by accident, that TWA ended up as #43 on the "Amazon Hot New Releases" page. You see, I never remember websites so I usually just type in a few words into DuckDuckGo.com and pick what I'm looking for off the resulting list. Yesterday's selection led me to TWA on a page with other books, and when I scrolled to the top of the page I almost shit myself. I was four slots behind the re-release of George Orwell's 1984, so I was in heady company indeed. Claire was over the moon, and immediately provided me with her list of diva demands for upgrades in her comfort categories, to accompany her new found fame. She'll be hiring an agent next, and will no doubt want to reprise her role in any film version of the story. But lets not get ahead of ourselves. For all of you who have pre-purchased TWA from Amazon (or anywhere else), my heart-felt thank you, I am eternally grateful for your vote of confidence. I promise you will not be disappointed. For those of you who have not taken the plunge and bought TWA, all I can say is that you will be missing out on one hell of a good story come February 18th (plus shipping days).

So come on, lets keep TWA on those Amazon lists!

# The Wise Ass - The First of a Trilogy.

January 12, 2021



When I unexpectedly moved out to Northern Colorado, my life changed. After living in New York City my entire life, where you really have to fight for every inch of your personal space, I was now in a place where you had to actually intend to make contact with another person. For the longest time, I didn't bother. I was happy to mill around my property, with just my wife and dogs for company, and only venture out for my morning exploratory walks at a time when even the locals had not yet had their coffee. But the animals were always awake, and I soon became familiar with all of them, wild and domestic, along my morning route. One of these creatures was a mule named Claire. From the moment I first met her, I knew there was something special about her. Where the other animals along the way were hit or miss, sometimes interested, sometimes not, Claire was always waiting for me to pass, standing stoically at her fence, watching, knowing. She always appreciated my snort or head shake my acknowledging nod and wave, which over time evolved into brief whispers and ear scratches, and finally into all of the above with longer conversations and a morning snack. Didn't matter the weather, she was there. I became emotionally dependent on our morning ritual. I'll save the details of the story about how I came to have Claire share my property and my life for another blog, but let's just say that it involved a wonderful, selfless young family willing to share her, a knowledgeable equine experienced friend and mentor willing to teach me how to provide for her, and an extremely patient wife. What I will tell you is that Claire is indeed every bit as magical as her character in the novel. After quickly acclimating to the entirety of my property she began making frequent stops outside my home-office window, where she would stare at me toiling away before my computer working

remotely at my day job until I looked up and acknowledged her presence. If I took too long to do so, she expressed her impatience by turning around, raising her tail and dumping a steaming pile of mule dung right outside the window. I was quickly trained to get up and walk to the other side of the basement where Claire would meet me at the sliding door, waiting for a carrot or two. These repeated interactions became my welcomed respite to the tedium of my work day.

As I spent more time with Claire, I wondered more and more about her past life, and I began to recite some of my developing thoughts on the matter to her. And she always listened, patiently.

After a while, I realized I had created quite a backstory for my new BFF and decided to write it down. I also incorporated the faded memory of an interesting offer I received as a young lawyer, but chose not to accept. The Wise Ass is the result.

The novel is over the top and a lot of fun. It will be published on February 18, 2021. I really hope you all check it out on Amazon, B&N, Google Books, BAM, and on the publisher's website: <https://www.blackrosewriting.com/historicaladventure/thewiseass>

Its already gotten some wonderful reviews: <https://readersfavorite.com/book-review/the-wise-ass>.

The sequel, whose working title is An Alien Appeal, is complete and just going through final edits.

The third and final part of the trilogy is all sorted out in my brain and will be set to paper sometime this spring, as soon as Claire approves it.

Stay tuned.