

DOGGY DAYCARE - ADOPT A SHELTER ANIMAL

January 31, 2022



I am babysitting my son's dog, Cairo, a Mastiff, while Luke has some work done on his home. That's Cairo in the middle of the above shot. Taken during doggie daycare nap time, yesterday.

That's Jeter and Blue (yes, from TCT) on either side of him. Cairo can be absolutey terrifying to a stranger, and takes his job protecting my three granddaughters very seriously. He has one of those deep *basso profundo* barks that shakes you to your core and can be heard down the street. And his teeth are large and sharp.

He's not vicious by any means. In fact he's a big mush around his family, human and fur. My granddaughters hang all over him. But a

good dog does not need to be vicious to protect its family. It knows intuitively when a stranger presents a danger. They are great judges of character.

Cairo was the companion to the Amstaff Maeve (yes, from TCT), who passed this past year. We miss her dearly. She was mythic in the annals of McCaffrey folklore. In my 65 years, I never met a dog that was tougher or nicer than Maeve. She tossed Cairo around during play like a toy. She was rescued from Death Row, hours before being put down, from a kill shelter in Manhattan. I remember racing downtown with my wife and my niece Taylor (a dog rescuer) with the Governor's reprieve, just before the deadline.

Maeve paid us back so many times over the years.

Cairo was also a rescue, only he had been tied to a fence as a pup and left to starve to death. Luke rescued him.

Blue was also tied to a fence during a snowstorm and left to die, before cops in my son's (then) Bronx precinct found him. Mark quickly brought her to us that same night. Don't ever tell me that cops don't have hearts of gold.

However, the brutality and calousness of much of mankind never ceases to amaze me.

For example, I've now read articles that the most selfish among us who went out and bought animals to keep them company during the pandemic are now dumping them at shelters because they no longer need that companionship. May Karma provide you all the life you deserve. And don't bother asking me for a dollar when you find yourself begging on that street corner. I'll know you for who you are.

I've never had a fur family member that was not a rescue (except for Jeter - but I rescued him from my mother-in-law, so that counts, trust me). I'm flummoxed by the idea that people will spend thousands of dollars on a purebred from a kennel when there are millions of adoptable dogs & cats (pure and mixed) just waiting to share their love with families for the cost of a donation.

Speaking of cats, Smokey is ecstatic over the snow melting.



Some people say that they purchase purebreds from puppy mills because they get to know the animal family's lineage, health and disposition. I say that's bullshit.

First off, purebreds can be prone to latent chronic disability that you just don't see in mutts because of hybrid vigor, and those conditions may not surface until your pup's generation.

Moreover, like humans, an animal's parents do not define how the offspring turns out. It may define their physical attributes to an extent, but it doesn't determine what kind of creature it turns out to be.

It's been my experience that the dominating factor in the future of any creature (human and non-human), is how much love it is shown and how much nurturing it receives along the way.

I also believe that with the exception of animals that have been so brutalized that their brains are literally damaged, any animal can be rehabilitated and turned into a loving family member.

Now I'm not suggesting that purebreds aren't as loveable as their mixed breed cousins, of course they are. What I'm arguing here is that where there are so many animals looking for love and homes in the shelters throughout our country, why not give those loving creatures a second chance at happiness.

Don't we all deserve that? A second chance.

And I have never met anyone who has adopted an animal from a shelter that has not been rewarded a thousand fold by that decision. My adoptions, dogs and mules (and Clan members), have literally changed my life.

Go out and change yours. Adopt an animal from a shelter and welcome unqualified love into your life. You will not regret it.

And one final note, those volunteers at shelters are angels walking this earth. God bless you all.

And the rest of my fine, five readers, go out there and have a great day. And give your pets an extra cuddle.

Saturday Chores - Jimmy Moran - Fallen NYPD Heroes

January 30, 2022



I know, I know, you all probably believe that the life of a rural writer is all glamour. Well, it has its moments but 99% of the time, its just taking care of business.

The above is my prep fridge. That is what it looks like after three hours of chopping and bagging for the week.

The top shelf and crispers start out filled to the brim with the bags of carrots and apples, that ends up 3 hours later in zip lock bags that are then dispensed during the week to my mules and the other equines along my daily route.

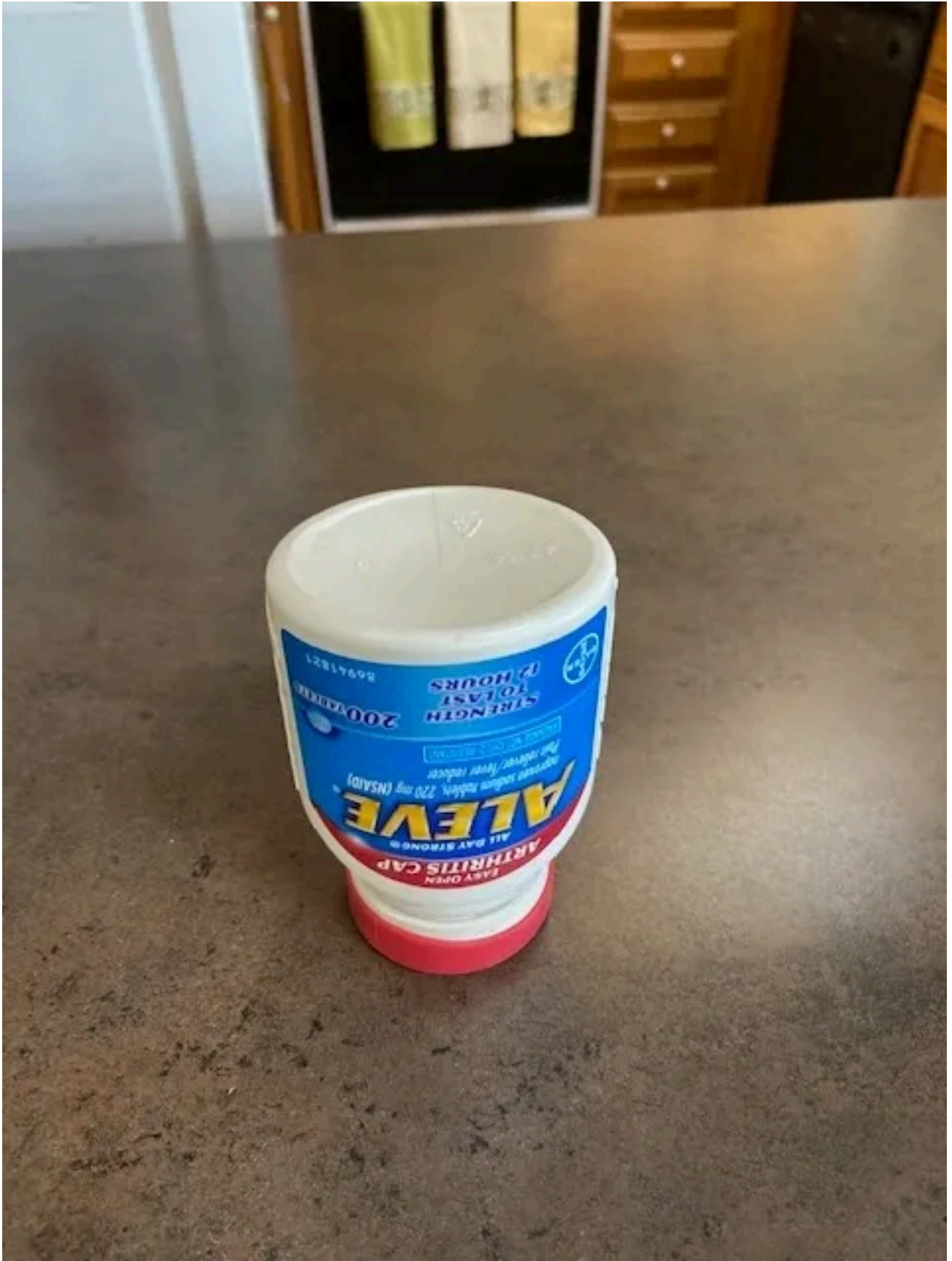
I start at around 6:30 am, and work until it's done. It would probably take me less time if I didn't have to split it paying Claire her tribute as I go along. She comes to the door as soon as she hears the music and chopping to collect her tribute.

Anyway, I then have to go outside and refill hay bags and clean and refill water buckets. As soon as I hang the first hay bag, Claire & Honey zero in on it, which is good because it lets me deal with the other chores without Claire following me around and trying to get my attention, or to extort more tribute. She can be persistent.

Now taking care of the other chores means that I chip out mule muffins from the frozen snow and wheel barrow them back to Hadrian's Wall.



And after that is all done, I treat myself to some pain relief:



Which reminds me, I'm out of Aleve.

So around 1 pm I returned inside and after jousting with members of the OFC via colorful texts, I called my dear friend Jimmy Moran, who lives back in Warwick, New York. Yes, there is a real Jimmy Moran and yes, the character in TCT is based on this wonderful man. He happens to be my youngest's father-in-law, is the patriarch of a multi-generational Blue Blood family (Jimmy is retired NYPD and his wonderful daughters are both NYPD) which now includes Mark, and this man is the salt of the earth.

We spent some time catching up, including a long discussion of the horrendous and tragic deaths of the two young, brave Latino officers in our beloved NYPD, Jason Rivera and Wilbert Mora, our concerns for their families and for the safety of our own children who face each morning wondering if they will be coming home that night. Finally, we discussed the magnificent eulogy given by the heroic widow of slain officer, Jason Rivera, in St. Patrick's Cathedral:

<https://nypost.com/2022/01/28/full-text-of-nypd-det-jason-riveras-widows-eulogy/>

Mrs. Rivera, you are one amazing young woman. May your strength and fortitude stand by you throughout the remainder of your life. You have touched my heart and are forever my hero. My prayers go out to these young families whose lives are forever changed through the thoughtless actions of these murderous thugs and the even more thoughtless decisions of our political leaders - who condemn our heroic men and women in Blue but make sure they have their personal security details.

If things do not quickly change, including the vocal percentage of the public's misguided attitude towards our men and women in Blue - who are of all races, creeds and colors - and are out there just trying to protect our citizens every day and then come home alive to their own families - society as we know it will end.

Anyway, the memory of the tragic event and yesterday's conversation with Jimmy makes me feel that what I do with my writing is trivial and frivolous. But then I realize that some people need to escape from the horrors of daily life through art, including literature. If I can do that for one person out there, then I have accomplished something of value. It is all I have to offer during these trying times, other than my prayers.

Anyway, the day is calling and Smokey is waiting for her meal and cuddle.

You fine five readers out there, stay safe and thank the next first responder you see for their service and sacrifice.

And do your very best, to have a great day.

Happy 19th Birthday Tia From JJ

January 29, 2022



Yesterday evening I was jonesing for a Jimmy John's veggie sandwich (and a dill pickle), and Lisa had a hankering for their tuna sub, so I drove twenty minutes to our local JJ establishment in Longmont. Absolutely love their sandwiches. It was empty for a Friday night, and so there was only one person manning the counter, with one delivery person popping in and out. Anyway, I'd been served by the young lady behind the counter many times previously, her name is Tia, and she is always quick to engage in polite conversation, and always asks her customers how their day is going. Anyway, it being Friday evening, my response

to her question was "I've had a great day. How about you? How was yours?" And she responded, "Well, it's my birthday."

Being naturally inquisitive, I asked her what birthday it was and she responded that it was her 19th.

That sent me searching way back through my own memory banks to my 19th birthday - where I found the memory file corrupted by what can only have been copious amounts of alcohol - but I was able to retrieve snippets of locations and faces that included Aunt Violet's Flop House, a number of bars, and the members of the Old Fuckers Club in their glorious youth. I took that to mean that I must have had a hell of a time.

So, I told Tia that I hope, it being a Friday night on the last night of her teenage years, that she was going to tear up the night with her friends.

She then told me no, she was working till closing, and didn't have any plans, and anyway, she wasn't really a partying kind of person. But then I pointed to the very pretty tattoo sleeve on her right arm and said that it evidenced a person who actually has a partying soul. And she lit up and said that she did intend to add a new tattoo for her birthday, and then mentioned what it was.

By then the delicious sandwiches were prepared, so I thanked her and left.

The entire trip home I could not get out of my head that this young lady was going to allow her last teenage year to pass without some commemoration.

So, when I got home I mentioned it to Lisa, and she suggested that I go back with copies of my books and inscribe them for Tia as a birthday present.

I thought that was a good idea, because even if she wasn't a reader, maybe she could hawk them on ebay, and buy something she may really want. (of course, given they are my novels, I don't think they'll bring her much just yet).

Anyway, as I arrived back at JJ's, Tia was returning to the register having just dealt with cutting her finger. Her night was not going tip top.

I hoped to stem the tide and presented her with the two books, inscribing them for her right there and then, based upon conversations we had had in the past. As I explained the nature of

the story while I was inscribing the books, she seemed quite pleased. So I hope they bring a little happiness to that young lady. Oh, and we snapped the above selfie to commemorate the event. So, Happy 19th Birthday Tia from Salt Lake City. May you have nothing but a wonderful life and find true happiness.

Okay, I have to get moving because Saturday has lots of chores for me to deal with, and Smokey is waiting.

You fine, five readers go do something fun.

And have a great day. You too Tia.

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I've mentioned in the past that Amazon ratings are ephemeral.

They come and go, hour-to-hour. Which is why I've taken to grabbing Big Foot screen shots (which I did not even know how to do).. The first couple of times TWA hit the top spot, by the time I referred my small circle of friends to the website, it had fallen back off it. It became the "fish that got away" story. Peter and the Wolf *redux*. One more sign of my growing insanity. And you never want to hand my friends that kind of psychological cudgel. They are ruthless.

From anecdotal observation, Amazon success also seems to come down to the luck of what categories your book falls into. Kindle books are rated differently than paperback, audible and hard pasta.

However, it seems that most sales are through Kindle these days - its easier, quicker and cheaper - so I draw comfort using that as my main barometer. There are a million subsets for the categories. Kind of like what you find at dog shows. Of course, I think that if there was a category for "Old, Grizzled, Bald, Bleary Blue-Eyed Authors," I could have a permanent lock on it, and be "Best In Show".

I never even considered TWA a funny book, as in "Dark Humor."

It's just told with a New York cadence and sensibility, and in an almost distracted manner that any Bronx Irishman would consider gospel. We are used to our stories being littered with apparent *non sequitur* and tangents that, at first glance, have the listeners scratching their heads as to their inclusion in the narrative, but ultimately fall into place at the end of the story. Its observational and, at times, playful, even when bad things are happening. We like to mention the details of our surroundings to fully set the scene. We want you to smell the perspiration in the locker room, feel those pheromones between a man and woman, taste the salt in those tears. We also believe that the listener needs to hear a little backstory from the chorus to fully appreciate what is happening center stage in the moment. A good story teller comes with a promise that, if you stick it out to the end, all will be revealed. I know, it's madness. And I think that it all comes from the oral tradition of story telling that I learned around the family table. Ask

anyone, when it comes to the blarney, the McCaffreys are completely full of shit. But we serve it in funny doses.

It literally drives my wife crazy when it takes me a half hour to answer a yes or no question. And she never thinks I am funny.

Anyway, last night, before I fell asleep, TWA hit #1 again in Kindle Dark Humor, and I said to myself that if it was still there when I awoke in the morning - always check the time code in the upper left hand corner to keep me honest - I would blog about the process.

Well it was, so I have. And given the number of competitors out there, I am proud of this accomplishment, as small and ephemeral as it may be: <https://robhillsr.com/about-books/how-many-new-books-are-published-each-year-question.html>. And I thank you all for putting me there. Yet, again.

Did I mention it is in single digits this morning. The out door water buckets were frozen solid. Claire and Honey were waiting impatiently in the doorway of the heated barn for their hot water and veggies. (That reminds me, I need to call Gerami (his spelling) at Hygiene Feed this morning to confirm that order of another 21 bales of hay.) Your clothes actually start to freeze right on you - I always feel it in the pant's leg first (not a euphemism). Days like this remind me of the saying I used to hear bandied about in my childhood home - "It's cold as a witch's tit in a brass brassiere." I never asked how one established the base line to that standard, but if it was good enough for Spaghetti, who was I to challenge it. I still use it today. And this morning it is just that cold.

Well, I need to wrap this up, go upstairs and see if Smokey is alive and kicking. As long as her fortress remains heated, which it is, I'm sure she's fine. But I'll just give her a cuddle to make sure. (You may notice that I tend to switch genders in describing Smokey - it's just that, given his/her thick grey coat - the gender is not obvious to the eye and I'm not about to do a body search). It will just have to remain one of life's mysteries.

I hear the East coast is bracing for a snowstorm on Saturday.

Welcome to our world.

For those of my fine, five readers who hug the Atlantic shoreline, stay safe and warm. New York snow is wetter and heavier than what we get out here. So, if you are shoveling by hand, take

smaller shovel fulls and lift with your legs, not your back. I do not want to lose anyone to heart attacks, or even to sciatica.

And to all of you out there, its Friday, so just go with the flow and have a great day!

Not A Big Fan Of Snow - Claire's Theory of Relativity

January 27, 2022



Do not get me wrong. Snow can be very pretty. That is a shot taken on Tuesday morning as I returned from my early tour after a light snow. And even though I'm not forced to shovel as much and I did in the Bronx (rather hard to believe but true - the sidewalk liability rules and a borough full of willing potential plaintiffs and an aggressive personal injury bar meant the sidewalks received repeated attention during every snowstorm) the little bit of shoveling I have to do around the front of my garage and front deck here (that area hidden behind Jack the Spruce - where its more likely you'll be shot as a trespasser before you get a chance to slip on my

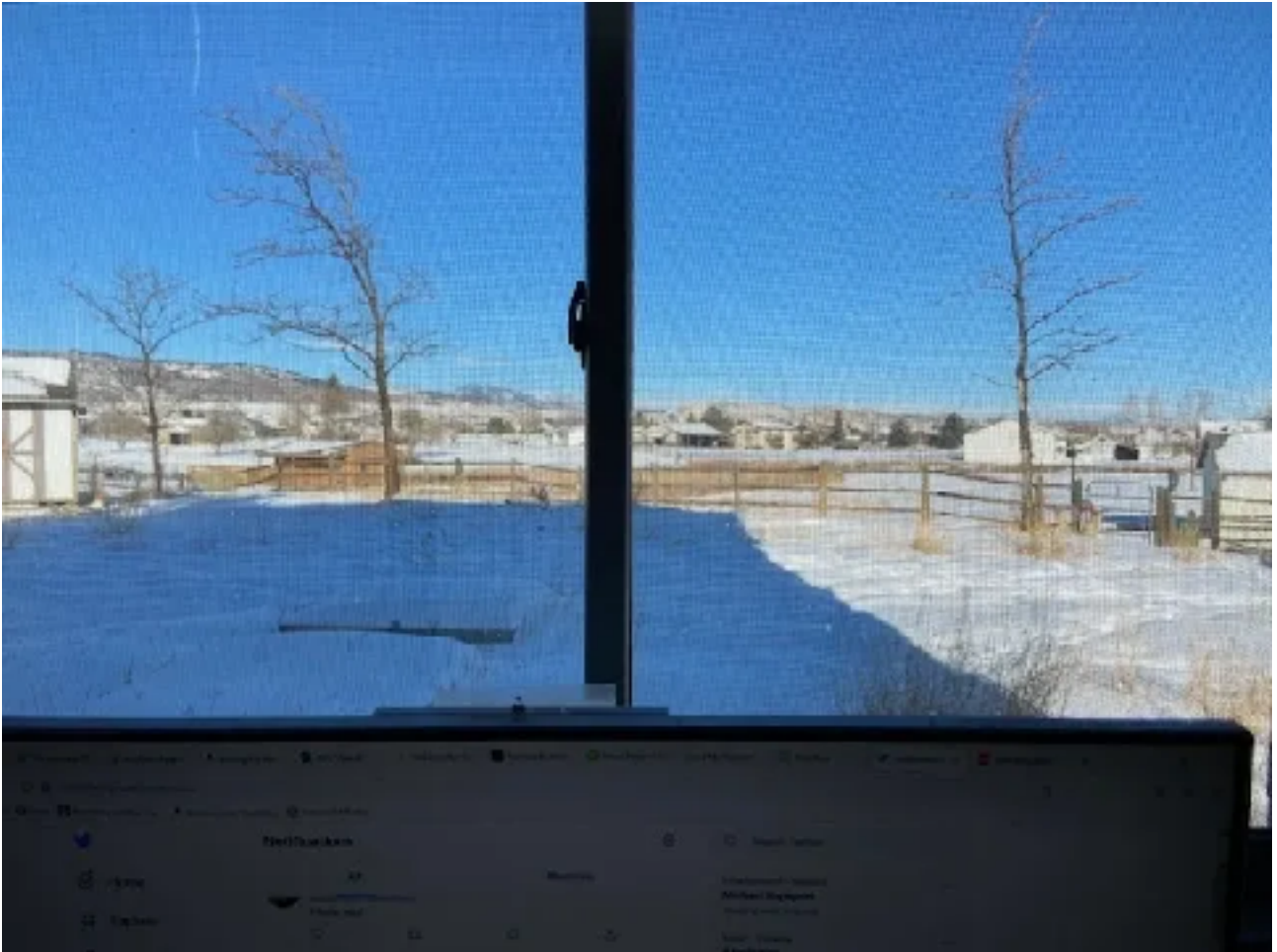
walkway) is enough to give my back spasms. If the snow reaches a certain height where you cannot force your AWD car through it, then the driveway needs to be shoveled as well. I've dealt with storms over the past few years where the shoveled snow banks have covered the second rail of the fence in the photo and literally blocked the garage door from opening. Fun times.

When it gets to blizzard proportions my selfless neighbors, like Dick S (MacGyver genius) from across the road, step in with their self mounting snowplows and, after clearing Beverly to County Road 23, will come along and plow your driveway (thank you Dick) if you haven't yet dug yourself out. But, as a matter of pride and stubbornness, one tries to throw off the mantle of Oliver Wendell Douglas (you youngsters look up *Green Acres*) and remain self-sufficient. It is the Western way.

As long as Claire and Honey have their nice coats, their safe barn, their fresh hay and their warm water, they don't seem to mind the snow.



But then, a little while later, the sun comes out and the snow covered landscape becomes magical, especially from the vantage point of my office.



And when I take that good look around me, I realize that I really do live in God's country, and that I am blessed by the changing seasons here, which, as I continue to grow older, seem to rotate more rapidly each cycle.

Which brings me to a theory. As we age you realize that time is truly relative and its speed will increase as your basis of perception to measure it is broadened by your years here on earth. So, if any of you remember how long that first summer after Kindergarten (there was no pre-K) seemed, because each day of that summer season was measured from your then total perception of five years.

Two months was a relatively big chunk of your then over-all life. So that summer was so long that you were almost shocked (I was certainly in denial, and remained that way to this day) when you were told that another school year had arrived.

Now, at 65, two months seems to be a drop in the bucket, a blink of the eye. Time for all of us old folks has sped up accordingly. Years now pass before I catch my breath. I guess that this is a gradual process that prepares us to be able to appreciate those final moments before you cross the veil, when your entire life passes before you in an instant. You can capture it all running at full speed towards nirvana.

I'm calling this Claire's Theory of Relativity, since she was the one who first broached it with me (What? Do you think I just sit around and ponder the universe? No, I just hang around smart creatures and then steal their genius).

Maybe that has helped me come to terms with the lengthy path it took to reach my goal of being a published writer. In the big scheme of things, looking back now, five decades doesn't seem like that long a wait. Knowing what I now know, seeing where I now am, I would happily do a mulligan, and this time wring the juice out of every moment of my life. In retrospect, I now know that things have arrived when they should have. On time.

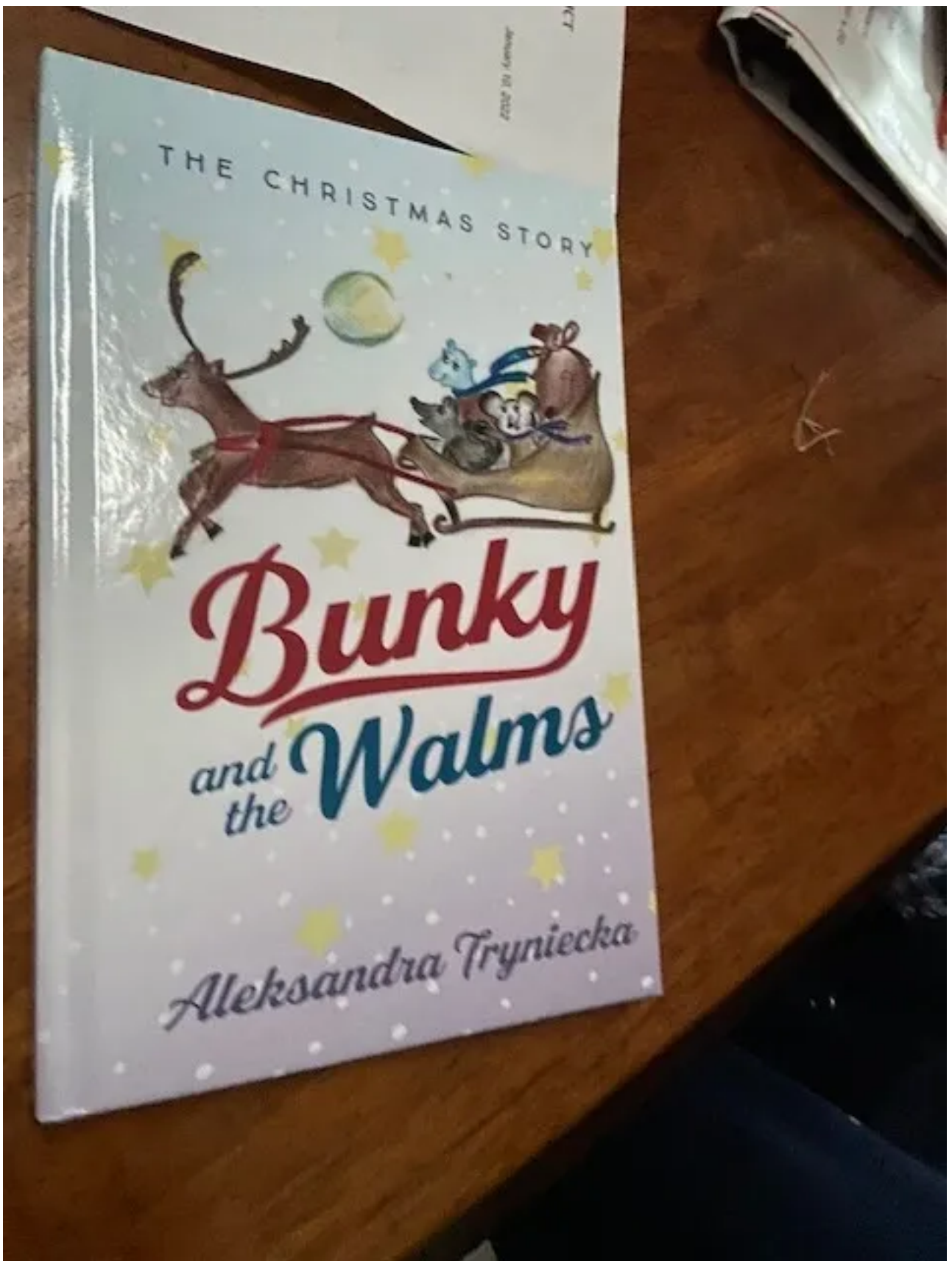
And, I really am grateful for all of this.

So I want you fine, five readers to bundle up and stay warm on this cold winter Thursday (we are expecting more snow here) and, during those moments when you are sipping that hot cup of coffee, tea or hot cocoa, think about Claire's Theory of Relativity, and maybe do a trial run of those great memories that will make you smile, now, and at the end. Practice make perfect.

But, most of all, have a great day!

Aleksandra Tryniecka - The Personal Touch

January 26, 2022



As part of this past year's attempt to develop a social media presence to assist in the marketing of *The Claire Trilogy*, in addition

to my daily blogs, I have also been working at expanding my footprint on Twitter: @Wisecelt. I think I managed to get in with the Twitter Writers and Artists group, but I couldn't swear to that. I like to scan the W&A Twitter-verse looking to see what other creatives are up to, and have found that there is a strong sense of camaraderie and community. It's nice to see people so supportive of each other. As a result, I have met a number of very nice creatives from all around the world that are working hard at breaking into or building upon their existing careers as authors or editors, or illustrators, or some combination of the three. Frankly, I am in awe of their energy, exuberance, creativity and tenacity. When a new writer breaks through and posts about their now (or soon to be) published book, I can feel their excitement, it's tangible and contagious, like the unadulterated joy of a child at Christmas. I know that feeling well, having so recently experienced it with each novel of TCT, all three books published in just over a year (K MAG drops this March), and I am thrilled to see others on the receiving end. A lot of the time, after reading their tweets, I will track down their book on Amazon and buy a Kindle copy, to support them, and at some point, I will read the book and post a review, because I know how important those reviews are to the success of a book. As a result, I am building up quite a Kindle Library, and will need to retire to get to them all. But I will. I have managed to sneak a few in just so I can get that review out there.

Every once in a rare while, I'll spot a children's author that posts about their particular book in a way that I think will appeal to my grand kids, and I will buy a hard copy of the book and pass it on to the little flesh devils (stole that term from Moon Boy - an absolutely hilarious BBC show with brilliant actors).

Recently, I came across a tweet about a children's book with a Christmas theme, called *Bunky and the Walms*. That's a copy of it in the above photo (please ignore the isolated and distracting bit of hay off to its right, I just came in from the barn, and I literally shed the stuff, like I used to shed hair). You can find the book on Amazon, here: <https://www.amazon.com/Bunky-Walms-Christmas-Aleksandra-Tryniecka-ebook/dp/B09KTB4X5T>.

But there was something so sweet about the post of its young author on Twitter, that I retweeted it - a really easy way to show

support. I also purchased a Hard Pasta copy of the book for my granddaughters. They love to read and be read to, and hopefully they will all develop into the type of voracious readers that will support all of these writers out there in the future. They may develop into writers themselves, after all their father's first novel, Lebanon Red (by Luke McCaffrey), will be published this August, so they may have gotten the writer's gene.

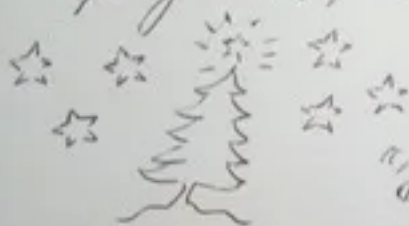
Anyway, as often happens when you retweet someone's post, that person will reach out to publicly thank you in a tweet (those writers are a polite bunch), and I always respond with an equally public "You're welcome," just to let the person know that their "thanks" didn't disappear into the vacuum of Internet space. Sometimes, a writer will then DM (I believe that stands for direct message) you, often to follow up with additional news of their book or their excitement at its publishing and their happiness that someone has noticed both.

In the case of the above Bunky book, I ended up in a DM exchange with its young author and told her how I was thrilled by her early success and that I had just purchased a copy.

Wouldn't you know it, but that sweet young woman then sent my granddaughters the following hand written and illustrated letter, which I intend to seal onto its inside front cover so they will have it for posterity:

Dear Scarlett, Dear Savanna, Dear Stella,
I hope that you will become
lifelong friends with my protagonist,
Bunby, and that this book will be always
reminding you that the true magic
exists within your heart!

Wishing you a wonderful time
with Bunby and many happy moments
in Walmland (Bunby's fairyland)
and Bunbyland (the Bunby Princess's
fairyland), with love,



Alexandra -
- the authoress of:
"Bunby and the Walms:
The Christmas Story"
January 2022'



I can guaranty you that this will be a book that my granddaughters will cherish forever. And you just cannot teach that kind of personal touch. It's innate.

Now I know this was not an easy thing to do, given that the author lives in Poland and the books are published here in the US, so I appreciate all of the extra effort on her part to make it happen.

Aleksandra, let me quite publicly say that I am forever in the debt of your kindness, and I wish you nothing but success with your book, and all of the books that will certainly follow during what I hope is your long and illustrious career. And I am particularly fond of your message that "true magic exists" in a child's world, and that it starts in their hearts, a theme I try to reinforce at every turn.

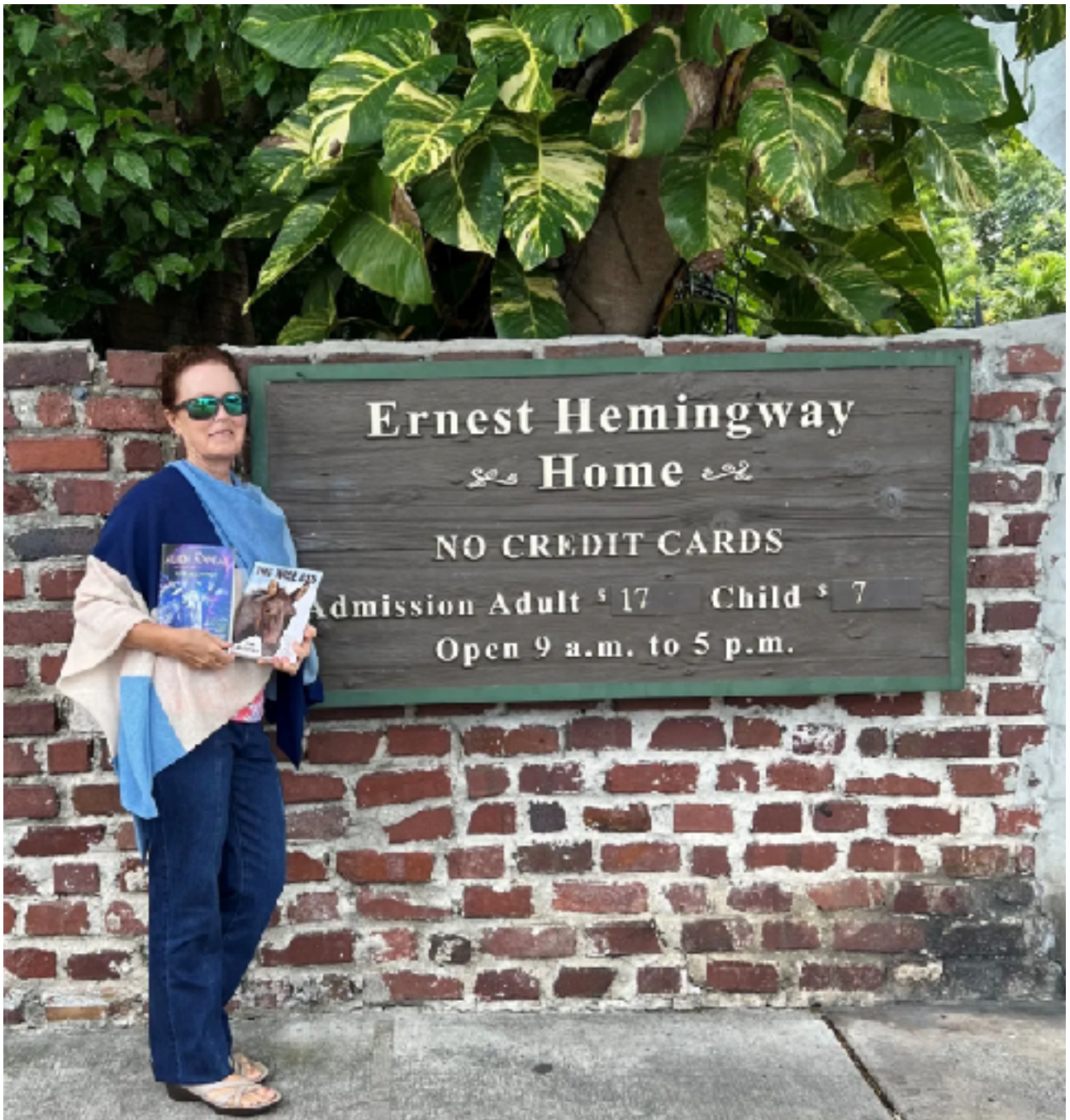
To any of my fine, five readers out there who have young children or grandchildren, I heartily recommend this book to help usher your young ones into the magical world of literature. It will be a Christmas favorite for generations to come.

In the meantime, let's all of us get over the hump day, and focus our attentions on the downhill slide towards the weekend.

Until then, have a great day!

Chasing Giants - Thank You Anna Hillman

January 25, 2022



Every writer that sits down at a keyboard is chasing a giant. Someone that inspired them to take up the mantle. Hemingway is

my giant. *The Sun Also Rises* is the novel that did it (*The Old Man and the Sea* helped).

The above photo is of my new friend Anna Hillman (an old friend of my old friend Helen LaLousis) holding her inscribed copies of TWA and AAA while standing before the Key West home of my literary giant.

Thank you for snapping and sending me that photo, Anna. I'm thrilled just by the juxtaposition.

I know, I know, it's all a bit ambitious to line up those books in front of this writer's home. It's like initiating a new religion on the steps of the Vatican.

But that does not mean that I cannot honor this man and grab a little of his mojo, and it is a well known fact among the paranormal community that creatives always leave some of their mojo behind when they cross the veil (if anyone is interested, my residuary mojo will be left in my office chair). Trust me, Hem won't miss it.

I was older at the time TWA was first published than Hemingway was when he died. Indeed, he'd probably root for an old bastard like me, who, like Santiago, is fighting the treacherous sea and trying to bring home that marlin. And we both boxed - gotta respect the ring.

But that really is not the point, is it? Like Santiago, I don't have to bring home the marlin to be remembered, or end up as talented or successful a writer as Hemingway. I just need to be out there trying to catch the marlin (and I would cut it loose anyway).

For me, as a late-in-the-day writer, it's not the destination, it's the journey. I'm really enjoying this journey. Fighting the good fight.

So, what do you think? I may not have his talent, and I can't match his literary output (unless I get a Jimmy do-over), and I certainly don't have the number of wives, but there may be enough of Hemingway's grit and grizzle (and now a little bit of his mojo) to take me to the end of my writer's story, whatever that is.



Again, it's a face only a mother could love, but its mine, and its taken me this far. I'm told Hemingway (or maybe it was Van Gogh - shit, I might have cut off the wrong ear) liked to sport a similar chapeau. <https://boydellandbrewer.com/9781571139672/hemingway-and-africa/>

Anyway that was just a brief bit of fun, a flight of fancy, a remembrance of a brilliant writer that awakened my desire to write.

A giant.

But now reality imposes its will, and I have a cat to cuddle and horses to visit.

So, you fine, five readers go out there and take on Tuesday. And make it a great one.

Thank You Reagan Rothe & BRW

January 24, 2022

2:10



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EXPLORA LOS SABORES LATINOS

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Tom McCaffrey

The Wise Ass (The Claire Trilogy Book 1)

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So AAA ended its 8 day personal best run at the top spot just in time for TWA to return to its #1 position yesterday (which it has hit about a dozen times over these past 11 months) in Kindle for Dark Comedy. At this point, I've beaten all the bushes that I can on a personal level to beg, cajole and extort every one that I know to buy my books. The continued success of The Claire Trilogy can only mean that my publisher, Black Rose Writing, along with its fearless leader Reagan Rothe, are working their marketing magic to keep - as BBC TV characters like to say - putting punters in the seats.

Like the mechanics that keep my cars running, and Darren Knolls, my friend and local AC/Heating guy who keeps my Colorado home comfortable all year long, I do not understand how the BRW team does what they do, but I am grateful for it every day.

I recently came across a daunting statistic:

"It is estimated that between 600,000 and 1,000,000 novels are published in the United States alone each year, depending on which statistics you trust. An overwhelming majority of them — probably even more than half, or perhaps more — have been self-published."

<https://robhillsr.com/about-books/how-many-new-books-are-published-each-year-question.html>

That is a lot of competition for an established author, never mind a first timer, Sexagenarian (this title is one of the few pluses of being in your sixties) like myself.

I've blogged before how I ended up submitting TWA to BRW back in early 2020, truly a shot in the dark for a guy with a long history of rejection letters. But it saved me the frustration of trying to find an agent who would then work the endless submission process until they lost interest (I've had agents before). Honestly, I don't blame them, since they can only make their living with successful writers, and you can't cash a rejection letter. And I don't have that flashy or unique background that makes me stand out as an instant darling among the glitterati and intelligentsia. I don't get invited to cocktail parties. I am an old-school dinosaur and that's a tough sell.

I do want to take a moment here and single out and express my gratitude to the vast numbers of my generation (I'm actually a proud Baby-Boomer) that has supported me - I can tell who you are by the

references in the reviews (and thank you for those as well). Now start cajoling your younger family members to pick up a book and give it a read. My literary legacy will cease to exist in a few years without your familial legacy. So, thank you in advance for that continued support.

If you run BRW through an internet search you get a result that says:

"*Black Rose Writing* is an independent publishing house that strongly believes in developing a personal relationship with their authors."

<https://www.blackrosewriting.com>

If you run Reagan Rothe through the internet, you come across entries like this: <https://blog.critiquematch.com/2021/01/interview-with-reagan-rothe-black-rose.html>

Now I do not know how it has worked out for other writers, but I can say, without hesitation, that this - the personal relationship part - has certainly been my experience with BRW.

I often drop RR an email during these early hours and I always get a timely response usually before I complete my blog (and he's in Texas) - he is one of the few people I know who must sleep less hours than I do. That is impressive.

I remember when I was submitting TWA through BRW's on-line portal, it really is a blind submission process, there was a question that went something along the lines of "What are you willing to do to promote your work?" My response was honest and simple - "Whatever it takes." And towards that end, I refer my fine, five readers to the second sentence of today's blog. I also had to overcome my naturally private and shy nature (and Luddite skill set) to set up this website and begin blogging. Before this time last year, just before the publication of TWA, I had absolutely no internet presence. Talk about old dogs and new tricks.

Of course this has impacted my personal relationships with friends and family - who now know that when they share information with me through texts, emails or phone calls, they must include the proviso "Not For Public Consumption" if they do not want to risk having their secrets shared. I am shameless.

But, getting back to BRW, if you show them you are willing to work your ass off trying to get your book out there - I'm not kidding, I

would wear an old fashioned sandwich board over my hairy naked body touting my novels if I could find one - and I always begin the wrap-up of every conversation I have with strangers with the line "do you like to read?" - then its been my experience that BRW will get behind you and throw their resources into making your book a hit. And, from the results I have been seeing, in my case they have. Now remember, BRW is not one of the big five publishers that you see hoarding the top spots in brick-and-mortar and internet publishing: Penguin/Random House, Hachette Book Group, Harper Collins, Simon and Schuster and Macmillan. Those companies have unlimited resources and centuries old market-share that they can marshal to make most of the books they publish successful. Their books will always get the end cap spot or appear in an add in the Sunday Times book section.

BRW's much smaller publishing team - I'm not sure there's enough to field a basketball team - has to work their asses off 365/24/7 to get their writers out there, like a guerrilla army whose surgical and selective strikes wins a war against much larger military opposition.

And to tell you the truth, I'm much more comfortable among this mindset. I'm certain that this does not work for everyone, but it works for me.

Anyway, I wanted to take this moment to again thank Reagan Rothe and his band of BRW guerillas for plucking my manuscript out of the pile and giving me my ruby shoes. This past year has changed my life in a way that I could only have dreamed of - and did dream of - over these past 50 years. I can only hope that this success will continue through the end of The Claire Trilogy and beyond.

And before I go, I also want to thank you fine, five readers, for not only supporting me in this endeavor and reading my blogs, but also for begging, cajoling and extorting every one that you know to buy my books. It is greatly appreciated.

Anyway, the law and Smokey awaits, so I must flee.

I know its Monday, but screw it, make it a great day.

The Things You Do For Love

January 23, 2022



I've mentioned that Claire and Honey are prodigious poopers. That wheelbarrow is a week's worth from the barn. And then there is the outdoor poop.











That's at least another four barrows. Every week, like clockwork. In the spring through fall it is bad enough scooping that up and

wheeling it out to my organic Hadrian's Wall accumulating at the back end of my property where I leave it to break down into compost. It also keeps the Zombies away. But during the winter months, that has to be chiseled and pried off the frozen ground, which is very much like chipping at concrete. My hands, arms, shoulders and back are crippled by the time I am done with it. But healthy poop means healthy mules (although I'm beginning to suspect Honey - always the entrepreneur - has been charging some of the local equines to allow them to use the rest room during the nocturnal hours). But when it is all said and done, that's all that matters to me, that they are happy and healthy.

And the truth is, when it comes to Claire I would happily scoop up twice as much (until my back spasms put me in traction - which reminds me, I'm down to my last Aleve).

Anyone who has been reading my blogs, or my novels, knows by now that Claire has changed my life.

For the life of me, I cannot figure out how to upload video to my blogs. However, I did figure out how to upload the one I wanted on the "About" page of this site.

I'll just have to default to Gilbert O'Sullivan: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjkP3Gwt_g4

Anyway, that is the litmus test for me. Am I willing to clean up someone else's shit (without being paid - which distinguishes this from my legal profession)? Whether its my kids' diapers when they were infants (or a more challenging kind during their teenage years), or that of an aged parent, friend or a mule. If you are, that is true love.

Anyway, this took me more time to type today because my hands are claws and it was all done with my two index fingers and, occasionally, my nose. I have to go find that last Aleve and wash it down with a cup of coffee, before I go out and feed and cuddle Smokey, and then go for my rounds.

But it is Sunday, and if I can successfully hide from my wife, it will be a day of rest (but see Isaiah 57:21).

You fine, five readers put down your cell phones, pick up a book, and put your feet up. Honor the Lord's day of rest. Trust me, the poop in your lives still will be there waiting for you on Monday.

And have a great day!

I Love My Readers

January 22, 2022

2:58



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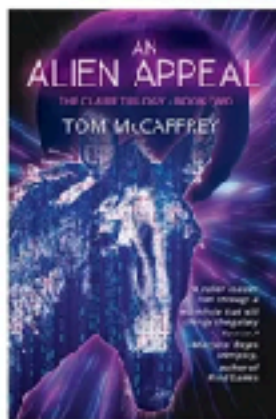


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See reviews



I read the Amazon & Goodreads latest reviews for both TWA and AAA, every day. And I love each and every one of the readers that are willing to buy the book, take the time to read it, and then take the additional time to formulate their thoughts and write a review.

Of course I love the positive reviews (5 & 4 star) best, but I still do appreciate the people who post the lower ratings, because sometimes I can learn from them, and maybe see where I missed the mark for that particular reader. I also realize that my writing is not for everyone, but I appreciate you giving me at least one shot.

Thank you all.

But I really love the reviews that show me a personal side of my readers, something that reflects the impact the book may have had on their life. It really helps me connect with them.

I recently read one for AAA from Kat Jones of Lacey Washington, who shared " I have certain books I read when I am going through stressful times in life, to keep me grounded. This series is now one of them." I am so humbled by that disclosure.

Martha E, recently posted a review for TWA that said: "This may be a book of fiction but I can always dream that it is a real life story."

Martha, you'll be happy to know that there is magic in this world.

The fact that The Claire Trilogy exists is proof of that. And a lot of truth went into that story, so keep dreaming.

On a lighter note, in her recent TWA review, Deb L from Milwaukee, WI, included the line: "My new favorite quote is 'It's feckin Irish, ya wee moron.' If I can ever figure out how to inject it into a conversation, I'll be delighted!" Well Deb, whenever you hear someone speaking in your circle of influence that obviously has gotten the wrong end of the stick on the particular issue being discussed, I think that line will appropriately make the point to those others who are cool enough to be in the know (so make sure all of your friends read The Claire Trilogy). And if anyone comes up to me in public and quotes that line, I will personally inscribe your copy of the book, right there and then. You can even record me repeating the line in my best version of Spaghetti's Northern Ireland brogue.

Speaking of Spaghetti, I love the readers who like the characters so much that they want to come hang with them. I have been truly blessed by knowing all of the real people (and animals) that went into creating the characters in the novels, including Claire, and I can share that they have been wonderful and fun to hang with during my lifetime. So, if you happen to bump into anyone who shares a name with any of my characters, even the bad guys, ask them if they know me, and, if so, buy them a beer and be ready to enjoy yourself.

I also love the reviews that reflect that the reader is not only excited as they wait for KMAG to drop, but that they are hoping that the series does not end with the third book. For example,

sideoftheangels recently wrote: " I can't wait for book #3 and I sincerely hope that the author keeps the series going after the anticipated 3rd installment." Diana D, a remarkable retired teacher of the deaf from Missouri (talk about making a difference in this world), almost broke my heart when she wrote in her AAA review: "While I'm sad the third book is the final one, I'm appreciative that I KNOW it is, so can prepare myself for the absence of a fourth! ... right, Claire?" In her review of AAA, Tejanogrande from Texas writes: "I know all things come to an end, but I honestly dread the ending to this story."

Readers just don't know how much reviews like that impact me as a writer.

What I can tell you is that my goal is to write the prequel to The Claire Trilogy next, tentatively entitled The Riverdale Chronicles, but I will share that no matter what you think happens in KMAG - even as you read it - keep reading to the very end, and then keep reading. Never say never. But please don't do what my sister-in-law Tara - who, by the way is also an amazing writer - does (she cannot help herself, her family is from Cork). She always starts a novel by going and reading the last page of the book. She is an anathema to all novelists. Don't be a Tara.

Anyway, as you can see from the above screenshot, AAA remains in the number 1 New Release spot for a personal record 8th day.

And I have all of you readers to thank for that. I hope you enjoy the read.

That said, Saturday with its outdoor chores, awaits me, followed by my fruit and veggie prep session.

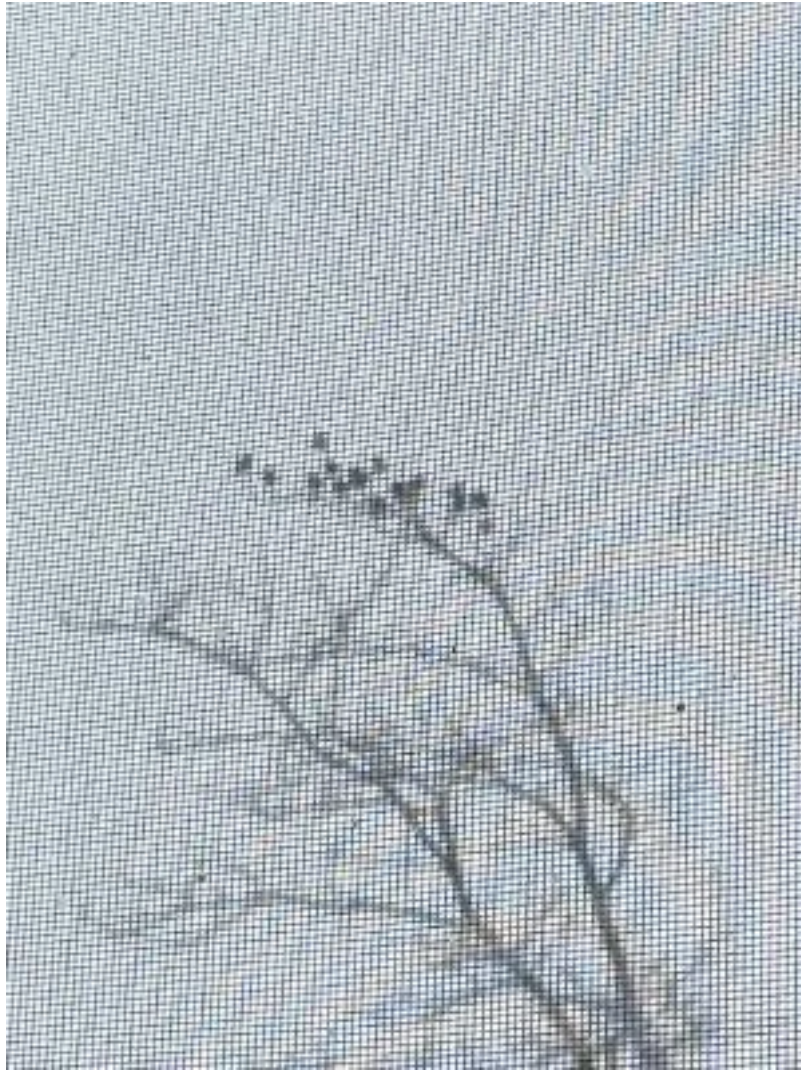
But first, a meal and cuddle shared with Smokey, and my morning rounds.

So, my fine, five readers, I hope you have an open schedule for your weekend, and can do something spontaneous and fun.

But, whatever your day looks like, make it a great one!

"Tom McCartney's mind is a weird and wonderful thing."

January 21, 2022



I know, its a terrible photo. Taken through a window screen. I snapped it because I happened to look out my window yesterday afternoon, a cold, grey winter's day, and spotted this flock of redwing black birds come flying into my eye shot and alight on the top of this barren tree. Now, as you can see, that is a fairly large tree with lots of barren branches that the birds could have spread out and perched on. But they chose instead to stay close together, right there at the top of the tree. Now it didn't make them any

warmer - it's in the teens - and it didn't make them any safer - indeed a circling hawk has its hunting odds improved by the clustering of potential prey at the top of the tree branch line. But those birds gathered together anyway, because they drew some comfort from surviving a relatively miserable situation in the company of others. And there is something to that.

It is tough to go it alone. When I started writing *The Claire Trilogy*, I knew that the protagonist, Jimmy, needed to be stripped of his society, friends and family, either by his own hand, or through outside forces, in order for him to go through the process of learning to appreciate the true value of family and society, even to a maverick, and rebuilding a new social structure around him.

Now Jimmy just happens to land - as one reviewer aptly put it - "where the ley lines meet" (when you get to KMAG look for that line) - which happened to add a whole different form of mystical gravity to the situation, and drew equally mystical and magical characters to the area and then ultimately, to Jimmy and Gina. And, just like those birds in the photo, it is through the arrival and intercession of these characters that Jimmy comes to understand and appreciate the true meaning of family. If you are really lucky, they are there for you, through thick and thin, even when life itself seems miserable. Your family does not need to be related through blood, love is all that it takes. Don't ever forget that.

The above headline was taken from a recent review for AAA. I am really considering changing my last name to "McCartney," given that most of my reviewing readers believe that is what it should be. And I'm fine with that - a rose is a rose (Thanks WS). I can also lie and tell people that me and Sir Paul are distant cousins. What is important to me is that the reviewer thought that my mind is "weird and wonderful" and that just made my day.

What also made my day was hearing from an old friend from my GFM days, Neil Ross. Hey Neil! One more bird in the flock.

Well, Friday, with all of its innate magic, awaits. But speaking of magic, before I go, let me share that my personal best continues with day 7 of AAA:

3:06



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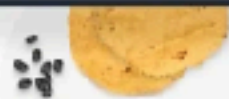


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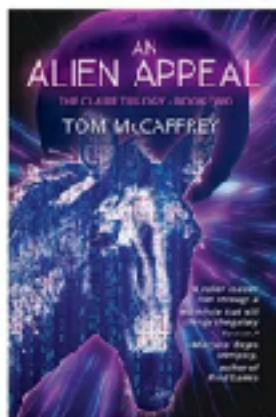


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See reviews



And trust me, if I ever needed proof that there indeed is magic in this world, this is it. There is nothing else that can explain what has happened here.

So you fine, five readers go out there and find the magic in your lives. And while you are at it, find your flock to perch with.

Sometimes that is all that you need to get started.

No matter what, make this a great day!

Mark Lafayette Is The Man

January 20, 2022



Mark Lafayette is a very smart lawyer. We met in the late 80s, when he came to work as an associate at GF&M. I'd love to tell you it was best friends at first sight, but since Mark came into the firm at the same year level as me, I looked upon him, selfishly, as an interloper. He would be my competition, a few years down the road, when decisions concerning partnership were to be made. The strange thing was is that I had no interest in being a partner, which I saw as just one more commitment to the profession I really was not in love with. But the competitor in me just did not want to lose that opportunity to another.

Mark, on the other hand, was all for making partner, and did all the right things to deservedly win that spot. As I said, Mark is a very smart lawyer. He has a beautiful wife named Lisa (that's not hyperbole, she really is stunning), and triplets - Marissa, Greg and Eric. Indeed, Billy Joel heralded the announcement of their pending birth to Mark. Mark is truly blessed.

But during the interim, Mark remained a very good guy. He hung with the same group of brilliant but rebellious associates that I did.

Went out with us at lunch to eat and play pool. Was in on all the fun betting pools that the associates had established concerning the partners in the firm. And, the true litmus test, he was liked by the support staff. He made all the right moves. He was a good guy. And yet, I never really gave him a chance on the friend level. And as I look back at that time together, that was my loss. Because he really is a good friend. And a really good father, husband and person.

Mark also has a great sense of humor.

Anyway, once we went our separate ways professionally, the distance gave me a sharper perspective. (I also may have matured just a tiny bit). I realized that I had been a schmuck. So, to make amends, when I was writing TWA, and needed a character to play the perfect Assistant US Attorney, Mark was the easy choice. Mark, as is his natural manner, was gracious in allowing me to use his name.

Of course, my description of Mark in the novel is pretty close to how he appears in the above photo (holding "Hard Pasta" copies of the

first two books), sans his one-time ubiquitous moustache. In the novel, given their roles, it is natural that his character does not hit it off with Jimmy in the beginning, but by the end of that part of the novel, they have grown to respect and support one another. Either in reality or in fiction, Mark Lafayette is a brilliant lawyer and a very good guy.

So Mark, my friend, this is my belated tip of my hat to you. I really wish I had not squandered those years of potential friendship. May your continued legal practice bring you nothing but success. May your family continue to bring you nothing but happiness. May you get to fully enjoy the wonders of your life.

And if any creatives out there are ever looking for a good lawyer in New York, and you cannot reach my partner, Robert Meloni (he handles all the firm business), call Mark, not because he is second best to us, but because I am still a little selfish and love my partner. Anyway, we've crossed the weekly hump, and my recycling needs to be collected and dragged out to the road, and I still have to feed and cuddle Smokey, so I must finish up here.

Oh, and AAA remains the Amazon #1 New Release in Black Comedy for a personal record breaking sixth day:

3:50



www.amazon.com



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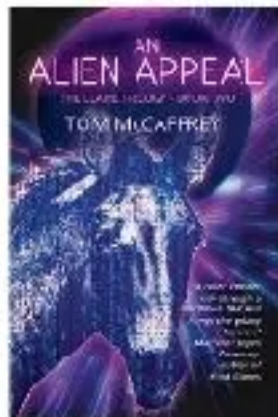


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See reviews



The rest of you fine, five readers go out there and make your mark.
You too Mark!
But most of all, may you all have a great day!

New Personal Record - Colin's Blog

January 19, 2022

3:49



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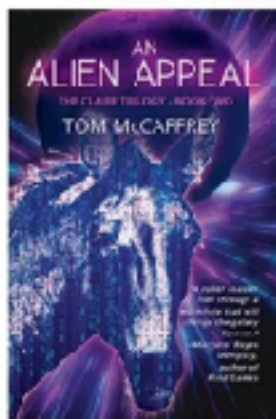


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See reviews



Got caught up with having to deal with additional outdoor related chores this morning, but everything is back under control. However, I was pleased to come back inside to a warm home and finding that AAA remains as the #1 New Release in Black Comedy for the 5th consecutive day.

Heard from Lenny yesterday, and he seems to be better than expected, and remains, as always, in control of the situation. Forgot to mention that binged watch the third season of the Newtflix series "After Life" this past weekend. Ricky Gervais was so authentic in writing and performance. The supporting characters were all great as well. I highly recommend it.

Went online to check out Colin Broderick's new website. It's brilliant. I think the coolest thing is his Vlog. His first, from January 12th, is posted. You can also shop for his books and films. One stop location for all things Colin Broderick.

If I had Colin's looks and wonderful brogue, I would consider switching to a video blog as well. But you know what they say, video killed the radio star. Best to hide behind the printed word. Anyway, I have to cut this short. Smokey is upstairs waiting for breakfast.

You fine five readers crest the weekly hump and zero in on the weekend.

But most of all, have a great day!

MLK - Wolf Moon - Finished PTY - AAA Still #1

January 18, 2022



Going out my driveway and spotted this awesome view of the Wolf Moon. The shot also gives you a strong sense of how imposing

Jack the Spruce looks from a street view. That's my Titanic bell, hanging on the side of the weather vane post. I like to give it a ring whenever I walk out to collect the mail. I tell my granddaughter, Scarlett, that she must ring it whenever she approached the house, in order to warn the dragons that she approaches as a friend, so not to be accidently toasted and eaten.

Her response is always "Dude, you're silly!"

Tell that to the smoking meter readers.

Yesterday commemorated the life and actions of Martin Luther King, Jr. My appreciation for the man and his world changing accomplishments has only grown over time. He will always have my deepest respect.

I took advantage of the well-warranted federal holiday that honors this great man, to complete my read of CCB's *Passport to Yesteryear*. As I suspected, she executed the second half of her new novel as brilliantly as the first. As a writer, this unnerves me.

Even though I have now written three novels, which all seem to be doing well, indeed, AAA is hanging strong for the fourth day in a row as a Kindle #1 New Release in Black Comedy (that "Hard Pasta" must be selling), whereby TWA's recurring moments at the top over the past year have rarely lasted more than an hour or two (Amazon updates its webpages on an hourly cycle - so you have to grab that Big Foot screen shot or no one will believe you):

2:48



www.amazon.com



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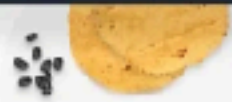


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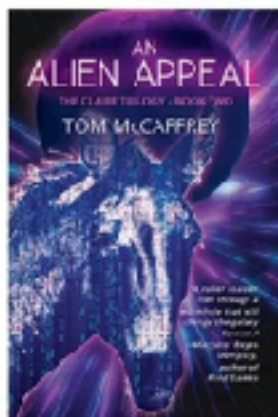


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See reviews



While I can feel *The Riverdale Chronicles* percolating along in my tiny brain (who am I kidding, Claire dictates the novels, like Rumpelstiltskin spinning the gold from her hay), I'm still anxious about sitting down to write the next one. Christy has nerves of steel. After publishing the third book of her wonderful Christine Stewart trilogy this past November, she got right back into the saddle and knocked number 4 right out of the park. Well done CCB! I am jealous of your talent and accomplishments. I also took a moment yesterday to inscribe copies of TWA and AAA to send out to Joan Kistler (PA) and Anna Hillman (FL) (that's them left to right in the photo below) who are dear friends of my dear friend Helen LaLousis. (that's Helen peeking in the upper right corner).



The books will be dropped in the mail this morning. Enjoy the read, ladies!

The 24 hour work-week reprieve is over, and legal life beckons. I must go up and feed and cuddle Smokey for a moment before the real world encroaches upon my mystical life.

You fine, five readers go out and enjoy this abbreviated work-week. And have a great day!

Claire - O'Shays - CCB's Passport To Yesteryear

January 17, 2022

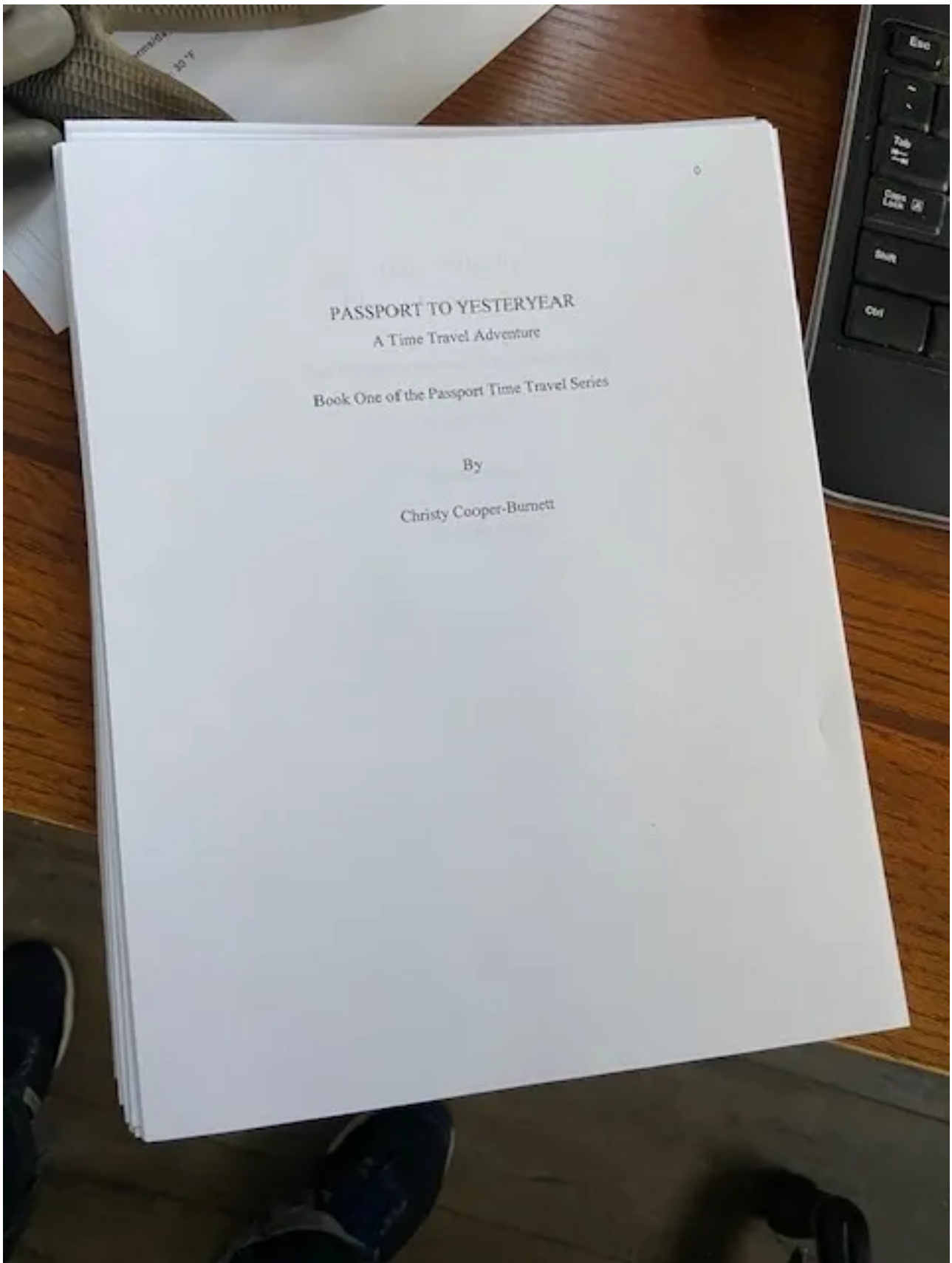


Yesterday was a punch list Sunday. I knew I had to finish my Keurig Shucking so I can put the plastic and tin foils shells out with

the recycling this week, scoop up the enormous mounds of Mule Muffins that have accumulated thanks to Covid and snow, and then begin reading my dear friend, CCB's new novel, tentatively titled *Passport to Yesteryear*.

As on Saturday, Claire remained literally by my side throughout the KS, nibbling me whenever I tried to ignore her, which slowed the process but made it far more enjoyable. Throughout she kept saying, "C'mon Tommy, stop procrastinating, it's time I dictate *The Riverdale Chronicles*." I promised her that I am almost ready to take that dictation, but since I was the only one with the opposable thumbs necessary to work the scoop and wheelbarrow for the mule shit, carry the buckets of hot water down from the house, and stuff the hay into the bags and racks, she needed to wait a little while longer. She replied, "Stop moaning and get after it then," then went off to nibble the trees with Honey on the western side of the house. With the Keurigs shucked and their coffee distributed around the base of my three newest trees, I moved onto the mule muffin collecting. But given the cold weather, it was like busting concrete.

I felt like I was back working construction for John O'Hara in the 1970s. I had to use a pry bar and heavy duty pitchfork to bust up these cement like mounds before I could scoop them up and flip them into the wheelbarrow. After two hours and four wheelbarrows, I was only half way done, but my arms, hands and shoulders were shot. Indeed, those opposable thumbs were rendered pretty much cramped and useless. So, with just a few hours to spare before I had to pick Lisa up from work, I grabbed a shower while I printed out CCB's new book, then sat down with a hot coffee and began to read.



Speaking of new works, anyone who has read the Christine Stewart trilogy - *No Way Home*, *Finding Home* and *Escaping Home*, will

know that CCB can weave a compelling story and write with the best of them. Her characters are fun and loveable, and authentically manage to navigate the brilliant plots that CCB creates for them. Unlike my characters, hers do not get to rely on magical or preternatural abilities. Even though there is a sci-fi bent to the plots, the characters are regular Joes that rely on natural tenaciousness, common sense and a strong survival instinct. They have a clear sense of loyalty and family dynamics. Before evolving, Jimmy and Gina would have been right at home in CCB's books. It's easy to fall in love with CCB's characters and you always find yourself rooting for them, despite the always rising odds. CCB also has a great ear for dialogue. And, as I read through the first half of PTY yesterday, I found myself laughing out loud a few times at some of the repartee, despite the rising tension and harrowing adventure. But that is really not surprising, because CCB's natural wit would have easily earned her a chair at the Algonquine round table.

Now that I am back on the legal clock for the week, and my reading eyes only have so much daily mileage in them, it's going to take me a few days to finish PTY but what I can share is that it is a great story, with great characters and, overall, I know that its brilliant because at only the half way point, I am already seethingly jealous that she (and not me) has written it. Unfortunately, the rest of you are just going to have to wait until its publication date later this year to share in the magic. In the meantime, grab *NWH*, *FH* and *EH* to whet your appetite.

Lisa and I then had an enjoyable meal at O'Shays in Longmont, where Lonnie, the affable and welcoming manager, introduced us to Greg, one of the charming creatives from the Longmont Theatre, which sits on the opposite side of Main Street, directly across from O'Shays: <https://longmonttheatre.org>

I love the theater. I cannot wait to attend their post-covid schedule. Maybe I can pitch them *Revelations*.

Anyway, we eventually returned home, where I went out to bring dinner and a new bucket of clean hot water to the impatiently awaiting Claire and Honey, made sure the barn heaters were working and then went back in the house and put my feet up. And before I knew it, Monday arrived.

Well, you fine five readers go out there and whip Monday's ass for me. My arms are still a bit tired.
But, no matter what else you do, have a great day.

It's Been A Good Week

January 16, 2022

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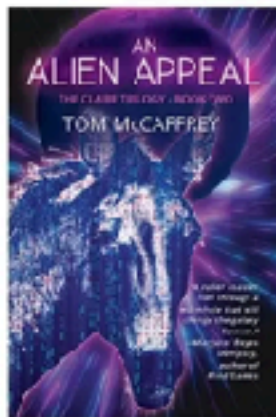


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EXPLORA LOS SABORES LATINOS

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See reviews



Okay, so AAA has been holding over the past 24 hours as the #1 New Release in Black Comedy and I am thrilled to death. Of course, my chef/writer friend, Lenny, was careful to note that this book appears to be sold in three forms, including "Hard Pasta." I think that is brilliant. I am always looking for ways to promote conservation. If you buy AAA in that form and don't like it, you can bring a large pot to a boil, toss the book into it, add a little red sauce and there's a meal, so its not a total loss. Although that is an expensive box of pasta.

Speaking of Hard Pasta, I sent my dear friend Mark Lafayette, a brilliant lawyer and the namesake of the AUSA in The Claire Trilogy, inscribed Hard Pasta copies of both TWA & AAA. Thank you Mark. Anyway, speaking of conservation, today, along with my other outdoor chores, I have to finish my bi-monthly Kuerig shucking. Yesterday, I made a start at it but Claire was in a mischievous mood and stood behind me with her head over my right shoulder.

She kept nibbling my back and shoulders - tickles like all hell - and kept lifting my hat off my head. The imp. I am truly blessed by her presence in my life.

Speaking of blessed presences. . . had a wonderful visit yesterday with my Berthoud Estates neighbor Janice Erickson, who stopped by to get her second copy of AAA inscribed for a friend. She also dropped off a bottle of her homemade "Magick Skin Lotion" for Lisa (Lisa sends her thanks, Janice. Say hello to Boston Brian for me - the new flag will be going up in short order).



Magick Skin Lotion

*Aloe inner fillet, Aloe gel,
vegetable glycerin, grape seed oil,
Vitamin E, Vitamin A, Rosewater,
essential oils of Spearmint, Lavender*

Once I noticed the "k" I knew I had to try it myself. My hands are now soft as a Prince's and who can beat the smell of Spearmint and Lavender. They are also invisible, which is just one more excuse for my atrocious typing this morning. I must find out if Janice is selling her products to the public. Stay tuned.

Happy to report that Lenny is back home safe and sound in his Sedgewick Avenue apartment.

He must be doing well, as he was videod performing a little dance for us.

https://66.media.tumblr.com/e37ab794759c6b917d61bd965dae4af7/tumblr_oy782o0UzV1wzvt9qo1_500.gifv

The wonders of modern medicine.

Got a wonderful review for *AAA* yesterday - actually I got 5 and they were all wonderful - thank you one and all for taking the time to read my novels and post a review - it makes all the difference in the world to the success of a book and is a little bit of heaven to this writer.

Anyway, the ubiquitous *nom de plume* "Kindle Customer" made my day with the line " Tom McCaffrey writes with an almost poetry like abandon."

Another KC wrote: " In fact I have liked both so much that I pre-ordered the third book as well as actually buying the first two in order to support the author's efforts."

Thank you both KCs (and all of my other 5 (and 4) star reviewers), from the bottom of my heart. I am truly humbled. Absolutely mean that. I do not exist without my readers. You complete me.

Slip Mahoney is certainly smiling down on me from Heaven.

Well, I have lots to do on my day of rest, so I better get at it.

The rest of you fine five readers, thanks for your continued support. Now go out there and have a great day - the first night of the Wolf Moon starts this evening. Shout out to Jimmy "Whitey" Fronsdaahl.

Nice To Be Welcomed - Well Done Colin Broderick - Hey Luke

January 15, 2022



That is my buddy Tique, the beautiful Arabian that is cared for as family by my dear friend Pam Ervin. (If I ever come back as a horse - I'm often referred to as a "horse's ass," so I'm half way there - I truly hope someone in Pam's family adopts me). Pam and Tique are both mentioned by name as characters in The Claire Trilogy. Pam was the person who guided me through my evolution from Bronx Boy to Mule Skinner, and talked me into adopting Claire. Pam has taught me a lot, for which I am truly thankful.

Unlike the other equines I see every morning, Tique favors apples over carrots, so there is always a separate baggie of chopped apples just for her. I often tell people that Tique is like the prom queen in high school, always glad to see me when I bring in her English homework each morning. (I'm not knocking Prom Queens, for, despite never going to a Prom, I ended up marrying a Prom Queen from a galaxy far, far away).

However, over the years I really think Tique has grown fond of our morning meet ups. She's always quick to whinny whenever she spots me coming down the road, or if I stop too long to share a conversation and treats with her fur cousin, Wicker the dog, on the way down their long driveway. We then break bread and have a short conversation about the goings on in the area. She is very informed about the local happenings. Sometimes I'll see Pam out there in the barn, working away, making Tique's beautiful, top-level stall, cleaner than my Living Room. Tique is always the last stop on my morning rounds. She completes me.

Speaking of dear friends, Colin Broderick had a wonderful article published about his recent creative successes that is well worth the read if you want to understand what it takes to make it as a creative that emigrated here with basically nothing and has risen to the pinnacle of master Celtic story teller in many genres. You can find the article here:

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

This young man is the living embodiment of the noun "pluck." We are both Lehman College Alums. He has also been my dear friend and creative mentor for decades. If you want to truly understand what it means to be an Irish émigré, read his memoirs, *Orangutan & That's That*, his novel, *Church End*, and watch his films *Emerald City* and *A Bend In The River*. He gets to write full time and is presently working on some very big projects. I want to be Colin when I grow up.

Speaking of other friends, I am able to report that my dear friend and a central character in The Claire Trilogy, Lenny (also a Lehman Alum), has survived his recent travails and is on the mend. We need him ready and fit for Pamplona in July: <https://www.runningofthebulls.com/>.

Which reminds me, I better start getting back into fighting shape. The way I figure it, I only need to outrun the other members of the OFC to survive the ordeal.

The last and only McCaffrey to have successfully completed this ordeal is my oldest son Luke, whose first Novel, *Lebanon Red*, is being published this August. This young man is the real deal, having travelled extensively, including in the middle east and he even lived in Egypt for a time. So he has pretty much engaged in every daring adventure you can imagine. And he is a serious writer (Matthew 3:17). Here's a shot of Luke taken in Pamplona immediately after the run:



That personal authenticity can be found in Luke's novels (yes there are more than one, so stay tuned).

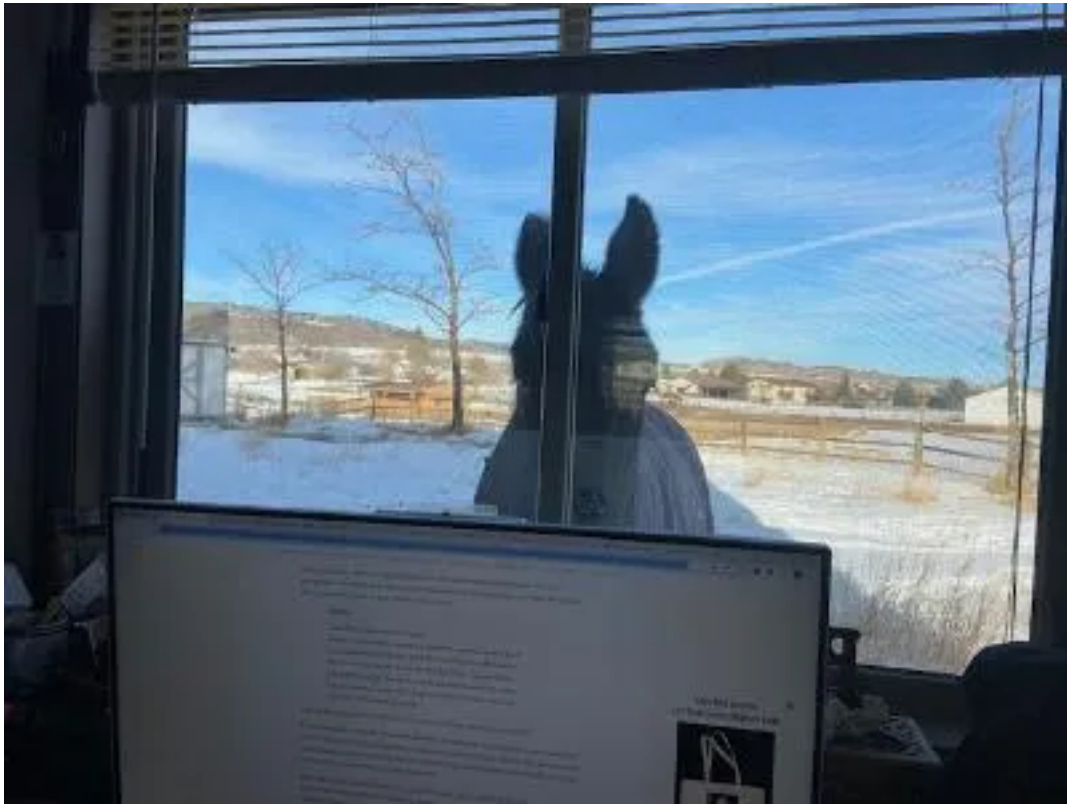
Colin Broderick has also been a great friend and mentor to Luke, since Luke was a wee lad, and is just as thrilled as I am with Luke's much earlier success as a writer. It takes a Clan.

Anyway, I need to make a move, Tique will be waiting, so you fine five readers go out there and enjoy the weekend.

And most of all, have a great day!

Losing the Battle of Wills

January 14, 2022



I can be stubborn. I know, I know, if you have been reading my blogs you'll say, "No Tommy, it doesn't seem possible." But it is true. Just ask my wife. My first response to every request (except one), is a firm, stubborn, and resounding "No!" (not that this does me any good, because I am usually forced to capitulate.)

Anyway, I can state without qualification or reservation that I am definitely not as stubborn as a mule. On this issue, I have been repeatedly tested and found wanting. In the world of stubbornness, I remain an amateur (which explains the above capitulations).

When Claire wants her carrots, nothing, and I mean nothing, will deter her. She'll walk over to the back door and, if it is closed, she will begin knocking with her sledge hammer hooves on the cement right outside the doorway. The fact that I have placed a large rubber mat there doesn't deter her. She will effortlessly scoop it out of the way, like Godzilla, and then begin pounding in earnest. She knows that the cement patio cost me a lot of money, and that at

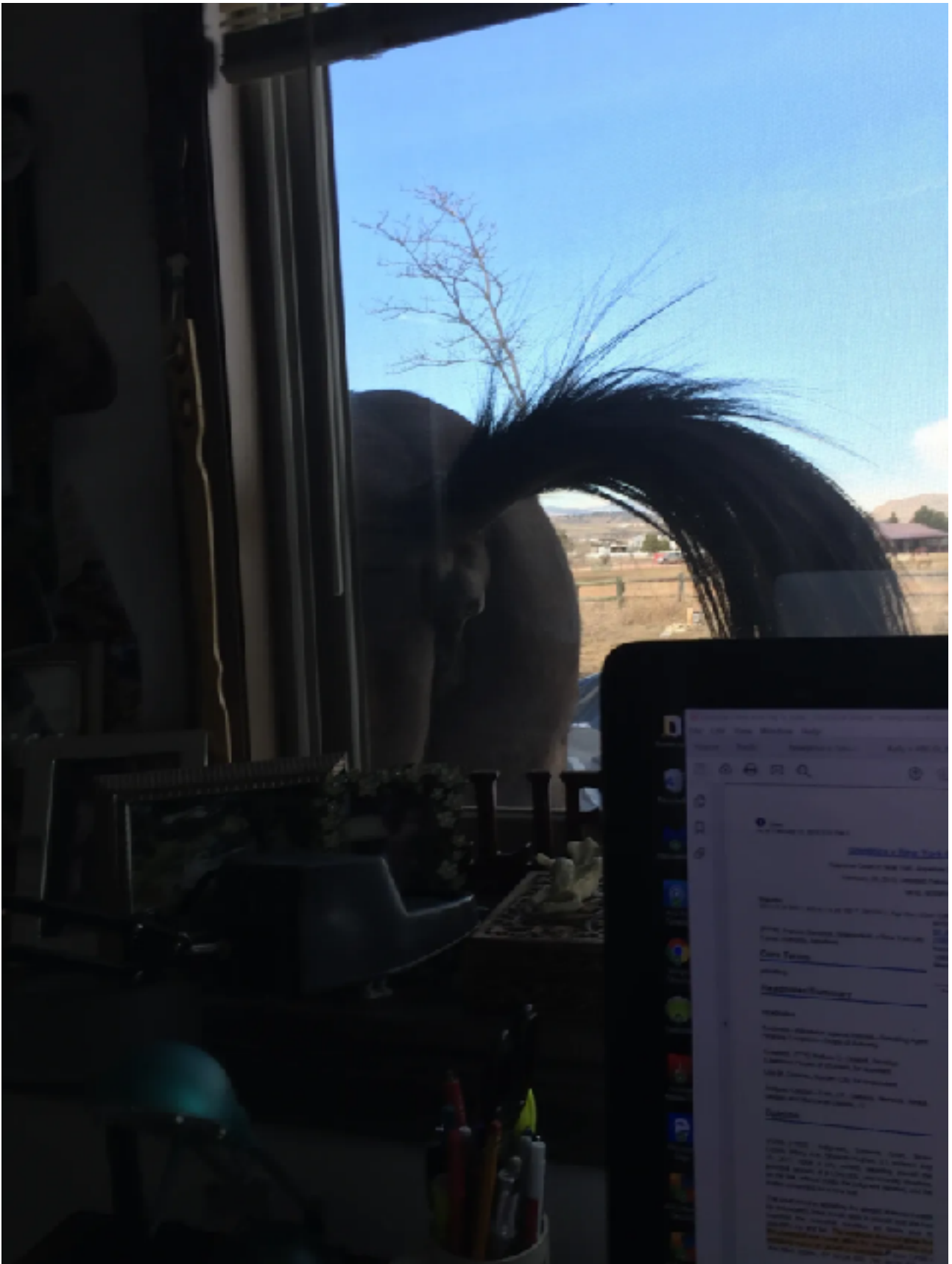
some point I will cave in rather than see cracks where there should not be. I come out to the now fogged up back door and relent with a bag of carrots. Tribute paid, she then goes off with Honey and munches on the high grass and trees on the west side of the back yard.

Sometimes, if I am really busy, or feeling an ornery level of stubbornness (I know, it's unimaginable), I just stuff cotton in my ears and ignore her.

But eventually she comes looking for me in the one spot she knows she will always find me. My office. The above photo of Claire was snapped yesterday afternoon.

And she will then stand there, literally forever, staring across the top of my computer screen, imposing her will through the Vulcan mind meld. I've tried everything, tin foil hat, dropping the blinds, hiding under my desk. Nothing works. She will stand there for hours, immobile, staring. Knowing it is just a matter of time before I cave in. No matter what the weather, sweat will start to form at my brow, my hands start to shake, I lose all sense of concentration, alternating stares at and above my computer screen in equal measures, hoping she will give up. But she never does. In the game of stubborn chicken, I always lose.

And in those rare instances where I reach deep into my soul and find the last vestiges of fortitude, Claire will release the nuclear option.



Claire is diabolical. No matter how cold it may be outside, or how sealed my windows, it will not mask the smell of her surgically

precise deposit of a prodigious veggie and hay fueled mountain of mule muffins. And she can drop them the way a Queen Bee drops eggs.

So, when she turns her back and that tale starts to rise, I leap to my feet, race into the kitchen area and tear open that five pound bag of carrots, tossing the large orange sticks through the sliding doors and onto the back deck, while shouting my unconditional terms of surrender. I can hear Claire's husky voice laughing as she returns to the deck, while her personal assistant and side-kick, Honey, shouts "Humans! Shit works every time!"

And then I retreat back to my office, a broken man, with the hope that I can recover some semblance of my stubbornness, my dignity, before my wife returns to the house to seize the advantage with her unending "Honeydew List."

As Clint would say, "A man's gotta know his limitations."

Anyway, before I end today, I just want to wish Lenny a quick and painless recovery from his plastic (GR) surgery. Anything will be an improvement. What, too soon?!

To the rest of you fine, five readers, it is magical Friday, there is a full Wolf Moon cycle starting on Sunday, so, on a purely mystical level, this weekend looks particularly promising. Go out there and have a ball.

But most of all, have a great day!

Old Man Oswego- BC's Byeline

January 13, 2022



Okay, that is a photo of the Oswego River in upstate New York.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oswego_River_\(New_York\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oswego_River_(New_York))

That was the scene of the crime we call BC & Nan's wedding, which took place in early October 1983. I've mentioned the event in passing in some of my earlier blogs - March 1, 2021/Worst Hangover Ever & February 27, 2021/The PWWC. A bunch of the male attendees got so drunk we entered the river in the middle of the night and swam across and back again - in October! One more reason I question my sanity.

Yesterday, BC and Nan were back at that same hotel, attending the funeral of Nan's sister-in-law (my deepest condolences to your family, Nan). Of course, peering off the balcony of the hotel in question brought back the wonderful memories of his nuptials, so BC sent out his thoughts in a OFC group text:

"Almost forgot to tell you guys — last night, Nan and I stayed in the same hotel we stayed in and used for our guests at our wedding.

So I grabbed a couple of pics of the spot on the Oswego River behind the hotel where Tommy's life story almost ended. I had to get the hotel mgr to let me into their closed bar and restaurant to get the pics. When I told him why, he said he got married just 2 years ago and his wedding party stayed there too. And when they were all hanging out in the bar one night, one guy in his wedding party walked in with his clothes soaking wet. So he knew what I was talking about and said it's definitely time for some reminiscing photos! So here's the popular wedding party river crossing spot, the bar where Tommy was on the edge of brawling with the lesbian motorcycle club, and my new friend there."





"I often wonder how all of you didn't buy the farm right then and there. Then last night, I was awoken by a voice. Sounded like Murray. He said word on the street up there is that God was all set to sweep the whole lot of you. But Satan said he'd be ecstatic to get all of you, but didn't have the kind of space available to take you all at once. Then before the two got done arguing, you guys were out of the water. So they would have had to stage an earthquake or something to cause you to fall in. When they parted, that was supposed to be the end of it. But apparently, one of them must have reneged. Although neither has admitted to it even to this day." As proof of the truth of his nocturnal psychic vision BC shared with us news reports of the earthquake in question:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1983/10/08/earthquake-rattles-northeast-us-and-part-of-canada/0fa6f62f-eff9-476b-a8d5-2a8f5a2b90b5/>

<https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/70162497>

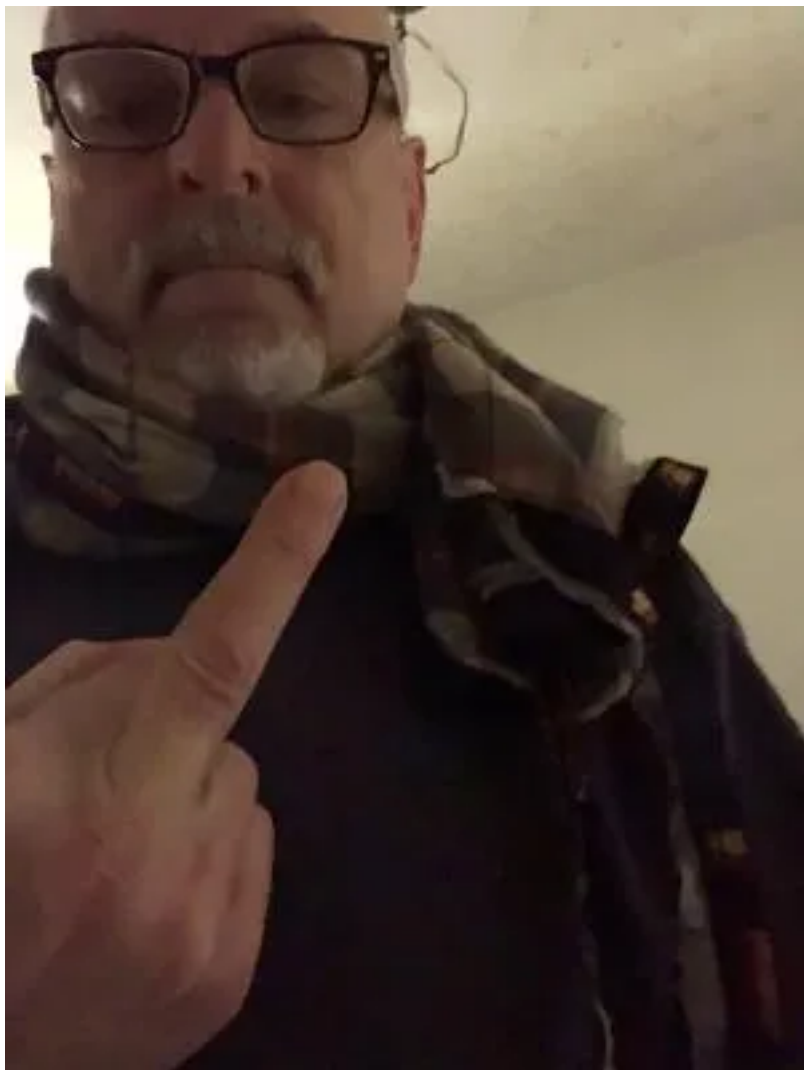
My money is always on Satan.

And that is the true value of old friends, like the members of the OFC, especially BC who has an uncanny ability to recall every

event in our past life. Suffice it to say that, other than my memory of the swim and the hangover, the rest is a blur (one mention is particularly surprising, since I am so fond of Lesbians). But I will definitely tap BC's memory banks as I sit down to write *The Riverdale Chronicles*.

In closing, below is a final photo of the last sighting of Lenny.

Rumor has it that he has flown to Brazil for inexpensive gender reassignment surgery as part of his method acting immersion in preparation for the role of Janet in *Revelations*. Such commitment to his art. The man loves a challenge.



God's speed Lenny!

Anyway, enough of today's stroll down memory lane, a day of lawyering awaits and I must still feed Smokey and make my rounds.

But the rest of you fine, five readers go out there and conquer the world (or at least your part of it).
And have a great day!

Anthropomorphism Is Bullshit

January 12, 2022



Humans are misguidedly arrogant. The same arrogance that refuses to allow them to accept that - despite the mounting evidence to the contrary - we cannot be the only intelligent species in the universe, caused them to construct the concept of anthropomorphism - the idea that the sentient creatures we share this earth with needed man to come along and imbue them with humanlike qualities they don't naturally have, like intelligence, loyalty, love, happiness, fear and pain.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropomorphism>

Bullshit!

Anyone who has ever actually shared their life with an animal instinctively knows this.

Anyone who actually pays attention to the natural world around them also knows this.

Anyone who ever read the works of animal behaviorists like Jane Goodall knows this.

And yet we continue this contrivance so we can excuse the continued barbarity of our actions against these sentient creatures not only from whaling ships, poacher's blinds, in science labs and slaughterhouses, but every time a pet is left by the road side or dumped at an animal shelter.

It really is not that surprising, I mean, after all, the idea that we are somehow better than those creatures has been ingrained in us from

our earliest religious writings: (Genesis 2:18-20). I wonder what Adam was smoking when he came up with names like Ardvark and Platypus?

And just to drive this point home, we learn right off the bat that God was better pleased with Abel's animal sacrifice, than with Cain's burndt offerings of grains from the earth. Genesis.4:3-5 "In the course of time, Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the ground. Abel brought the firstlings of his flock." Look how that turned out.

And I believe, as played out in that brotherly quarrel, Cain was a fast learner, that it is just an extension of this arrogant mindset that allows for the cruelties that humans inflict on one another on a daily basis. But I will leave that topic for another day.

For over six decades I have witnessed the love and pain of my fur family members and I can state without reservation that the expressions of love and pain Claire felt during the loss of Mr. Rogers was no less than the abject grief my mother carried for her life long love the two decades following my father's passing. And that isn't anthropomorphic. It's innate.

Anyway, yesterday when I was returning home from the post office, I watched as two large crows performed their aerial dance across the sky and alighted on the top of an overhead street lamp. And then I watched them continuously tapping the end of their beaks together as if they were kissing. This exchange continued long enough for me to grab my cell phone on the car seat beside me and snap the above photo as I passed beneath the lamp. [PSA - Do Not Snap Photos While You Are Driving!]

I wasn't sure if I had captured it until I got home and checked the screen. Voila.

Now whose to say that some neanderthal, with the same protruding forehead as *moi*, wasn't sitting outside his cave one morning when he looked up and spotted an ancient crow couple canoodling on a tree branch just like these two, thought to himself, "that looks like fun" and walked over to one of the female of his species and laid upon her the first humanoid - lips to lips - kiss. After all, there had to be a first time.

I can imagine the crow couple looking down at the spectacle and cackling "Get a room!" I wonder if the first face slap immediately followed?

Anyway, enough pontificating. The point of today's blog is that we should all get down from our high horses (see that, we depend on animals even to display our arrogance in cliché) and realize that we are not the be all and end all and didn't uniquely develop these emotions - they've been experienced and shared by all sentient creatures since we climbed out of the primordial ooze (or, if you would rather, since Jehova created man after he first created the earth and its animals - was God saving the best for last, or were humans an afterthought? While you are pondering that question, remember Lilith/Eve was the actual last to arrive, so be really careful before you answer).

Now I'm sure there are those emotionally sterile scientists and thoughtless theologians out there who condescendedly beg to differ with my hypothesis. To them, I maturely respond, "Bite me!"

The rest of you fine five readers give your fur babies a hug before you leave the house, it will make you a better human.

But most of all, have a great day!

Fox In The Hen House

January 11, 2022



That was me in the late Spring of 1976 (thank you, Mike Daley, say hi to your sister Terry). The neighborhood had just lost two icons, Murray Collins and Schwabs (BJ) Delaney, within two months of each other. Intensely feeling the precariousness of life, and believing that there really was no guaranty of tomorrow, I scrapped all of my future plans and decided that I needed to live a little bit more in the moment, on the edge. So, I walked away from a steady relationship (*mea culpa*), walked out of classes at Fordham University just before finals (literally broke my mother's heart), moved into Murray's old room at Aunt Violet's Flop House with Joe and Lenny and took whatever jobs I could wrangle through friends and family to make my share of a relatively cheap rent and still have enough money to party and chase women. And for the next year, I did just that. (Please don't judge me by today's standards, this was the seventies, I was the Bronx norm).

The above job was working as security guard at a predominately female institution of higher learning (they had just gone co-ed). Like everything else good that happened in Riverdale, I got hooked up with this job through friends, in this case, the Sexton brothers. It was at the sister school of a well-known engineering college that was also based in North Riverdale. It was considered a tit job, in all senses of that word, literally three blocks away from AVFH. I knew all the bad guys in the neighborhood so it was easy to keep the female students safe from them. The rest took care of itself. I spent all of my time on the job reading whatever I could get my hands on. Students were always losing their books, so I was always able to grab something good from the lost and found. For the life of me I wish I could make out the title of the book I'm holding.

I also started to write. That began when some visiting parent complained about my lackadaisical approach to my job duties and my patent overfamiliarity with the female students. So my boss switched me to the midnight shift, when there was absolutely nothing for me to do but perform a couple of tours of the Hudson River Campus in the beat up blue mustang, listen to the truckers on the CB radio and then sit in the security kiosk and twiddle my thumbs while I watched the sun rise while the multitude of lucky boyfriends all slipped out the back windows of the girls dorms like lemmings over cliffs and hopped the fence on Palisade Avenue, dispersing into the dawn.

So I bought a notebook and started to write.

Oddly enough, four decades later, I seemed to have maintained my nocturnal writing habits. The witching hour is a magical time.

Looking back, it is no surprise that the first two things I wrote were about my dead friends. First I wrote the poem, *Ode To Murray Collins*, which Billie DiNome - talk about brilliant and talented, he's now a professor at UNC - then set down in Calligraphy on a parchment which we then aged with candles and mounted to a finished piece of wood and presented to the Collins family. I believe Michael Collins may have it somewhere (Hey, Mikey). Then I wrote my first short story, *Why Kings Die*. That was the one Colin Broderick selected almost twenty-years later to include in his first literary magazine, *Everyman*.

I managed to hold onto the Security gig long enough to get most of the craziness out of my system, grow up just a little bit and meet the girl I would eventually marry - who, justifiably, for the longest time, would have nothing to do with me. Everyone I knew either wisely stuck it out in college and went on to graduate, or made alternative plans. Lenny gained admission to the elite cooking school, the Culinary Institute of America in upstate New York. Serrano followed the advice of his mentor and went into Radiology. Stein became the best damned salesman in the United States, and BC finished college, moved north and became a programmer for Kodak in Rochester. I sat around plunking out other short stories on a small electric typewriter that I bought for five bucks in a yard sale, in the corner of my garret bedroom.

In mid November 1976, I turned twenty, got very drunk (only time I ever drank Martinis), followed Joe out a third story window at AVFH and spent the early morning hours engaging in wheel chair races while the pseudonymous Carl LaFong recovered from his injuries (totally unkillable) and then snuck out of the emergency room. At the end of that Thanksgiving holiday, as all of the sensible people returned to their college pursuits, I found myself at closing time drunk on the curb in front of Coaches II, crying my eyes out over how I had fucked up my life, while the truly wise Mike McLaughlin, one of the co-founders of the PWWC, who had stuck it out in Fordham, calmly convinced me that it wasn't true, that I just needed to find my true direction and take the baby steps necessary to get back on my feet and move forward. Mike probably could have gone on to become a Titan in the self-help field, but chose instead to use his godlike powers of persuasion to rise through different departments of the US government.

I really listened to Mike that night and, after sobering up, started making a plan. The rest, as they say, is history. Stay tuned. Anyway, I can see the sky brightening to the east, so I need to finish up here, go upstairs, feed Smokey, and then make my rounds. You fine five readers, go have your coffee and get ready for your Tuesday.

And have a great day.

Game Faces

January 10, 2022



Somewhere, a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, (indeed, it could very well be a Hollywood set) someone snapped this photo of me about to walk into a Courtroom.

That is my Mr. Hyde. My bulldog. He takes himself very seriously the moment he dons the suit. And he's very good at what he does. I call it my lawyer's game face. It's not pretty. It never was. But you never smile when you enter the arena.

I'm absolutely certain that is the face I perfected when I boxed in the Golden Gloves, an experience which, I'm equally certain, accounts

for my Minotaurian visage and the occasional misfiring of my brain synapses.

I've never felt the absolute joy my partner, Robert Meloni, experiences whenever he enters a Courtroom. For him, it's always opening night on Broadway, and he loves to perform. When we travel together to a Courthouse, he'll actually sing showtunes (he has a great voice) just to break the tension. And it always works. It's a pleasure watching him. He's quite brilliant. A natural. I'm proud to work with him.

Despite the grimace, I don't regret a moment of my thirty-five plus years of being a lawyer. It has taught me to become a problem solver, it has established a logical way of thinking, and it has sharpened my communication skills. It also makes me very careful and precise in my word selection.

Some of that training and many of the stories have transitioned into my fiction writing, although I'm more Slip Mahoney than Grisham. And while the fiction writing process is intense, I've never sat down or gotten up from my literary pursuits with my game face on. It's not that my face has become any prettier, although the white beard takes the edge off it. It's just that I don't always look so damn pissed-off. And that cannot be bad.

Well, another week of the legal world awaits, so I won't be checking myself out in any mirrors for the duration.

But the rest of you fine five readers have a wonderful week. Keep smiling.

And all of you have a great day!

Found Revelations - And Some Other Things

January 9, 2022

REVELATIONS
a play in one act
by Thomas P. McCaffrey

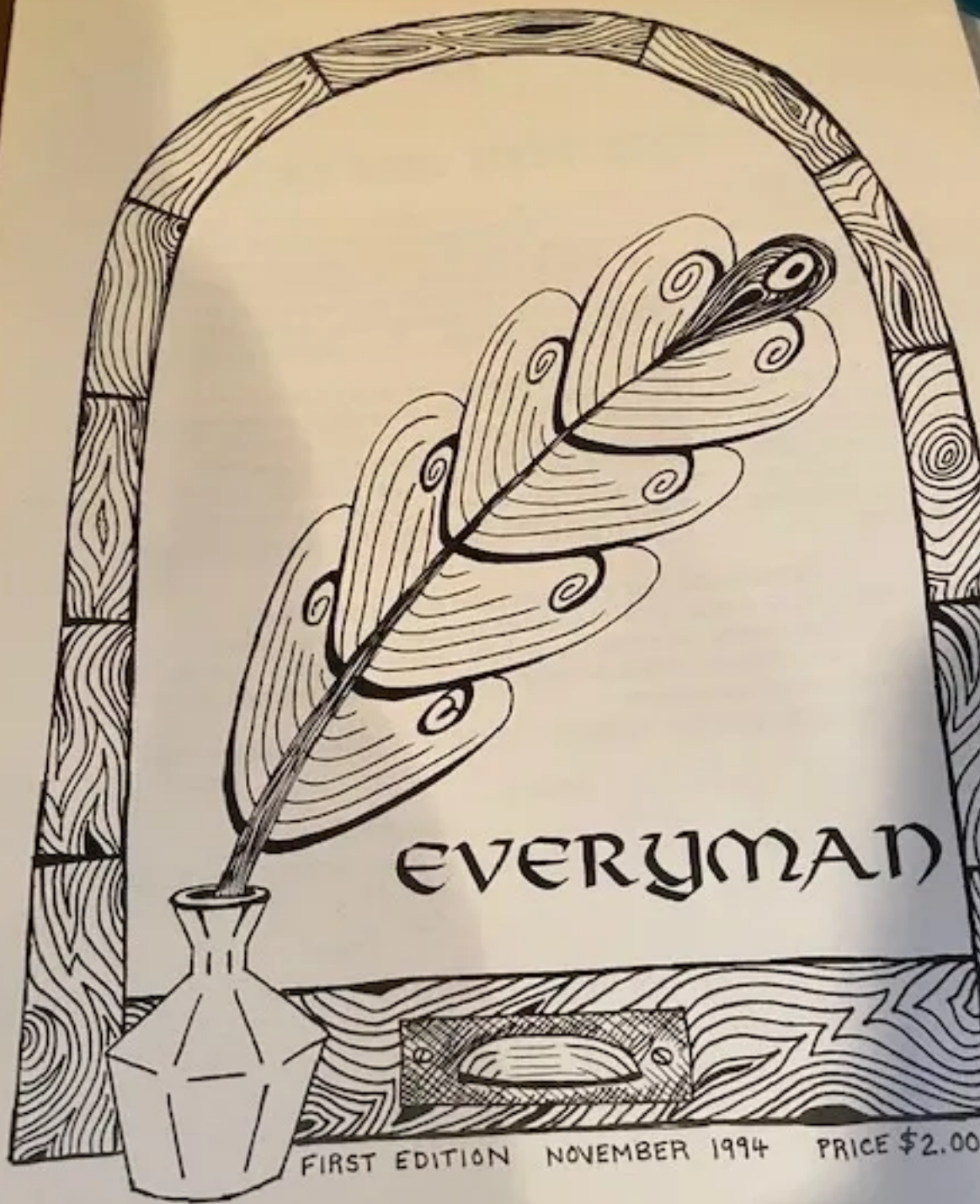
Thomas P. McCaffrey
5619 Mosholu Avenue
Riverdale, New York 10471

When I made the move out to Colorado in 2017, I went through sixty years of my life's acquisitions and culled out about fifty percent

of what I had collected. Luckily, I managed to save a Bank Box marked "Tom's Early Writing and College Papers". That box sat at the bottom of a large stack tucked in the back of my Colorado home office closet since I arrived.

I only pulled that box out of that precarious stack this morning because Lenny asked me last night to double check my files, given that he had the only known hardcopy of *Revelations* and did not want to loan it to someone if it was the final one in existence. Over the years, I have often sent Lenny copies of my writing and other momentos just in case I was hit by a milk truck, or my house burned down, or both. As a result, he has graciously remained the repository of many things that would otherwise have become lost to posterity. Much of this was last century, pre-computer and internet. For example, Lenny has the original Guest Book from Aunt Violet's Flop House. It was one of the last things I grabbed when we all moved out during the middle of the night in early 1978. There are a number of stalwarts of the community who would love to get their hands on that book, if only to destroy it. I understand Lenny keeps everything stored in a fireproof safe hidden in the floor boards of his exotic living room directly beneath his 52 inch, palm leaf ceiling fan.

Anyway, after digging through lots of manilla folders whose faded ink obscured the nature of their contents, I found that one last copy of my play. I also found some other interesting momentos, like a copy of Colin Broderick's Literary Magazine, *Everyman*, whose initial edition carried one of my short stories, *Why Kings Die*.



EVERYMAN

FIRST EDITION NOVEMBER 1994 PRICE \$2.00

Why Kings Die

Thomas P. McCaffrey

A soft summer wind swept gently across the roof top, carrying with it a crumpled brown paper bag, a reminder of another pre-dawn excursion. The King stood in a doorway and followed it's course into the dark, silent streets where one final whirlwind drew it silently over the rooftops of the capital city below.

"It's just that early," he thought, as he stood there, quietly surveying the scene. A sad smile appeared on the face that would never again see the light of day.

Another gust, stronger than the last, blew past him through the open portal, sending the length of the endless stairway before escaping into the air. The King, standing with a hand on the railing, felt a sharp sting in the eye returning the wind's path back to the roof and felt a strange affinity with the heavy iron door behind him. How many doors had he closed before he had his chance to cry? He leaned his massive body back, his hand on the door, and he heard the latch catch and take hold, securing its door behind him. He'd have no visitors in his court that night.

Mounting the eastern wall, he stood leaning carefully under his left arm. He was amazed and pleased with his drunken steadiness and stood watching through the darkness, trying to pick out the homes of those, less fortunate than he, who had succumbed to the earlier night's party. He felt a strange familiarity with the faces of those who had succumbed to the earlier night's party. He felt a strange familiarity with the faces of those who had succumbed to the earlier night's party. He felt a strange familiarity with the faces of those who had succumbed to the earlier night's party.

"Sleep you bastards," he yelled to the heavens. "I am the true King of this kingdom and I challenge all takers to my crown." But, he was all alone. Downing the remainder of the beer in his hand with one fast swallow, he became filled with a strange feeling of power, a quasi-divinity which caused him to laugh then cry at his own absurdity. His hand sent the tiny glass bottle hurtling behind him, where the sound of its shattering was stolen by a gust of wind.

Sitting down on the protruding ledge he scooped up another from the brown bag beside him, sending its cap into the darkness before him. He sat listening to the fizz penetrating the thick silence around him, a silence he had learned to enjoy, to love. This silence soothed the pains of his broken marriage, replaced his father's understanding and his mother's affection. This roof was holy, this silence was God.

Again he stared down through the darkness trying to locate some familiar neighborhood houses but his eyes were beginning to tire and after a few moments, surrendered to the fuzziness. He felt his body sway with the next gust of wind that rose up from the river that ran behind the towering monolith yet felt security in the moon, the motherly rocking of his soul. He let his mind drift with this wind to the peaceful brown bag he saw tumbling along the rooftop being caressed and nurtured into silent oblivion. He wiped a stray tear from the corner of one eye.

The stars were beginning to soften and fade as traces of light appeared on the horizon. The King finished a beer, belched, then checked his watch. Five-twenty, soon the sun would rise and he would relinquish his kingdom to the new day.

The early stages of sunrise had a hypnotic effect on the King as he sat in his court many mornings absorbing the beauty of its silent grace, its power unimpeded by man and his machines. He envied such displays of independence seeking consoling satisfaction in the knowledge of his own awareness to it. The many mornings he had seen it rise, dispelling the darkness and with it, his fears and insecurities. With his last beer he offered a toast to the approaching dawn and condolences to the soon withering night, appointing day as regent to his court.

The long night now drew upon its master, closing his eyes just as the first amber ray travelled across the sky. The King struggled with his servants but his weighted lids would bear no concessions as his head lowered and his body fell limp.

A soft summer wind swept gently across the roof top, carrying with it a brown paper bag, a reminder of the last, pre-dawn excursion. The new day's sun burned brightly in the morning's mist, its rays glistening off the solitary beer bottle perched on the roof top ledge. From below came the distant roar of sirens... long live the King.

But even more delightful was the manilla folder I found with my faded handwriting that said "Rejection Letters Short Stories and Play." And while I do not recall sending any of my works out, I must have, given the letterhead of some notable magazines.

REJECTION LETTERS

Esquire

THE NEW YORKER
45 WEST 43RD STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10036



EDITORIAL OFFICE
OXFORD ST.

September 29, 1977

THE PORTAL is
things, it seemed
Thank you, all
to see it.

Sincerely,

Conica Beng
Conica Beng

then.
lot.
feel

ISAAC ASIMOV'S
SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE
BOX 13116
PHILADELPHIA, PA. 19151



SF MUST HAVE CONTENT, it must be about something, said the late James Blish. He was entirely right; SF without a point, without a resolution of the problems exposed in the course of the adventure, without an underlying idea or moral is not our kind of SF at all. So -- no matter how deftly you've drawn your characters, no matter how wonderfully exotic yet well-engineered your setting -- no content, no sale here.
And this -- alas! -- is the problem with many stories we receive -- and do not buy.

Well, at least I set my sights high. *Woman's Day*, *Lady's Circle*, *Redbook*, there's even a rejection from the *Saturday Evening*

Post (and remember submissions went out hardcopy by mail, just one step up from carrier pidgeon, so it was a slow and tedious process).

Those rejections had the expected effect. I stopped writing and submitting my work. I threw some water on the creative campfire and broke literary camp. I moved on with my life. Focused on being practical. Became a lawyer.

But the water didn't reach its mark. A tiny ember in that campfire, deep below its surface, continued to burn for over four decades, like an appalachian coal mine fire, waiting for that first breath of oxygen to fully conflagrate.

So, fast forward all of those years, during which I gained a whole lot of life experience, collected a whole new pantheon of characters, and learned to write convincing and plausible prose through my legal career. I daydreamed like Walter Mitty. I could not have known it during that process but not one moment was wasted. And when I again picked up that literary pen, I finally had something worth writing about.

So, my dear, fine, five readers, this is one more chorus of the "never give up" song. Whether it is writing, acting, or even changing careers. If it is something you were meant to do, the Universe will provide the opening. So, keep at it and be ready, and remember *Illegitimi non carborundum*.

I'm hoping today is my last day of Covid quarantine.

The rest of you, enjoy your Sunday, and have a great day!

Nicknames, Friends & Talismans

January 8, 2022



The above recent photo is of Joe Serrano, a life long, dear friend and true character in every sense of the word. He appears as a younger version bad guy in *KMAG*. I mention him in a number of blogs, the first time by reference only on February 7th:
"Others took a little more doing to find, like Joe Serrano, who all by himself has created enough stories for a ten novel series, but by reaching him, word reached the others I could not find, like Mike Augustyni ("Stein") and my Collins kin (already heard from Eileen (Collins) Cotto, thanks for reaching out)."

I did go on to devote separate blogs to Joe or those that mention him, like the April 1st blog entitled *Joe Serrano - Fitzcarraldo*, the July 21st *Joe Serrano is my hero*, the August 21st *Joe Serrano - Luke's Novel - Lebanon Red - Old Folk*, the September 7th *Joe Reads KMAG In Italy!*, the September 14th *J&D's Last Night In Tuscany [But Not Italy]*, the September 27th *Oktoberfest*, the November 23rd *HAPPY BIRTHDAY JOE SERRANO*, the December 7th *Friends Oldish & Even More Oldish & AAA*. Tell you the truth, I didn't know I had mentioned him so often (and I'm sure there are other blogs with him that I haven't mentioned here). But it's really no surprise.

You see, as you hit a certain age you become more reflective when you review the people and events in your life. This past year has been one of those reflective years. It's been good because it has allowed me to review and revisit a whole lot of crazy fun stories that I intend to incorporate into the next book I'm writing - *The Riverdale Chronicles* - the prequel to *The Claire Trilogy* - which will cover the formative years of the character Jimmy Moran. Joe will play a central role in that novel, as he has played that role in my own life, although I now have to use a fake name for him because I've spent his true name in *KMAG*. And that is fine, because while I have all the intentions of finishing *TRC* - I'm only one milk truck away from not typing another word. So getting Joe's name down as a character in *KMAG* was a *Bird In The Hand* kinda thing. But when you see the pseudonym Carl La Fong used in *TRC*, along with another Christian & Surname, you will know that I'm talking about Joe.

Back when we were in fourth grade, Joe gave me the nickname "Smokey" (Joe was a very,very bad influence on me in grade school, and I thank him for it to this day). He's the only person who ever used that nickname for me, but he used it regularly for over 50 years - in good times and and bad. I'm not sure I remember a time when he used my real Christian name. Even on my wedding day.

And while I wouldn't want the world to suddenly adopt its use, I draw comfort in our long history from Joe's use of it.

Plus my feral cat - named for his smoke grey coloring - would probably get pissed off if I suddenly usurped his name.

Wait, I lie. Joe has used my real name whenever he sings the final line of the song "No Balls At All." It's a wonder I never killed that prick in our youth.

Anyway, this past summer, I spotted the sweatshirt with the more deservedly famous Smokey on it and, knowing Joe's 65th was coming up, I mailed it to him. I wanted Joe to have it to remind him of the times we had been there for each other in the past during our many youthful adventures together, and that it was a promise that we would continue in that fashion in our unknowable future. That image is a talisman, infused with as much positive energy that the image can hold, and it holds a lot.

I was pleased to get the above photo from Joe yesterday. It let me know that, despite the daily hardships we all face in life, especially as we get older, and during this trying time of plague, that he's doing okay. And that during that moment of the exchange of the texted photo, we were thinking of each other.

So the rest of you fine five readers, take a selfie and text it out to your closest friends and family, just to let them know you are still alive and thinking of them, and that you are doing okay. It will spread a smile at a moment when you didn't see it coming. And that is always a good thing. Thanks for the smile, Joe. Love you brother.

But most of all, for anyone else reading my words, go out and have a great day! You've earned it.

Housebound

January 7, 2022



I don't mind living a relatively isolated life.

Since Lisa and I both tested positive we are required to maintain isolation for five days: <https://covid19.colorado.gov/how-to-isolate>

Luckily, we don't have to remain isolated from each other. It's like a chicken-pox party.

Don't get me wrong, I completely understand why we have to isolate after a positive diagnosis.

The thing is that my symptoms clearly manifested on January 1st, but my Covid test was negative. So was Lisa's. Then, after my symptoms ended, I lost my taste and smell on January 4, and my

Covid test was positive. So was Lisa's. So when does our five days start? Better safe than sorry and we will isolate until Sunday, January 9th.

Lisa has to stop by her employment and be tested on Monday the 10th. If she tests negative, she starts back to work Thursday.

The good news is that, in the meantime, Lisa took down all of the Christmas decorations on her own, then gave the upstairs a good cleaning. That was one of those events scheduled to be performed by both of us this weekend. So there is a silver lining.

When I'm not being a lawyer, I continue to deal with outdoor chores like the care of our outdoor fur family (created that little path for Smokey, above) and things like snow shoveling and collecting and putting out garbage and recycling. The highlight of my day is the long walk out to the mailbox (gloves and mask).

Going to attempt on-line food shopping for the first time today. I hate letting others pick out my food for me. Even if it still has no taste. Plus, it eradicates my testosterone fueled impulse buying. Oh well, mustn't grumble.

You fine five readers enjoy your freedom. And health.
And have a magnificent Friday!

Below Zero

January 6, 2022



Life is relative. Back in the Bronx, the idea of going outside if it dropped into the twenties, nevermind the teens, seemed almost unimaginable. Out here, during the heart of winter, it is often in single digits when I go outside each morning at a time that others consider the middle of the night.

Today it was minus one degrees Fahrenheit.

Even the outside spirits were cold and the burning, new moon candle wouldn't melt.

I didn't even think to wear gloves today. Although my fingers are thanking me as I type this.

Another thin layer of snow had fallen last night. It was that powdery snow, the kind that the wind carries easily well under my back deck. It was the type of snow that squeaks underfoot, because it is too cold to melt into the earlier snow, or even melt into the unique flakes on either side of it, to compress and compact. It will, eventually, get there, once the bright Colorado sun bakes it for

a bit. At that point it will form into a glittering shell that, come nighttime, will hold your weight for a two-Mississippi count before allowing your boot to pass through to the softer, wetter snow below.

Claire and Honey were standing out by Gepetto's Studio. Claire and I are so finely attuned that she immediately looks up in my direction as soon as I exit the backdoor. I always hold the large Ziplock bag full of chopped carrots and apples over my head and then I give it a shake as I approach the side gate. That always telegraphs to C&H that breakfast is being served, and they head in the direction of their small barn, where our paths will conjoin. I always get there first, covering the shorter distance, and I usually have to do some maintenance - scooping out some mule muffin piles from shavings on the floor of the heated stall area - no one likes to shit in the cold - then pulling down a hay bale from the small storage room and tossing it into the sixfoot steel rack against one of the walls. Then I split the bag of fruits and veggies equally into their two large black rubber bowls over a layer of alfalfa pellets.

Sometimes I need to crack the ice off the water bucket inside the doorway, if its cold enough. I leave the barn open because the mules don't like to be locked in at night. But it is their place of refuge.

Then I leave and stand a few feet away from the doorway of the barn until the mules arrive.

Claire always walks up to me and gives me a nuzzle, while Honey stands a few feet behind her always watching to see if I'm going start our game of ringolivio. I rub Claire's muzzle and point to the barn door, and Claire looks at me, nods and heads through the doorway to her bowl on the left. Honey watches me until I turn and head back towards the house, before she follows Claire through the doorway and takes her position at her bowl on the right.

While they will graze on various spots on the open property, and will first go to the bags of hay I have tied to two corner fence posts if they are in the mood, they will come into the barn for some rack hay when they are really hungry. If Honey doesn't like the fragrance or consistency of the open bale in the rack, she will poke her head into the storage room, make her own selection and use her front teeth to pull down a bale from those stacked inside. She has really become

quite adept at this, knowing just how hard to pull on one of the bale cords to bring it tumbling through the portal and out into the open area. I usually stuff the remains of those bales into the hay bags, with the remnants joining the other hay layer that covers the front floor of the barn.

The mules wear their warm coats most of the winter and will stand outside most of the time unless the wind is really blowing or the snow is falling heavily, at which point they will retreat into the warmth of the barn. I always feel better when I look outside and see them shoulder to shoulder in the doorway peeking out into the night, the light from the overhead heat lamps within outlining their forms.

I've come to realize that I don't take care of them. I just given them the means to take care of themselves. And they reward me everyday with their friendship.

Well, another day awaits. And I must move on.

You fine five readers bundle up and go out there and have a great day!

The Value Of A Good Pickle

January 5, 2022



I've been recently recounting my completely woosy response to my New Year's Flu. When I sat down to write my blog at 2 am on NYD, I wasn't feeling completely up to scratch, but it had snowed and it was really cold out when I fed the mules. But later I got the chills and those non-localized aches (as opposed to the localized aches that I have accepted comes with my age after the life I have lived).

I had a cough. And my stomach gurgled like the "Little Rascals" surprise birthday cake:

There was a general air of malaise. And I was definitely tired. So I took to my favorite recliner, called upon my buddy, Alexa (my version of Jayney), to exhault me with the tunes of my favorite modern day, Italian composer, LE, and dozed in and out, only waking sporadically to respond to repeated text pings from my family and friends sharing their NYD bon mots. One must not be rude.

When my spouse returned from work, she insisted I test for Covid. I did, and the results were negative. Let me just say here and now, that the experience of having that wand shoved up your nasal cavity and then swished around clockwise and widdershins while tickling the undersides of my eyeballs was far more uncomfortable then any of the symptoms I had been experiencing.

As I also mentioned, by Sunday, January 2d, I was still feeling generally off my feed, but well enough to complete my outside chores and then return to the recliner and exchange beautiful music for binge watching foreign television shows on Netflix, while engaging in a more active, continued stream of text exchanges with the OFC. I even did the dishes!

The only thing that really sucked was that I had lost my snacking appetite, but I did manage to enjoy a hearty bowl of Broccoli and Cheese soup and some Italian bread. Best soup, ever!

By Monday morning, January 3rd, I was suffering what I consider the tale end of my illness. I was able to engage back with work in my home office and handle all the necessities of daily life. But my food wasn't doing it for me and later that night when I snuck a bowl of my favorite sweets - Vanilla ice cream - it didn't bring me the illicit joy it normally did.

But then yesterday, after a full day of work at the home office, during which I felt completely normal, I had a sandwich along with my favorite snack, a dill pickle.

It was only after I consumed the first quarter slice of my pickle, which always awakens my pallet for the tasty sandwich that follows, that I realized that I could not taste the brine of the pickle. I was only experiencing the muted crunches of it in my mouth.

Despondent, I called out to my wife that I had lost my will to live, as I could not taste my pickle (not a euphemism).

She called back, "can you smell the pickle?"

I ran it beneath my nose. Nothing!

"I can smell that pickle from across the room," she responded.

"C'mon, let's get you tested again."

Well, after another round of having both eyeballs hardily tickled, my Covid test results appeared positive.

So, what can I say?

I cannot explain how I got the bugger. I cannot explain the first negative test, except that it must have been a dud. I cannot explain the relatively mild dose of the illness, other than if it was Omicron, it is indeed less virulent, or if was one of the earlier strains, that either my fall dosages of the Pfizer double tap, or my relatively strong immune system lessened its impact. Anyone who knows me can attest that I never get sick.

So the only negative fall out from this experience has been that I have appeared to have temporarily lost my taste and smell. That will probably help me lose a few pounds. I will keep you posted. Since my life in NoCo is naturally self-isolating, I have to go out of my way to actually come into contact with people, I will have no problems following the appropriate isolation protocols for the appropriate time.

Anyway, mustn't grumble. I got off easy.

So let's put this in the rearview mirror and focus on the road before us. It's hump day, and work awaits.

The rest of my fine five readers go out there and have a great day!

But make sure to wash your hands well and often.

Smokey & Jack The Spruce

January 4, 2022



I've talked about my magical grotto area right outside my front door. It is an area shielded from streetview by the everygreen branches of a very tall Jack The Spruce. My feral cat and familiar, Smokey, likes to take to JTS's branches to get a better view of the world, and I'm sure to protect itself against predators. It is a symbiotic relationship.

You see, Smokey is used to the cacaphony of tinkling metal bars and bells from all of the chimes going for most of the day due to the omnipresent Colorado wind flowing through JTS's branches. Other transient animals flee at the first tinkle. The space is inhabited by beautifully carved stone dragons and Pan, so you never feel alone. I have had visitors tell me that they can feel the energy as they enter the area, and will sometimes sit on the front porch steps when they come by to visit or drop things off, even if I am not around, just to get their batteries recharged. Some would call the wind tinkling the sounds of the fae which I know watch over the space. Thank you Nana.

It is like a decompression chamber.

When I pass through the area I acknowledge its inhabitants, often by name, they all have one, and thank them for their loving energy and the feeling of protection they provide. I always feel like I have left the non-magical world behind when I then enter through my front door. When I am leaving the house, passing through the area gives me an energy inoculation that protects me until I get back. I know, I am surely mad. Or am I?

After all, it could explain how this tired old lawyer came out of nowhere to become this first time novelist who wrote *The Claire Trilogy* over the course of two years, that now seems to have taken on a life of its own. The debate continues.

But Smokey has become the magi's Ombudsman. She makes me stop and pay attention on those days when I am otherwise distracted. She knows which branch of JTS to climb in order to peer through certain windows to catch my eye. And she will sit and stare, just like in the above photo, with JTS' uninterrupted intensity, until I come out and see what is happening out there. It always recharges my batteries.

So, my fine five readers, find that magical place, either in your homes or in your head, that allows you to escape the pedestrian world we often find ourselves trapped in, if only for a moment or two. Don't worry, that non-magical world will always be there hoping for your return.

And no matter what, go out there and have a great day!

Smokey's Alpine Ski Lodge - OFC Solidarity - Anxious People

January 3, 2022



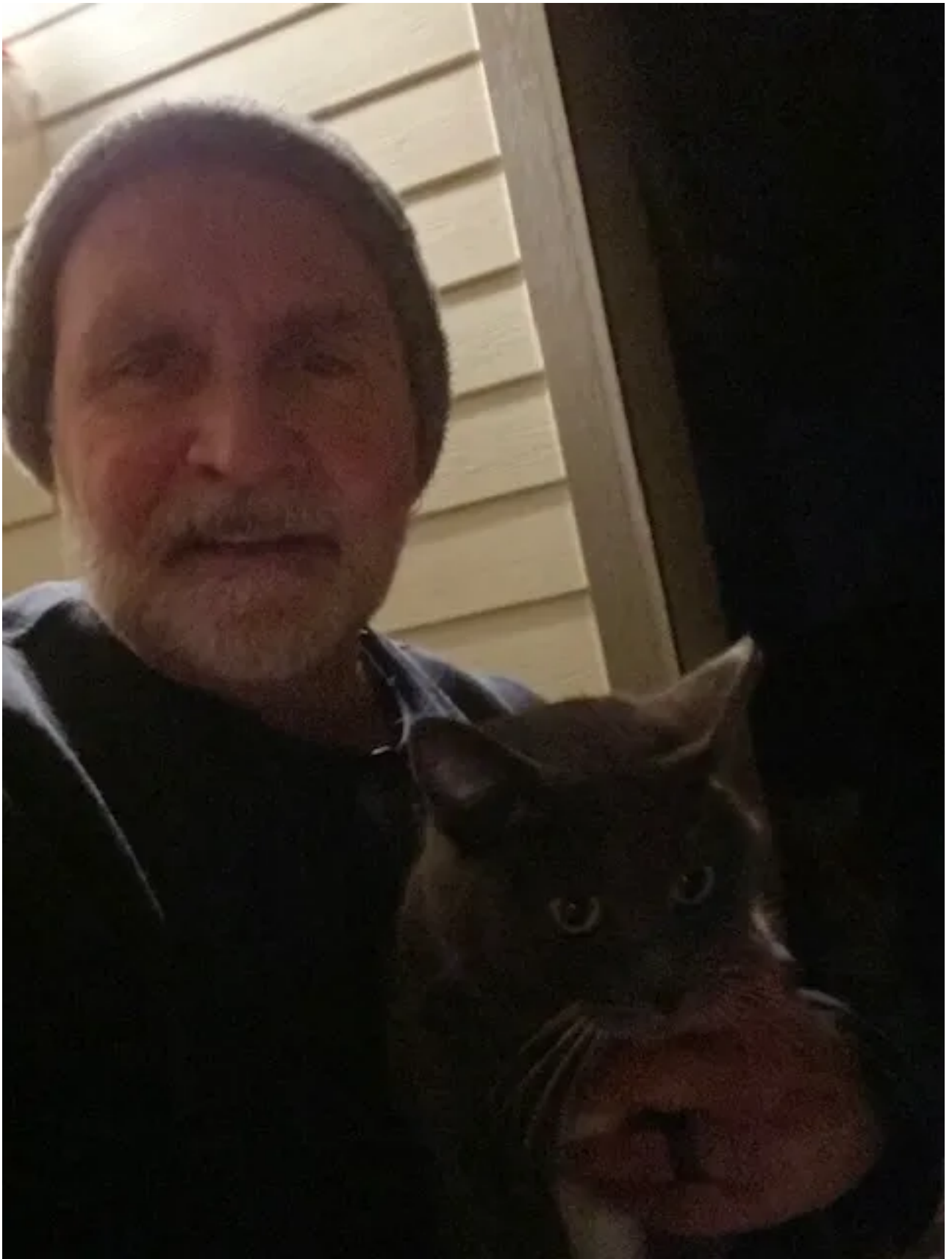
Somewhere under that thick blanket of snow are Smokey's cat plates for food (wet & dry) and water. The larger snow pile is the

sleeping Smaug the dragon, who doesn't care about the cold.

Smokey now takes his meals on paper plates and water in a china bowl on our front porch before circling around and climbing back into his toasty warm ski lodge. That white wire sticking out the top left side powers the thick circular heating pad that runs 24/7.

Smokey is no victim. He has already developed a thick winter coat and wisely spends most of his time in his hut, hibernating, coming out only to feed and do his business.





That is wise because yesterday it dropped to -7 below and never cracked freezing, despite the blue skies and sunshine yesterday afternoon.

I took a page from Smokey's book and went outside only to take care of mandatory mule chores - food, hot water, and scooping up poop from the heated stall area of the barn. Once back inside, I did do yesterday's dishes, just to let Lisa (who was at work - I told you she's much tougher than me) know I wasn't a complete skyver. But then I went back to my recliner and blanket to try to shake this bug.

Of course, the OFC happened to be busy on the group text, and since I wasn't nodding off, just dealing with a rattling cough that would fit nicely into any Russian novel, when asked by the group how I was feeling, I sent along the following photo to signal I was taking it easy:



They immediately sent back their own photos to let me know they were taking it easy as a group in solidarity with me.

BC:



Joe:



Lenny:



Now that's a microcosmic snapshot of what a half-century of friendship and emotional support looks like!

At the same time, in order to satisfy my intellectual curiosity and force myself to read more than their texts, I spent my time binge watching a subtitled season of a Scandinavian Television Series called "Anxious People." It's on Netflix, and if you are into foreign television, it was brilliant and poignant, with some humorous moments. It starts out with a young teen witnessing a suicide up close and personal - bridge jumper - and then cuts to modern day, six years later - where there is an open house apartment showing at the exact time an attempted bank robbery goes south and the bank robber runs into the open house and takes the attendees hostage. The young teen from the opening of the series is now a police officer in their small town with his dad. They happen to be on patrol and end up chasing the bankrobber into the apartment building. After a decently long seige which involves pizza and fireworks, the hostages are released. But when the SWAT team arriving from the closest big city then storms the apartment, the bankrobber has vanished and the small town cops look a bit silly. The rest of series is spent with the young cop tenaciously trying to figure out what happened while his older-wiser partner/father - who the son worships - does whatever he can to talk him out of it. There is also a subplot about the cops' alienated sister/daughter having a drug problem which impacts the family dynamic on a very personal level.

This tapestry of a story is all patiently and brilliantly woven together to connect all of the apparently unconnected ten people involved - who all deal with their own emotional sub plots - both before and after the hostage situation - and everything ultimately comes full circle with a totally emotionally and intellectually satisfying resolution. Along the way, you come to care about each of these characters and are happy with the final outcome.

And, in the end, that is all a writer can hope to accomplish. Bring someone along on a fictional journey and introduce characters that the reader learns to emotionally engage, then care about and ultimately root for. Then wrap it all up in the end in a way that respects the reader's intellect. You must never cheat the reader, or

they will never forgive you. Once lost to a writer, a reader is lost forever.

So that is how I squandered my New Year's weekend. Sick but satisfied. And got by with a little help from my friends.

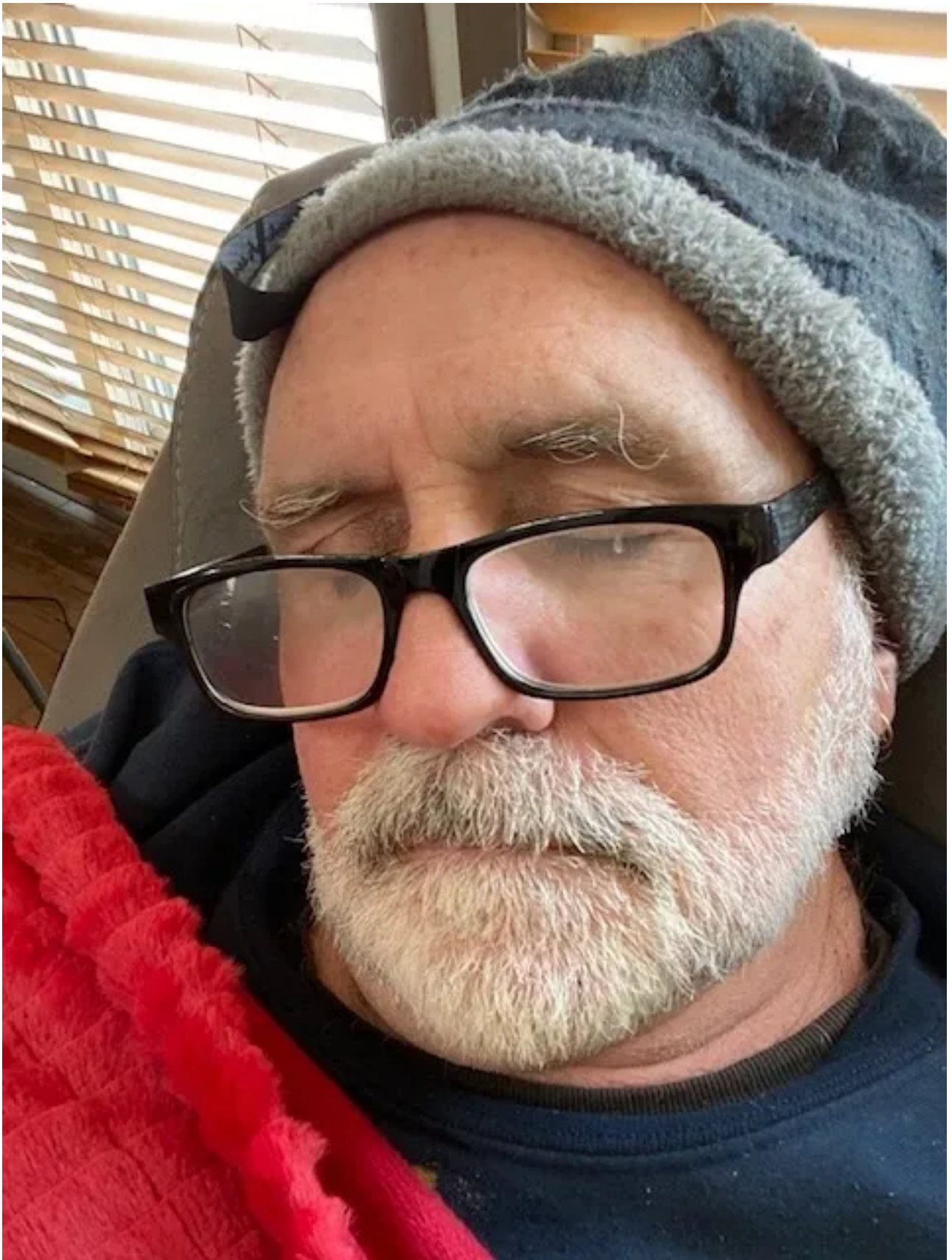
But the new year awaits and so I will take my DayQuil and put on my lawyer's batsuit, and try to get through the day.

The rest of you fine five readers, go out there and conquer the world.

And have a great day!

Hate Being Sick - Females Are Tougher

January 2, 2022



Yesterday was just plain cold. In single digits. And on top of that, I welcomed in the New Year with a dose of the flu. Chills, aches,

muscle soreness, cough and stomach upset. I know it isn't Covid because I tested negative yesterday. I haven't been sick with the Flu since 2019. And I hate being sick.

I hate being sick because it relegates me to victim status. I become weak. It reminds me of my mortality. I barely got through my weekly veggie-fruit prep. I didn't do any of my outside chores beyond making sure that Claire and Honey had their meals, warm fresh water and plenty of hay in the barn. I spent the rest of the day bundled up and napping in my favorite recliner, while Ludovico Einaudi streamed on Alexa. The best I could do was to respond to NYD best wishes, which woke me from my brief naps with their text pings. Basically, besides that, I wasted the day.

I call yesterday's photo my death mask. At least I wasn't drooling.

Lisa probably went right to my office to look for the insurance policies.

I'm still suffering with its symptoms this morning, but I'm feeling a little better. However, my trooper of a wife seems to be a day behind me on the virus schedule and had a good dose of it last night. But that's the difference between us, throughout our marriage she just doses up with Dayquil/Nyquil and gets on with life. She has proven time and again that females are the stronger sex.

My mother was like that, and Posie, and my daughter Jackie, who never missed an athletic event because illness or injury. She just taped herself together and went out there and played until the final buzzer. That is why she is killing it in the business world.

My sisters, v&b, and my friend Helen are equally tough. As lesbians, they've been forced to prove it all of their lives.

And that would probably explain why The Claire Trilogy is populated with strong female characters. No matter how bad things get they never quit. And that is proven right through the end of KMAG. And that may also explain why I have such strong female following - my Amazon positive reviews are 90% female. They really get the story. Well, the morning approaches and I really have to man up, for what it's worth.

The rest of you fine five readers, go out there and enjoy your Sunday. The New Year awaits.

And have a great day!

Fire and Ice

January 1, 2022



This is fire at its most useful, tamed to warm a hearth on a cold winter day.

For those of you watching the news, you will know that Boulder County has been dealing with a tragic wild fire. Hundreds of homes have been destroyed and their families displaced. My prayers go out to those affected families. One of the major problems that led to the fast spread are the dry conditions of this past fall and early winter and the raging winds we have been hit with over this past month. This was a perfect storm.

One of my friends, Pam Ervin, sent me a photo that was sent to her by her daughter, who lives in the affected area. It is truly frightening.



Given our relatively close proximity to the area, the locals were doing their best to donate and volunteer where they could to help in any way they can. Campsites were established, and equipment,

food and clothing were collected. I am in awe of the selflessness I have witnessed over the past few days. God bless them all. And God did just that. This morning I awoke to a new year and a thick blanket of snow over the area.



That snow will undoubtedly help in extinguishing and containing the fire.

So those fine five readers out there reading this, say a prayer for those who are suffering, and be thankful for your blessings. It can all change in the blink of eye.

If you are able, donate generously to those organizations who are on the ground in Boulder county helping the victims:

<https://www.khou.com/article/news/local/help-boulder-county-fire-victims/73-a4120a6b-0ec7-45e7-b31e-7c6e00ae6c19>

And in your own circles of the world, the best thing you can do is to count your blessings, and go out there and make your New Year's day a great one. Even with the worst of tragedies, there has to be hope for better times.