

I Love Book Stores

July 31, 2021



Because I am a male, I have a natural abhorrence to browsing. That is why I and so many of my brothers, blood

and otherwise, hate shopping with our women. We are outcome determinant. If we go into a clothing store seeking a pair of blue jeans, we leave the store ten minutes later with a pair of blue jeans. If we go into a Super Walmart with a list of items, we come out with what's on that list, and no more. Same is true when shopping in Home Depot, or Ace. Ask what aisle something is in, go there, find the item, and check out. There are some aisles in SW and HD I have never entered, never mind walked down. In stark contrast, there are times, when I am following my wife around a store, that I am ready to shoot myself after five minutes. Clean up in aisle three!

But when it comes to book stores, throw that all out the window. To me, book stores are like a labyrinth to be explored. My eyes will scan every shelf in every department. I will stop and lift a book from the shelf and flip through its pages, knowing I have no intention of ever buying it. I can spend hours sitting on one of the round step stools that are dispersed throughout the aisles, reading sections of a random book.

Back at the end of the last century, when I was working at Gold Farrell & Marks, my best friend in the firm, Bob Mulvey (RIP), and I would often spend our lunch hours (when we weren't playing pool) at the B&N on 17th street, browsing for 3/4 of an hour and then gulping down some star bucks coffee while we discussed some of the books we had found. Bob was a genius and one of the most well read barbarians I had ever known. I learned more about literary criticism just listening to him mumble across the wobbly wooden table than in all of my years in higher education. And he always ended our lunches by telling me the most inappropriate and offensive joke I had ever heard, because he was a very complex and funny man. I miss him dearly.

Further back in antedeluvian times, when I was studying for law school exams, and later for the NY Bar, I used to find a table deep in the stacks of the Duane Library, located in the FU Bronx Campus, just so I would be surrounded by books that were not law related. There were two books that stick out in my memory that I would love to thumb through just because they distracted me: Crab Antics, by Peter Wilson, a sociological study about Carribean islanders; and a biography about Cotton Mather, a puritan minister that, *inter alia*, participated in the Salem Witch Trials. I can visualize the titles on these two book covers as I sit here writing this. Both were dark colored (I'm weirdly color blind) and the CA cover was cloth, while the CM biography was leather. I can even recall their musty smell. I had no real interest in either subject, but their existence reaffirmed that there was something else in the world that mattered besides the law.

Anyway, fast forward to this past week. There is the coolest used book store in Longmont, Colorado called **The Used Book Emporium** on Main Street, in the downtown area just above 3rd on the eastern side of the street. It's old school, like the kind you would find in lower Manhattan before the fall. The owners displayed a copy of *The Wise Ass* on the top shelf of their rotating end case devoted to local NoCo writers. That is the first wooden shelf in any bookstore anywhere, where I was able to see a tangible copy of TWA displayed. I am forever in their debt.

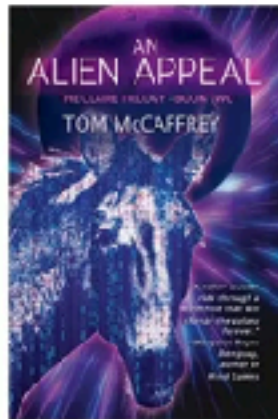
Fell Off The Chart Wagon

July 30, 2021

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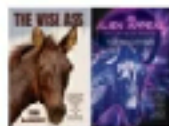
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This title will be released on **December 23, 2021**.



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I'm weak. I'm going to start a 12 step program for new writers. "Hi, I'm Tom, and I'm a chartaholic!"

This morning I woke up to find that TWA is holding strong at ##3, 11, 16 and 20 on Kindle's Humorous Dark Comedy, Psychic Suspense, Legal Thrillers (books), Legal Thrillers (Unlimited) charts, respectively.

But what was even more of a rush was seeing that AAA had risen on the Kindle Humorous Dark Comedy list to #24, and maintains its extended run as Kindle's *#1 New Release in Humorous Dark Comedy*

Thank you everyone who continues to support The Claire Trilogy. I am truly humbled and honored.

Thank you Reagan Rothe and BRW for taking the chance on this old dog.

Thank you readers for buying my books.

Thank you reviewers for taking the time and making the effort to post your reviews. Each one helps me along on my literary journey. Plus I enjoy reading them because my *raison d'etre* as a writer is to provide someone out there in the universe with a pleasurable, if brief, respite from the everyday (fill in the blank).

Thank you my old friends - BC, Joe, Lenny & Eileen (Stein remains MIA) -- who continuously bust my balls on a daily basis to keep me grounded. The Riverdale Chronicles are looming. Pay back is a bitch!

Now its time to make those final editorial tweaks to KMAG, finalize the cover and get those cover blurbs put to bed.

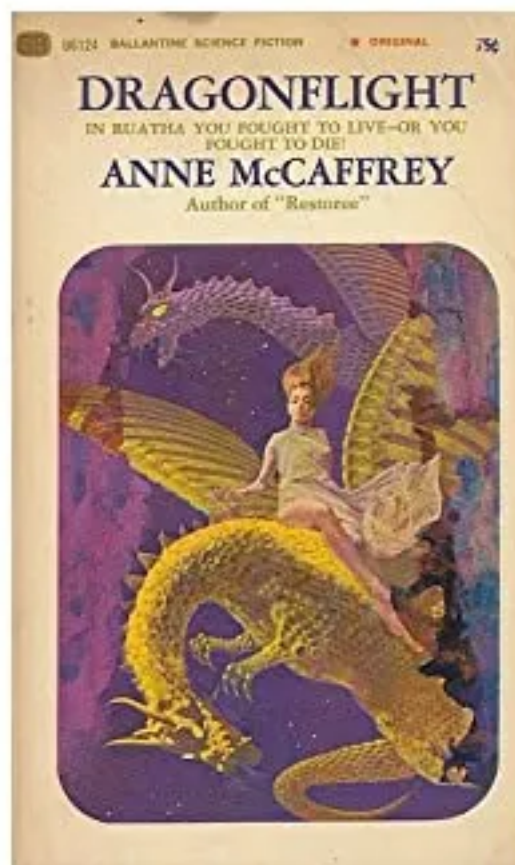
Everything along those lines is moving along in a timely manner. I cannot wait to see all three novels up on Amazon.

Still cannot believe my luck.

Have a great Friday!

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARY, DRAGONS & DREAMERS

July 29, 2021



Today is my oldest child's birthday, having arrived two years to the day after my nuptials. Both events were life changing. So much has happened since then. My birthday wish today and every day is that all of my son's dreams come true. You see, he is, among other things, also a writer. He is much better at the craft than I, and has lived a far more exciting and interesting life than I have. He has

written a couple of novels which I have read and they are amazing. He just finished a third novel which, my credibly sourced rumor has it, is outstanding (my son keeps his artistic creations close to his vest). He insists on making his own way as a writer, so whatever publisher is canny enough to snap him up will be very lucky indeed. Happy birthday Luke. Again, may all your dreams come true.

Anyone who knows me also knows that life with me is a mixed bag of tricks. I am equal parts funny, cute, annoying and petulant. I am the ultimate procrastinator, but once yoked, can plow as many fields as need tilling. I'm great at solving problems because I am even more talented at creating them. So my poor wife has not had an easy time of it. But she has hung in there for over four decades, through thick and thin. She has been my muse. And I love her for it.

Happy Anniversary honey (my wife, not my mule). I love you.

Back when I lived with Joe and Lenny at Aunt Violet's flop house, I used to salvage furniture I would find discarded on garbage days during my trips through Westchester using the school bus van I used to drive as one of my part-time jobs.

Another man's treasure. One of those pieces was a bookshelf. My library collection at the time was eclectic, but there was definitely a fantasy bent to it. So along with my paperback copies of *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, and some Vonnegut and *The Dharma Bums*, was a beaten up old book by an Author named **Anne McCaffrey**, called ***Dragonflight***. That's it above. You see, I have always loved dragons.

Anyway, Lisa was there when I used to stare at my well worn copy of *Dragonflight* sitting on the top shelf, focusing on the oversized name "McCaffrey" on its binding, and imagining out loud what it would feel like to see one of my

novels on some bookshelf in some bookstore right beside it. I was the ultimate dreamer, with very little tangible to show for my musings. Indeed, I could only point to a series of screw ups on my resume. I had pretty much failed at anything I attempted. For the life of me, I cannot understand what Lisa saw in me back then. If I was Lisa's dad, I would have kicked my ass and told me to bugger off. Fast forward over four decades to November of 2020. I remember the day that TWA went live on Amazon for presales. I must have searched every Amazon in every country just to look at it up there on the computer screen with other books. I was that four year old at Christmas. I couldn't get enough of it. When I finally clicked on Amazon India, there, on the modern, digital, world-wide bookshelf, a book below TWA, was a copy of ***A Gift of Dragons*** by **Anne McCaffrey**. Dreams do come true. And Anne McCaffrey is the gift that keeps on giving. A couple of days back, on July 27th, I spotted an Amazon review by "Avid Reader" who lives in Issaquah, Washington, and who wrote as follows:

"I was looking for books by Todd McCaffrey (son of Anne McCaffrey of Dragon Riders of Pern), when I ran across this book by Tom McCaffrey. It sounded fun, so I took a chance. Am I glad I did. It's absolutely delightful, and I can't wait for the sequel (out in December 2021). Even though there are some crazy goings on, everything, no matter how outlandish, makes sense and seems quite reasonable. READ THIS BOOK, and enjoy!"

So the juxtaposition of Anne & Todd's writing to my own not only led to another sale of TWA, but resulted in a great review. Thank you Anne McCaffrey for showing up and remaining in my life.

Since I am on the subject of dragons, let me give a shout out to another new writer's Young Adult genre book, who the brilliant writer **Margaret Reyes Dempsey** (*Mind Games*) turned me onto. ***Bradley's Dragons*, by Patrick Matthews**, is the Creative Child Magazine 2020 Book of the Year Award Winner. So, for any of you readers out there that may know a young dreamer who is looking for some creative inspiration, or who may just love dragons, may I suggest that you turn that youngster onto this novel. Who knows, forty years from now, they may be thanking you.

Don't forget to check out **Christy Cooper Burnett's** 99 cents Kindle sale on ***No Way Home***, starting today.

PS: During my walk this morning I learned that today is also the birthday of the oldest daughter of my dear friend **Joe Serrano** (who appears as a character in *KMAG*). **So happy birthday Nicole** (7/29), who has grown into an amazing young lady who is a Nurse Practitioner in the Cardiothoracic Unit at SUNY Upstate Medical Center. Your dad is rightfully proud of you as a person and as a professional. Have a great day!

No Way Not To Buy No Way Home for 99 Cents

July 28, 2021



For one week only, beginning tomorrow, Thursday, July 29th, the ebook version of my friend Christy Cooper Burnett's first novel in her time traveling series, *No Way Home*, goes on sale for 99 cents. The good news is that this is an economical introduction to the series, whose lovely second book, *Finding Home*, came out in June and whose third installment, *Escaping Home*, comes out this November. If you enjoy the engaging personality that drives the character Jimmy Moran, you will equally enjoy his female literary counterpart, Christine Stewart, who is equally willing to break the rules of her society, and do the right thing, in

the name of love and family. Consider *No Way Home* as the seamless introduction to a lot of pleasurable reading hours ahead, because CCB has a lot of stories left to tell. But as with all writers with independent publishers, word of mouth is key to survival and success. So when you do buy and read this book, please leave a glowing review on Amazon. They are a writer's lifeblood. You can find *NWH* on sale on Amazon and Black Rose Writing. https://www.amazon.com/Books-Christy-Cooper-Burnett/s?rh=n%3A283155%2Cp_27%3AChristy+Cooper-Burnett. Please tell your friends.

So yesterday I stopped by the Berthoud Public Library and dropped off five new copies of *TWA* (each inscribed to the BPL on the inside back cover) for the enjoyment of our town's more discerning readers. The sweet librarian at the front desk immediately volunteered how she had read *TWA* and really enjoyed it. She also mentioned that she had just checked out the one copy they had minutes before to a woman who was looking to sponsor it for a local bookclub. Funny how I just missed meeting Debi at the Library. My small world gets even smaller in Berthoud, and I mean that in a good way. So any member of Debi's book club who wants to check out *TWA*, borrow away! Of course, if you like it and decide to buy your own paperback (or if you really want a keepsake, the hardcover edition) copy, I will inscribe it personally, just reach out to me through this website and I will respond ASAP. And don't forget to leave that Amazon review!

In closing I want to give a shout out to my Law Partner and dear friend Robert (Never Bobby) Meloni (who appears by name as the mafia lawyer in *TWA*), but not for his prodigious legal mind. Robert, who has the woodworking skills of an old world Italian artisan (not that kind - but maybe in a past

life) just completed a major renovation of his Upper West Side Manhattan kitchen. He sent me a video of the end result and I can attest that it is absolutely stunning. White cabinetry and dark soapstone countertops throughout. Well done Bobby! Whoops.

Berthoud Public Library & Dee's Memorial Luncheon

July 27, 2021



The Berthoud Community Library District is located on Welch Avenue on the eastern end of town, on the other side of the railroad tracks, close to the Post Office and Side Tracked. I've never actually been in the building but have driven by it a number of times. Well now I finally have a reason to visit. Yesterday, I received a letter from a local book lover named Debi informing me that she is nominating TWA for the October monthly read for her book club. I am thrilled. Thank you Debi. However, one of the requirements for the nomination is that the BPL have 3-4 copies of the book available for its patrons. I will take care of that sometime this morning.

Also learned yesterday that there will be a memorial luncheon gathering of the friends to celebrate the life of Donna Noreen Krauer ("Dee") on August 1 (Lúnasa) between 12-4 pm, at 138 Eleanor Drive, Mahopac NY. RSVP via Text @ 845-803-5421. One must be careful using the term "I will be there in spirit" at such a gathering, given the number of

mediums and spirits that will be attending, and I am certain that Dee will be there in that ethereal form and will make her presence known. So I will leave it at "I will be thinking of Dee and all of the attendees during those hours" so as to not jinx myself and manifest the lumbering milk truck. Vaya con Dios Dee.

Unfortunately, I have other matters to attend to this morning before sun up, so I will end this here. Have a great day!

An Occassional Lazy Sunday Is A Must!

July 26, 2021



Yesterday was a lazy day thank God (who institutionalized the Seventh Day practice). We went to Grandpa's for breakfast and took care of some errands in the morning. When we returned we were happy to see Claire and Honey at their guard posts at the top of the side paddock, right behind the warning signs. We don't want any excuses for those willing to test the organic security system.

Lisa then went into town while I gave Claire a good brushing and she allowed me to put this smelly liquid that one of our horse neighbors recommended on her legs, back and tail to keep the annoying flies away. Now I've just got to keep Blue from licking it off her. I'm going to force Honey to put up with some of the same later today when we halter her for her medicine. I cannot imagine how annoying that must be for them, especially now where there are flies everywhere (actually call it fly season in horse country). The two mules hung out most of the day under my deck where there is shade and an overhead fan for some comfort.

It was so hot outside, and we were dragging a bit from last night's culture infusion, so we opted for an afternoon of air-conditioned binge watching *The Cook of Castamar*. A Spanish period drama based on a novel by Fernando Nunez (Love seeing novels turned into film - Bruce/Marisa take note). If you don't mind subtitles (and I do not mind), this was a great story. Love, Intrigue, family, friendship, murder, honor, class systems and sex. Can't beat it. Highly recommend it. Its a guilty pleasure. Given Lisa's own Castilian lineage (Grandpa Joaquim "Joe" Marrero) it was refreshing to see that the Spanish could be more devious than the Irish, with far nicer clothing.

Anyway, another week of legal work awaits. Have a great day.

Dee's Passing - A Midsummer's Night Dream

July 25, 2021



Yesterday I was sad to learn of the passing of a psychic friend of Helen Lalousis, and an acquaintance of mine, who

I only knew as Dee. She was the first psychic in a long list of psychics that Helen introduced me to over the past few decades. I met Dee a few times when accompanying Helen to Dee's Rockland County home for visits or readings. She was a true character. Tiny in stature, I can only remember seeing her sitting behind her reading table, shuffling her tarot cards, or peaking out behind the top of a livingroom chair or some other furniture that obscured her full body visage. I never saw her move about her home, but I did see her in different spots in her home. I'm not even sure she had a lower half of her body. She was one of those "suddenly just there" kind of characters, that invoke that Kramer stuttering shocked response. She reminded me in size, appearance, voice and stature of Zelda Rubinstein, the diminutive actress who played the psychic in Poltergeist.

I once accompanied my daughter - herself a powerful intuitive (thank you Nana - although Lisa is also intuitive) - for a reading by Dee, and that she was amazingly spot on - including about the pending arrival of my totally unexpected grandson (Love you Lucian). I also remember Dee drawing a map by freehand in a matter involving a missing person, that I later matched up identically -- like an overlay -- with an aerial google map photograph of an area that Dee had never been to. Helen turned it over to the police. Dee also predicted, before my book had even been picked up by BRW, that TWA was going to be a major hit and a movie.

So far, so good. If anyone out there knows Bruce Willis or Marisa Tomei, please hand them a copy of my novel. Dee, one last favor . . . fingers crossed! Dee was absolutely amazing.

Most importantly though, is that Dee is/was a dear friend of countless years and a psychic counselor of Helen's. As Dee got older and her body began to fail, Helen was one of a

close circle of friends that consistently and regularly looked in on and looked after this aging mystic. Helen was at the hospital yesterday when Dee passed at approximately 4 pm (EST). In purely Dee dramatic style, she passed on the apex night of the Buck [Full] Moon, a name given to this lunar cycle by the indigenous Americans because it's when a Buck's antlers are at their full size. The full moon is a time for culmination of processes, which allow us to achieve the fruits of our labor. It's a time of psychic clarity. Well Dee's time on this plain had reached its amazing culmination, and it will be for those she leaves behind, like Helen, to achieve whatever clarity in her own life that Dee's counseling provided her. I added an extra candle overnight to commemorate Dee's passing. Vaya con Dios. And Dee, if you are listening, keep an eye on Helen, she needs your comfort and guidance now more than ever.

Last night Lisa and I attended a performance of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream* in the way it was written for, in an open air roundabout theater at Colorado University in Boulder. It was truly magical. I love live theater and had seen a performance by this particular professional acting troop of *Twelfth Night* pre-pandemic, so I was really looking forward to this staging of this play, which I had never seen performed live. It was spectacular. Anyone who lives in the NoCo area that enjoys live theater should support this summer series. I had purchased four tickets for this event in early spring, because they sell out quickly. It was meant to be a birthday gift for my sweet sister, but due to other conflicts (full social schedule of the Denver elite), she and her significant other, my darling sister-in-law b (the inspiration for Tessa), could not make it, so I was left with two extra seats. Rather than waste them, Lisa suggested that I check with the box-office to see if there was anyone

looking for seats, and voila, I met and gave the two tickets to a wonderful and interesting couple -- Greg and Anne Greenstreet (that's right, a distant relation to Sydney Greenstreet of Maltese Falcon fame) -- who decided on a whim at the last minute that they would see if they could attend the sold out play. They are both very charming software engineers by profession but more importantly the delightful Anne Greenstreet is also a talented painter who was kind enough to show us photos of some of her impressive work. Annegreenstreet.com. The meeting and sharing of live theater with such a fabulous couple enhanced the total experience.

Anyway, we didn't get home until after eleven, well beyond our bedtimes, so I slept in until 4 am this morning. A first!

Could those Circadian rhythms finally be shifting? I will keep you posted.

Happy Birthday Veronica

July 24, 2021



My eldest sibling, Veronica, had about two years of peace in her world before her other four siblings, all boys, started arriving over the span of six years. Can't deny it, V has been the archetypal best big sister one could ever ask for.

She has been my life-long confidant. I do not have the energy or space to list all of the times she bailed my ass out of trouble over the years. She is the basis for the character Bonnie in The Claire Trilogy.

When we were young, my family usually made a big thing out of her birthday, because she was the only girl and it was the only mid-summer excuse for a childrens' party, so we

could often celebrate it outdoors (the Ginger being a contrarian, was the only spring birth, the rest of us were fall babies).

Of course, it was V's fourteenth birthday celebration that was the catalyst of the one time my family, including Spaghetti, got lost for three hours in the Maine Woods fifty-three years ago.

For about a decade, mid-sixties to mid-seventies, every summer my family used to pack up everything not nailed down in our Bronx home, including whatever animals were cohabitating with us at the time, and jam everything into whatever station wagon (the great great great grandparent of modern SUVs) that my dad was driving, along with four adults and five kids, and travel hundreds of miles along tortuous back roads through New England to Fitzwater Farm, our summer rental in Belgrade Lakes Maine. That's a photo of the Fitzwater Farmhouse, above.

I will regale you with the many wonderful adventures we shared in our youth at FF in future blogs. I mentioned in one earlier blog about the time Lenny came with us and frightened the crap out of the hitchhiker with his blind driver act, but I want to focus today on my sister's 14th Birthday. Posie (the then matriarch) and my mother, Vera, were preparing an elaborate feast for the occasion and needed to get everyone away from the house for an hour to wrap things up. So my father asked V what she would like to do during that time. From earlier summers of exploration (during day light), V knew of the footprint of a long ago abandoned house deep in the woods, where she had scavenged some cool colored tiny glass bottles, so she suggested we accompany her to this place so she can collect some more. So, Spaghetti, my father, and the four

boys followed the intrepid V into the woods, just as dusk was settling in.

The Maine woods are very thick with very tall trees. Even during the daytime it is relatively dark because once you enter you're covered by its interlocking canopy. V was undeterred by the already darkened woods that literally absorbed us from the moment we entered its perimeter. She valiantly led us along the very thin path through the trees to where she was certain that abandoned house was located.

To her credit, after a half hour, we arrived at the archeological ruins and she managed to locate another small blue glass bottle for her collection. There was only one problem, we had forgotten to leave a trail of breadcrumbs behind us to lead us home, and Maine decided it was time to drop night's curtain. So once we all took our turns examining the pretty glass trophy, we looked around and realized we could no longer identify the path or direction we had arrived from.

Spaghetti, who was carrying the tall staff he had fashioned from some local tree branch into a formidable shillelagh, and who resembled an older version of Finn MaCool, chose a direction and led the family unit away from the abandoned building site. We boys all thought that this was indeed the ultimate adventure, and began voicing our hopes of encountering the various large predators that still inhabited the Maine Woodlands - including Sasquatch. However, after an hour walking in one direction and not finding our way out of the forest, Spaghetti located an old stone wall that he knew from the ancient practices of the hibernian farmers back "home" in Ireland, must identify the perimeter of the now abandoned property. He and my father decided that if we followed this wall it would lead us to the promise land. Before we proceeded, the Ginger had marked an odd

looking tree using a pen knife he had carried. An hour later we found ourselves back in front of that same tree. By then, the large and hungry Maine mosquitos had begun dining on all of us. It was time to panic. The Ginger vomited at the base of the marked tree.

Spaghetti led us off in another direction and began to shout the name "Posie" into the darkness, followed immediately by my father's deep voice calling "Veeerrrraaa." The woods created an echo chamber and the percussion from the bellowing began to take its toll on our collective confidence. I understand that constant exposure to loud sounds later became a method of choice for our government to break even the most hardened terrorists. It works. I am certain to this day that those sounds were enough to scare away the Sasquatch.

After what seemed like forever, I had just begun calculating which of my two younger brothers would be sacrificed to feed the rest of us should our predicament become permanent, when, off in the distance, we spotted a faint light and heard the soft sound of the word "Edddddiiiiieeee." It was Posie and my mom to the rescue. The boys broke rank and hurled ourselves into trees and through brambles and bushes in the direction of the light and voice. My older brother and I were the first through the perimeter, my two younger brothers having been captured by a barbwire patch of thorn bushes just short of the promised land. I threw my arms around my mother's waist, banging my head on the large spotlight she was holding in her hand.

This was not the last time I would escape certain death, but being that the entire breeding stock of our bloodline had been placed at risk, it was a memorable event nonetheless.

Posie entered the brambles and magically freed the two youngest from their thorny bonds just as Spaghetti, my Dad and the birthday girl arrived in the clearing acting like nothing had happened. Posers!

All's well that ends well, and after attending to our scratches, scrapes, bruises and mosquito bites, we all forgot our worries and engaged in the family celebration of my sister's continued existence, as only the Irish can.

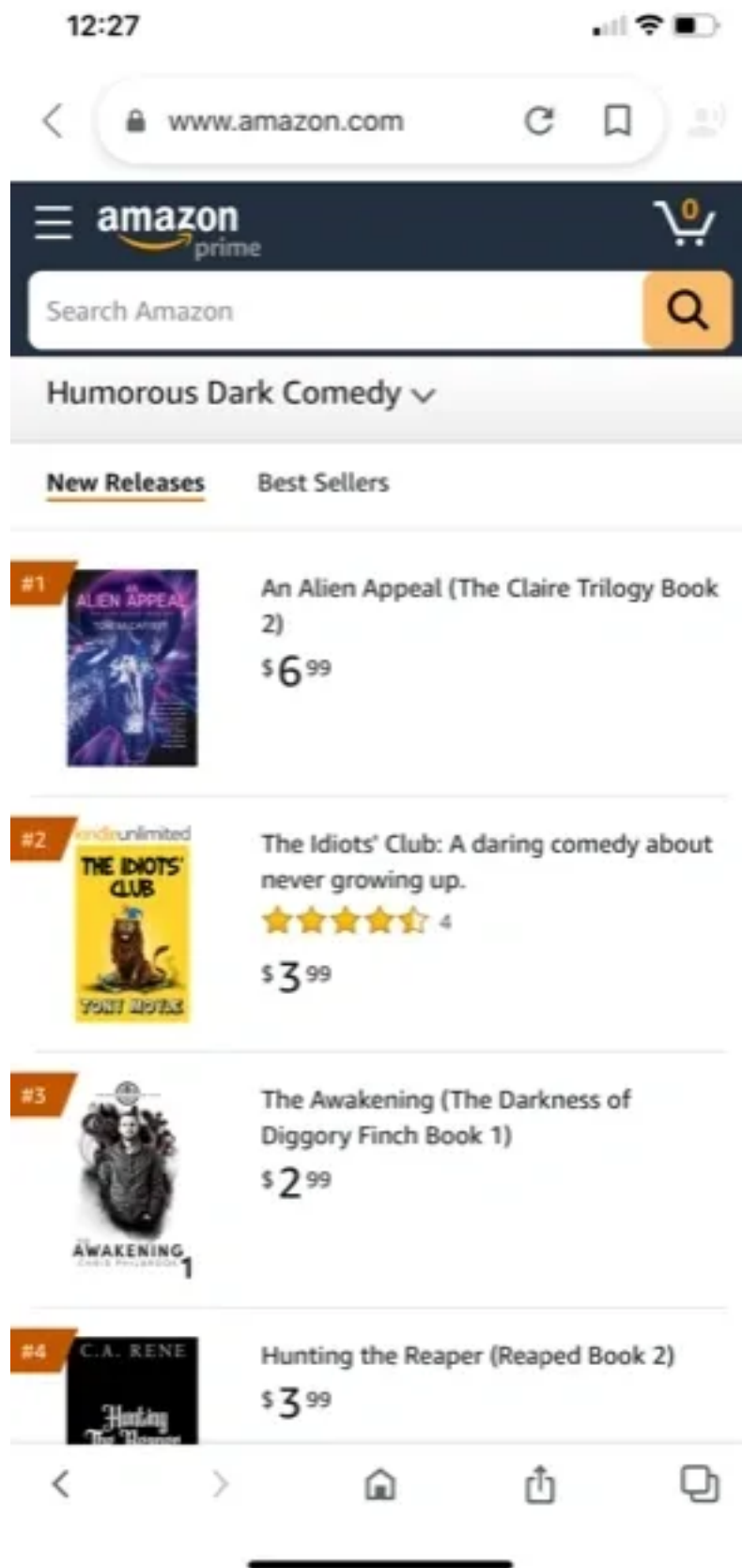
I think I may still have V's tiny glass colored bottle stashed somewhere, having pinched it at some point over the years.

Happy Birthday Veronica. I can confidently speak for the Clan you now so capably lead when I say that we love you dearly, and wish you many more birthdays to come.

But I'll be damned if I ever follow you into the woods again!

Silja, Darren, Anya and April Rock

July 23, 2021



Last night I attended a small social gathering at the home of my friends S, D & A (and April, their very sweet one-eyed

collie) where I was joined by an absolutely lovely group of their friends, who hopefully are now my friends. Jim, Patty, Diana, Brooke and her friendly giant husband, Jeff, were an absolute pleasure to hang with. Jim and Patty are originally from Philly, so we definitely shared our east-coast connections. We had a lot of laughs. I got to tell some stories about New York and the genesis of TWA, sign some books, and read a chapter each from AAA and KMAG. I was also blessed by their far more interesting stories about everything great in the area. I will definitely pinch some of them for backstory purposes in some future novels. I have to admit that I did not expect to hear the intense level of discussion of men in cowboy hats and chaps this far away from Christopher Street in lower Manhattan, and expected at any moment a rousing a cappella version of YMCA (I do believe Jeff wittily sang a soft couple of choruses - quite well I may add). And I would be remiss to ignore that Darren's chaps did display a significant bling that would have made any gypsy proud. But these men-in-chaps stories all involved cattle drives and mountain pass horse riding. And the women were the real cowboys in this group. We also shared fascinating and often hilarious tales of Jesuits, skydiving, bungy-jumping, hot air ballooning, cattle drives and golf (Anya is a lovely young woman - with the coolest natural bright ginger hair color - who is an excellent young golfer and will be hosting her own gathering of members of her youth golf team at D&S's this evening. I hope its a wonderful time. The University of Hawaii would be blessed to have her). I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed D&S's hospitality and the comraderie of this group. Thank you all. For a few fleeting hours yesterday afternoon I was thrilled to learn that both TWA and AAA were No. 1, respectively and simultaneously, on Amazon's Dark Humor Comedy and

DHC (New Releases) Lists. There is indeed magic in this world. Thank you all that have and continue to support The Claire Trilogy. I am humbled.

A Truly Wise Ass

July 22, 2021



I have to give it to Claire. She has a great sense of humor. I turn around for a moment to water the flowers and voila,

she's doing her best impression of me. She looks much better in my now official writer's hat (thank's BC). I'm beginning to wonder if my ears may be bigger.

Delivered an inscribed copy of TWA to a lovely young lady named Sydney, who is helping my friend Pam Ervin with her Tique-related chores this summer while Pam gets a titanium upgrade. I keep trying to reach out to that younger demographic, who assure me whenever asked that they do like to read. We'll see.

Tonight I'm going to a small back deck soiree at the home of my dear friends Darren & Silja Knoll (and Enya). This lovely couple are one of my earliest sets of Berthoud friends, whose lovely one-eyed dog, April, is mentioned in TWA. Darren is also AC/Heating contractor who has kept my home relatively hot and cold in the appropriate seasons (which reminds me to check that air filter). I highly recommend his services. Silja is the wonderful equine specialist who owns a few horses, used to be a farrier, which explains that handshake, and not only assisted in my adoption of Mr. Rogers, but also Honey. Silja is intricately connected to the local horse community. She is a sweetheart who knows her shit and does not suffer fools lightly, but who puts up with my unconventional, laissez-faire, mule rearing practices. She is the person who coined my Berthoud Estates nick-name "Carrot Claus." They have a bright and charming daughter named Enya, who is wise beyond her years. Their friends Brooke and Diane will also be in attendance. Brooke introduced herself one recent morning while I was descending a small hill after tithing some carrot medallions to a crew of local horses. She appeared on her bike and asked "Are you Tom?" Quickly assessing that she was not packing, I owned up. After a brief and friendly exchange, I realized that she was the same

extremely nice neighbor "Brooke" that Darren had mentioned in the past, and I offered to inscribe her book if she stopped by Casa Claire. I am looking forward to meeting Diane. The scheduling of the soiree resolves both issues, so I will bring my marker with me tonight. Thanks D&S for the invite.

Joe Serrano is my hero.

July 21, 2021



I've known Joe Serrano since first grade in St. Margaret of Cortona Grammar School in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. Looking back on it now, I realize that Joe was my first Latino friend. Back then, we didn't make those kinds of distinctions. He was just my friend.

Joe was always daring and fun. He would do all of those crazy things the rest of us were too chicken shit to try. Now this next series of memories were probably imagined, for legal purposes . . . but I'm pretty sure Joe became my (and the other boys in our crew) forever hero when he flipped up the school skirt of PP, the girl in our seventh grade class who was born looking like she was 18 years old. PP was taller than most of us and tough at cat shit, and I'm sure, if my failing memory serves me right, she gave Joe a beating, I mean a serious one, which, like the flipped skirt, the rest of

our gang will never forget (remember this was imagined). If you are out there PP, hope all is well.

Joe was there for most of my other memorable firsts. First cigarette, first beer, first shoplifting, all before fourth grade.

Joe was one of the first of the close knit group of friends that learned of my first on the lips kiss - Chrissy Pompa, an Indigenous American - in fifth grade (I hear CP went on to become a doctor - well done you). Her brother "Pickles" continued to terrorize me throughout grade school. I'm pretty sure Joe taught me how to drive (other peoples cars), again while we were still well under the legal driving age.

For the record, we put the "joy" in joy-ride and always returned the vehicles - safe and sound -- to within a block of their original location. Of course, these stories are apocryphal. . . so for you kids out there. . . do not try this at home.

Joe was an incredible athlete. He was faster than most of us, and we were not slow (which came in very handy during our shoplifting years and throughout our overlapping partying years). I hated catching (for the Athletics in the Riverdale Baseball League) whenever we played his baseball team (I believe it was the Yankees). Joe had mastered the perfect bunt. I'm not sure he ever swung away or struck out. And once he was on base, he stole the remaining bases with abandon. I, as a catcher, never threw him out. I also know that I never got the tag down on him whenever he stole home, which was pretty much every time he got on base. He would actually start to steal home on the pitcher's wind up, the ballsy fucker. They may have changed the league rules just to stop him. It got to the point that, out of frustration, I would just pound him as hard as I could with the empty catcher's mit to make him pay for his

bravado. And he always laughed. A true rat bastard. And I mean that in its most loving sense.

I taught Joe how to master the basic and spastic dance moves my dear sister taught me (I never realized back then why she always led). Just in time for grammar school dances. Of course, if he ever replicates those movements on video now and attributes them to me, I have sworn a blood oath to kill him. And I know people.

Joe was a musician. He could play the guitar and channeled Carlos Santana in pure looks and coolness for most of our high school years.

Joe was the ultimate prankster. No one was off limits. How he is still alive remains a mystery.

Joe and I (and about a half dozen others), all got our ears pierced by Goose at a Vodka party. RIP Goose.

Fast forward. When I ended up dropping out of Fordham and moving in with Joe and Mark Lenahan, in Aunt Violet's Flop House, I shared the best stories of my life, which, God willing, I hope to record in a partially, totally, not at all fictionalized setting, in *The Riverdale Chronicles*. We made Animal House look like a Roman Catholic rectory. Joe was Zelig, and appeared in 99% of the most memorable of those adventures.

My wife, Lisa, who has the memory of an elephant (audible sigh) just reminded me that she recalls that Joe was the first one of us to actually get something published. She recalls some short jingle or funny line that appeared in some publication (Joe, if you recall this, fess up).

Anyway, Joe, BC, Lenny and I (and sometimes Stein, where the fuck have you disappeared to you rat bastard?) began to share a group text over the past five months wherein we have done a lot of catching up. Most of it has been a lot of laughs. It's funny how the personalities remain the same

especially among a crew of professional ball busters. I've created characters for them all in KMAG, just to honor our friendships.

Sometimes, because we are now full members in the OFC, one or more of our respective curmudgeony sides surface.

Given that we are all now separated by great distances, its not like we can storm into the other's room and throw them a beating to bring them out of their funk, which always worked in the old days. But yesterday Joe called one (and all) of us out for it. He reminded us that we all have our shit to deal with but that he has chosen to put that shit aside and enjoy whatever remains of our respective lives. It was a soft slap in the face that the rest of us needed to experience. And I love him for having the balls to do it. Thanks Joe.

Of course, that does not mean that I will not trip his sorry ass (pictured above) next year in Pamplona should the bulls get too close to us. . . .

The Importance of Posting Amazon Reviews - Welcome Brooklyn James

July 20, 2021



Yesterday, one day past the TWA five month release mark, I crossed the thousandth posting threshold of star global

ratings, which means that at least a 1000 people took the time after reading TWA to go back onto Amazon and give it a range of 1 to 5 stars. I am humbled. As the chart above demonstrates, out of those 1000 postings, 63% was 5 star, 26% was 4 star, 7% was 3 star and another 4% was split evenly between 2 and 1 stars. I can succeed as a writer with those numbers. So thank you all for taking the time and making the effort.

I know I never fully understood this before I actually published anything, but Amazon has leveled the playing field for creators and purchasers/reviewers alike. For the creators, one does not have to hope and pray that the book critic from the NYT notices your work and says something that can impact your sales or make/destroy your career.

You are presented to the world of people actually looking to purchase a book. For the average Joe, like me, who shops on Amazon regularly, this star system gives you a voice, so its very democratic. One bad review won't destroy your career. One good review won't establish it. Its all in the total numbers.

It's also easy. Amazon often comes to you by sending you an email that asks you to give them (and the future potential purchasers) your opinion. If you are pressed for time, you can just give the star rating. One click and done. If you have a moment, and that's all it takes, you can post a short (or long) review. Trust me, each one of your opinions count.

I cannot emphasize how important it is to the creators that the readers make the time to post their reviews. First off, it gives you, the reader, a platform for your opinion. You are no longer powerless to affect change. As a writer I have mentioned many times that I read every single review (good and bad). I hope I am never too preoccupied with anything

else that I do not do this. So if you make the time to post your ratings and reviews, you are reaching across the internet and into my home office. But your reviews are also mini publications. Thousands of other Amazon shoppers make the time to quickly scan the reviews - remember these people are readers shopping for their next read - looking to invest a block of time out of their life that they can never get back - so they do read the reviews. So here's your chance to show off a little. Say something witty that draws the reader's eye. The more times you post a review, the more power your reviews have. People start letting Amazon know that your reviews helped them make a purchasing decision. After a while, some reviewers develop their own following. Heady business indeed.

But as we learn from Spiderman, with great power comes great responsibility, so don't let it turn you into a troll. If you are going to post 1 or 2 star reviews, don't do a drive by and just hit the star button, write something constructive, and be specific and factual. It's quite possible that a writer can learn something from you. Don't just say "This book sucks ass. I'm going to go find a good book" Remember, there is a human being out there holding their baby up for the world to see, and your 1/2 star review is like tossing a grenade into the nursery with a million people watching.

And I suspect, without any factual proof, that the more reviews a writer has, the more Amazon algorithms take notice. AI is a wonderfully frightening thing. And I believe this leads to more exposure for the writer on the Amazon website.

And to close out this topic, post a review even if the book you have read has been out there for a while. Sometimes a good review after a chronological gap can resurrect lagging sales. Its never too late. So go ahead, tell the Hemingway

Estate what you really think of *Across The River And Into The Trees*.

And to close this out, I would like to give another shout out to four women authors whose writing is far superior to my own (remember, I am the Slip Mahoney of Literature - but I can tell a story). Margaret Reyes Dempsey (Mind Games), Christy Cooper-Burnett (No Way Home, Finding Home and Escaping Home), Sharon K. Middleton (the McCarron Corner Series) and Nancy Ashmead (New Moons). Each of these writers has a distinct voice, with different levels of complexity to their stories and writing and all of them require you to pay attention. They are creating something worth reading. So give them a shot, and post your reviews, because their stories and careers are worth your time and effort. Have a great day!

Oh and one last thing. I just learned that family members Dana (ne Moran) and her husband Kevin, have just given birth to their daughter, Brooklyn James, and that baby and parents are all doing well. Congratulations to the happy couple and baby! Welcome to the world young lady. Also congrats to the new grandparents, the real Jimmy Moran and his lovely wife Liz, and to the new Aunty Sara and Uncle Mark (my youngest). Go Blue!

Moshi Says So Long

July 19, 2021



Karen "Cruiser" Anderson/Beck arrived Saturday evening at Casa Claire after a week of enlightenment at a Joe Dispenza Seminar. We spent the evening listening to tales of mystical meditations, scientific validations and interesting new acquaintances, and, of course, of JD, the man himself. I get it, I was a Wayne Dyer devotee. When it comes to the LOA, all roads lead to Rome. Find what works for you and stick with it.

I discovered WD on PBS late one night flipping channels.

The thing about WD that, to me, appeared to set him apart from the others on the LOA circuit, was his humility and self-deprecating humor. He didn't make himself out to be the only true path. He didn't try to fix you. He just explained what led him to where he was and then shared anecdotes that demonstrated why he believed what he believed. While he did author numerous books memorializing a lot of what he said on his PBS programs, he never tried to upsell you. I guess I identified with his natural ability as a story teller (as well as his bald head and penchant for dark T-shirts, the latter term being first employed in literature by F. Scott Fitzgerald).

Anyway, I was never one to belly up to the bar and pony up money to go see a live performance of anyone. I like being able to acquire and digest my knowledge at my own pace in private. However, for one of my many birthdays, I believe it was in 2014, my children surprised me with a ticket to see WD live in NYC.

Now to back up a bit. Approximately two weeks before I was to attend the event, I was standing in my driveway on Mosholu Avenue, I believe sweeping leaves. One of my very lovely Riverdale neighbors, who was short, and full figured, and who regularly walked a wind-up sized Pomeranian, decided to pass the end of the concrete

driveway at that moment. My dog pack, which included a large powerful white Amstaff, Maeve (yep, her), Shorty, my beagle, and I believe my daughter's mix terrier/dalmation breed, Max, spotted the Pomeranian and decided to investigate at full speed. Understanding the personalities involved, and my physical limitations, I knew I could only attempt to stop one of them from reaching their goal, so after letting (barely seeing) the whippet fast Max pass me, and hoping the slower, older Shorty would give up en route, I dove laterally for the lumbering Maeve, encircling her neck with my arms. It barely slowed her down as she dragged me along the concrete and, with a final shake of her shoulders, freed herself from my grip like Jim Brown and continued on her path. I landed with my full weight on my elbow on the cold, hard concrete. I saw stars. When I looked down the driveway, I saw the woman laughing hysterically, with the pomeranian resting comfortably out of harm's way on top of her prodigious bosom while my three dogs circled the two of them for a few more rotations and then ran back up my driveway and into the yard. They never even looked at me as they passed. The woman chivalrously called out "are you okay?" I waved embarrassingly in response with my still functioning left arm and she continued on her way.

I was slow getting up. I was certain I had fractured my elbow, by the instant and significant swelling that turned out to be a burst elbow sack known as Olecranon bursitis. But being a thick mick, I self remedied with ice and aspirin, which numbed the pain but did nothing to reduce the dimensions of the now Popeye sized elbow on my right arm.

I hoped for the best and went about my business. The leaves were not going to put themselves into a bag.

Over the next couple of days, the pain subsided but the swollen sack remained. Nothing I could do would reduce the size or the now clearly audible clicking sound my right elbow made when I moved it. Other than that Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?

Given the life I had led, I had drawn accustomed to the sounds of my worn body parts serenading me most mornings like a wooden xylophone as I rose from my bed.

So this newest clicking coming from the elbow member of the orchestra didn't really bother me. In fact, given that it was my dominant hand, it kept syncopated time during most of the performances. But I was still able to use the right arm as always, and just moved on.

Now I am not a vain person (but that does not mean I am humble). I made peace with the fact that I was going to get by in life on talent and personality, not looks, but I became instantly self conscious of my new appendage growing out of my elbow. Luckily, my autumn apparel of choice is a hoody sweatshirt. I have many. So I hid the deformity from public view.

It not only refused to go away over time. It actually began to harden to the touch, which really freaked me out. But not enough to see a doctor. After all, McCaffreys never go to the doctor, we only wake up there.

Anyway, on the day of the WD event, I hid my new friend in the right sleeve of my hoody and went.

Of course the event was everything I had hoped. WD was on his game and basically entertained the audience with his homespun stories that slipped in his message of opening up to source and letting go of your ego (trust me that last concept is not an easy one for me). It was an enjoyable 90 minutes. But what was most interesting was WD's accessibility to the attendees. During breaks he sat on the

edge of the stage and chatted patiently with the throng of his admirers that encircled him ten deep. When it was all over, the audience pretty much rushed the stage, and then, as I packed up my unused notebook, I watched as he proceeded to repeatedly go back and forth down the length of the stage and shake everyone's hand, while sharing a word or two before moving on. I was transfixed in my chair, fighting the geeky fanboy urge to go up there and join the throng. This went on for a half hour as WD waved off his personal assistant and continued shaking hands. Finally, as the numbers faded to one final line across the stage front, I stood up and ran up there and got on the end of the line stage left.

When WD arrived at my position, he leaned over and reached out his right hand. I reflexively took his hand with my own damaged arm and he gave it a gentle shake, saying "Thank you for coming. I hope you enjoyed the experience." Our eyes met and he smiled authentically. And that's when I felt the tingling in my right arm.

What can I say? When I awoke the next morning and rolled out of bed, the clicking orchestra started up as usual, but there was one sound missing. Mr. elbow had left the symphony space. But I did not notice my right arm until I completed my first thing in the morning piss. As I mentioned, I am right handed, so when that arm reached forward to perform its final shake and store duty, I immediately noticed that my elbow had returned to its normal size and shape and that the clicking was gone, never to return. Hand to God, true story.

Which brings me back to concluding my magical, dog related story. When the time came yesterday for mystical Karen to head off into the cooler Colorado hinterlands with her sweet dog, Moshi, the cute little bugger, leapt on my

chest and rewarded my hospitality with the most wonderful kisses, captured and shared later via text by now on-the-road-again Karen. Sometimes even tiny dog kisses are magical. *Vaya con Dios.*

Moshi's Visit Ends Today

July 18, 2021



Had a wonderful week hanging out with Moshi while Karen "Cruiser" Anderson/Beck completed her course with Joe

Dispensa. As you can see from the above photo, Moshi made herself right at home. I know Blue (yes, that Blue) and Jeter will miss her. But M has already booked another stay in October while Karen attends another healing and enlightenment course. And we have called dibs on Moshi, should Cruiser spontaneously achieve nirvana and pass from this plain of existence. Once part of the pack, always part of the pack.

Claire's dancing videos have been a big hit. Yesterday's two step was in accompaniment to Chainsmokers "Something Just Like This" (awesome song - all of them are - shout out to Alex Pall, my daughter's Masters High School boyfriend - you are one talented musician - and could dunk a basketball with authority - before you say it, not a euphemism). I wish I knew how to post Claire's video on this site, but I suffer from chronic and terminal ludditus. I did send the video out via texts and I think I managed to post one on Instagram, Twitter and Linked in. To be quite honest, I cannot even confirm that, and if I was successful, it will be a first for me.

But I did try. Anyway, can a call from DWTS be far off?

Claire is the gift that keeps on giving. I am blessed every day by her presense in my life.

In yesterday's text with my East Coast crew, the subject of yesterday's blog came up, where I talked about my error-filled, but extremely entertaining, writing style, and BC (you will all come to remember those initials, like Voldemort) proved my point when he mentioned - with thinly veiled glee (East Coasters are a tough crowd) -- that I had misspelled "voila" as "viola" in the blurb and then mentioned he spotted a similar error in TWA, but forgot to mention it to me over these past five months. I blame Word's autocorrect and obviously (pure opinion here) anti-francophile bias for that issue. Either way, it has now been corrected in all formats,

including the soon to be released audio version (where it would really be noticed, lol), thank you Reagan Rothe. The good news is, the uncorrected inscribed versions become instant collector's items. Like a double stamped Lincoln penny. So hang onto them, even you Viola. Voila!

Shit happens. For example, reviewers have a tendency of getting my name wrong in their postings, so I often appear with an "ery" ending to my name instead of "rey" and even have appeared most recently as McCarrey, McAfee and McCartney (no relation to Sir Paul, even though that is my middle name - "Paul," not "Sir"). I laugh every time. As Ralph (Where's) Waldo Emerson once said, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines." So feel free to call me anything, especially with a 5 star review, just don't call me late for dinner! Have a great day.

Sunrise

July 17, 2021



As I have mentioned in earlier blogs, I am a big fan of sunrises. They are my universal marker that tells me that

my world's engine is starting back up and I better get on board for the new day, with whatever it brings me, or get left behind. When you get to my age, you really do not want to waste any of those days. And that becomes easier to do, because time seems to accelerate the older you get, so the day is gone before you know it.

Regularly recurring events like work help. When you are an attorney, you are always running against the clock. There is always a filing deadline you must keep your eye on. They scare you into productivity. Over thirty-five years in this business has forced me to overcome my natural desire to procrastinate. I live pursuant the motto: "Do it now."

Regularly recurring chores also help. That is another reason it is important for people to have children and/or pets. They demand your recurring attention. Now that my children are all grown with their own families, and are spread all over the country, and soon the world, my mules and dogs force me to take care of their business. And I mean that figuratively and literally. Wheelbarrows full.

I approach my writing in the same way. I do most of the creating in my head, beginning with my early morning walks and looping in the background as I attend to other things each day, but once I have the lion's share of the story down on my mental video recorder, I sit down, play the video, and write. Once I begin a writing project, I'm at it every morning at 2 a.m., for a couple of hours, and an occasional weekend day when I can get my regular chores done in one day. If I am close to completion I can finagle a whole weekend chores dispensation from the boss, my wife, who has been amazingly supportive of the process. I write in the early hours while I'm fresh, and while there are no distractions. If my eyes wander to a window, I see only a grizzly old dude staring back at me in the indoor reelection

against the pitch beyond, and given that I have never been considered particularly handsome, that glimps of reality drives me right back to my world where my characters are as beautiful as I want them to be. I never stop writing before I have a chapter completed. I have sometimes knocked off two chapters in one sitting. But I never begin a new chapter if I'm running short of time before my real day begins, even if I have it all at my fingertips. Holding off makes the next day's writing easier, because I begin with momentum. I don't get caught up in rewriting my earlier chapters unless something specific in what I'm about to write causes me to go back and change something specific in what has been already written for consistency purposes. I do all my revisions once the novel is complete and I can clearly know the beginning, middle and end.

I'm not in love with my writing. I am more Slip Mahoney than Earnest Hemingway. My grammar is not perfect. I am the king of homophones and homographs. There will be proof reading errors that slip by. But in the end I will tell you a great story and I will do my very best to make it as credible and plausible as any legal brief I have ever written.

And luckily, most of my readers get so caught up in the story forest that they don't stop to examine the scars on the trees.

Some writers will revise something over and over again, for sometimes years, to make their language or word choice perfect. I can respect that. But that kind of writing process is a luxury for young people who are free of the demands of daily life. For those of us who must treat their writing as a secret hobby, because it doesn't yet pay the bills, time limitations sometime require that you trade that perfect chapter for a really good complete novel. And to me, I would rather read an occasional review that picks out a

couple of mistakes and still give me 5 (or even 4) stars because they love the story, than a 3 star review from a nitpicky reader that could find nothing particular to criticize about the novel but just hates the story.

Anyway, my writing time is up, the blue hour approaches.

Time to get up from my computer, go for my walk and then do my chores. The whole time *The Riverdale Chronicles* will be looping in my head. Have a great day.

Mule Gothic

July 16, 2021



Timing is everything. Back in the fall of 2016, my partner and I were trying an entertainment related case in the

federal district court of the Northern District of Chicago, which required us to stay in that city for almost three weeks.

One Sunday, while we had a few hours of downtime, we decided to visit the Art Institute of Chicago, to catch a peek at the famous "American Gothic" painting by Grant Wood.

Of course, at that particular moment, it was on loan to the Musee de l'Orangerie, in Paris. Nonetheless, it was an amazing museum, and I highly recommend any visitor to the Second City to stop by. And if you ever get an opportunity to go anywhere with my partner, Robert Meloni, grab it. He is one of the most spontaneously funny guys you will ever get a chance to meet. It is a miracle we were not escorted out of the museum.

Now that I am bespectacled and bald, and own my own pitchfork, I am intent on recreating the painting with a self portrait, assuming I can get my dear wife to pose with me.

So far its been a hard no. Stay tuned.

So, I have had to bribe my mules to pose in their own version of the iconic photo. See above. They refused to hold any farm utensils, so I just leaned the tools on the side of the barn. But they did provide me with that cool disembodied head shot (note the bent tip of Claire's right ear) at the doorway of Claire's Wee Laire (misspelling symmetrically intentional). The other signs on the front of the barn are "McCaffrey" with Two Mules (on the left) and then "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" and "Honey's Hive - carrots welcome" (on the right, top to bottom).

Off, way in the back, far right of the photo, is the gravesite of Mr. Rogers. His small wooden grave marker reads "Mr. Rogers' Home Forever." A promise kept.

You can often find Claire having an afternoon lie down right beside it. Don't ever believe animals do not mourn, or communicate with their dead. I witness it every day.

I did not cry when either of my parents crossed the threshold, not out of an emotional coldness or lack of love, but because they had lived their lives as they chose and I was prepared for their passing. However, I openly wept at MR's unexpected death. And I will never forget the heartbreaking Banshee cries coming from Claire for weeks afterwards. I can still feel MR around me every day when I'm out in the fields. His presense comforts me.

I have to confess that for the past few days I was fighting off a feeling of panic, because, as of yesterday morning, I had not seen a review for TWA (good or bad) since 7/11. I wondered (worried) that it meant the book had ended its popular run. Then I said to myself, I expect three new reviews to appear by the end of the day. Mr. Rogers' must have been listening, because voila! There they were - covering the missing days - when I opened to TWA's web page this morning. It seems that there is often a bottleneck in the time between a review's filing and its posting. Whew! Speaking of interesting reviews, I was blessed by a ubiquitous Kindle Customer with a review on 7/10 that touched my animal lover's heart with the closing line, "James Herriot would be proud." Love both the books and the original 1970s BBC series and have really learned to appreciate their representation of farm life even more since my move to Colorado.

Was thrilled to learn that both Margaret Reyes Dempsey and Richard Lamb have begun writing their respective new works in Asheville, NC. I am so jealous. What a cool and creative couple. Also was thrilled to line up a commitment from what will hopefully be the third blurb writer for the cover of KMAG. So now its just a matter of herding the final collection of frisky cats through the door of publication.

Hopefully it will all be done and dusted by the end of August. Have a great day!

Roadside Sunflowers & The Severn Collection

July 15, 2021



I've often written about how inhospitable most of the soil is out here. There is a lot of clay and shale that when dry

becomes like bedrock. It gives me even greater respect for those farmers that can make a living breaking their backs trying to grow their crops every year. I am eternally jealous of those neighbors who have managed to just grow beautiful perennials like Lavender in their front yards. So far all of my perennials have converted to annual status. The annuals have a very strong union with ties to New York. Join or die, or in this case, join and die. I just don't have my Irish grandparents' green thumb, so I'm concentrating on trees this year, with hopes they are tough enough to beat the concrete.

But what I have noticed over these past five summers during my morning strolls is that beginning each July, my course becomes lined with dozens of street side sunflowers. They are beautiful and defiant. They must capture the bit of water from brief afternoon thunderstorms that beat down on the streets that they survey, and suck the carbon dioxide from the exhausts of the occasional passing car. As the photo of the little guy above demonstrates, they appear to sprout right out of the asphalt. Tough as catshit.

And those sunflowers not only reward this writer by providing an unexpected and continuous aesthetic to draw upon each morning, they provide me hope for the human race. No matter how tough our circumstances may be, there is beauty to be found from which we can draw solace, if we just open our eyes and look for it. Van Gogh got it, although in the end, sunflowers alone were not enough to save him. So open your eyes folks. You may be missing something beautiful that is right under your nose.

Speaking of aesthetics, I want to give a shout out to my dear friend **Adrienne Meloni** (who is also an amazing writer), whose new company, **Severn**, is selling beautiful textiles for your home and person: [The Severn Collection](#) This is a

company with a conscience, as it was set up specifically to help certain disadvantaged groups in India make a liveable wage to create beautiful things. Take a look. Even these color-blind eyes know beauty and quality when they see it.

Good luck Adrienne!

Have a great day.

KMAG

July 14, 2021



Moving right along, got my first cover blurb for KMAG from Brian Fitzpatrick, author of the *Mechcraft Trilogy*. Love when writers push the boundaries of your imagination.

Check out Brian's novels on Amazon, I highly recommend them. <https://www.amazon.com/Mechcraft-Brian-Fitzpatrick/dp/1684336791>. One down, two more to go. Also reached out to someone whose name appears in passing in AAA to let them know. Always exciting to travel back in time.

Check.

Switching two letters, my Brain was on full legal mode yesterday as I nailed down some research, theories and strategies on a new and interesting matter. Unfortunately, I forgot to put the mules back in the side paddock before withdrawing to my office and was so caught up in the legal work before me, I didn't look out the window the whole day and thereby failed to notice the four legged devils devouring some of my wife's potted plants. It looks as though Morticia Addams has been hitting them with her shears. I am surely going to pay for my negligence when Lisa notices. Probably this morning. No doubt will result in a temporary mule ban from the backyard area. Mea Maxima Culpa.

Moshi continues to settle in at Casa Claire, and now follows the other dogs around as they follow me around the house.

That's Moshi (on her blanket) & Jeter (pronounced "Jeeta") sleeping in my office as I take care of my early morning business. Blue is out in the living room sleeping on her basement couch.

Learned recently that Lenny's Dad was a writer, when Lenny uncovered an old story he had penned - very well written - very Samuel Clemens. Knew Lenny got his own prodigious literary talent from somewhere. What a gift to find something like that. Time travel. A voice from the grave.

Okay, everyone, you must all have a great day. No excuses.

Moshi & Blue & Sara & Mark

July 13, 2021



As I mentioned in an earlier blog, Cruiser's dog Moshi (phon.) is staying for a week's visit at Casa Claire. I am pleased to report that after the first 24 hours, Blue has concluded that Moshi isn't a hairy mouse and has adopted her into the Clan. A telling sign is that Blue has allowed Moshi sleeping space on her couch. Even better, Moshi has also quickly learned to alert us to her bathroom needs by running to the side door that leads onto the side deck and into the side yard. All is well.

Spent yesterday early morning exchanging marketing strategy/budget emails for late summer and fall with Reagan Rothe who confirmed that AAA is off to a promising start. Luckily Reagan is an early riser so our communication is all wrapped up before 8 am my time. Thank you all five of my readers for stepping up.

I've now sent emails out to two other authors to request potential blurbs for KMAG. Thank you CCB (highly recommend her books *No Way Home* & *Finding Home*).

Need to get the three blurbs lined up over the next 30 days so their receipt will dovetail with the creation of the cover by Richard Lamb. Like everything else, sometimes life gets in the way and once committed authors have to back out so I need to stay on top of this. While that is being squared away, its just a final round or two of pdf edits to the completed manuscript and KMAG will be put to bed.

Personally, I cannot wait to be able to see all three books up on BRW and Amazon's websites. That will be surreal.

Only then will I be truly comfortable that The Claire Trilogy will be complete. The Devil is in the details.

It was my darling D-I-L Sara's birthday yesterday. Happy birthday sweetie (forever young). The day before that was Sara & Mark's first wedding anniversary. Congrats and

much love to you (and Jax & Ella). Young love is a wonderful thing. Hang onto it tightly with both hands.

CONGRATULATIONS MATTHEW & MARISSA

July 12, 2021



I mentioned yesterday that a young couple came by on Saturday to visit with Claire. Well, their names are **Matthew and Marissa**, and they are the son & future daughter-in-law of **Everett & Michelle**, my two dear extraterrestrial friends, who actually are two of the original inspirations for TWA. They really are everything I say about them.

M&M are just the most lovely young couple. Matthew is tall and handsome, in that rugged looking lumberjack (cue the song), mid-west way, and Marissa is equally tall and raven-haired beautiful in what we Celts describe as Black Irish, along the lines of the mystical singer Enya.

Anyway, they came over for a nice visit with Claire, and quickly won her over with soft, gentle strokes and lots of carrots. Honey, as she does, kept just out of camera shot, being in her own version of the Witness Protection Program, so Blue stood in for the photo op, and to catch and devour any carrot scraps that may have fallen. That's Michelle, in human form, standing to the left. Everett was snapping the photo.

I gave M&M the highlights of how reality closely matches up with fiction in TWA, including all of the geographical markers like Gnome Island, the pond and bat house, and I introduced them to Jack the Spruce, mentioning that there is a quick and decisive movement at the end of the novel that many readers overlook. Both tree and the couple were enchanted.

Anyway, M&M are being married this July 31, in Headsburg, California, wine country, just north of San Francisco. I know I speak for all of us in wishing this young couple nothing but happiness. God speed!

I also want to respond to a recent commentary exchange in my July 9, posting, between my old friend and conspirator **BC**, whose "based-upon" character makes his appearance as a Voldemort level, evil character in KMAG, so feel free to pillory the namesake when the time comes.

BC references a sky diving incident. I have to go back through these blogs to see if I have already described the event (they are adding up), but I will retell the part mentioned by BC.

When I turned 50, I was basically shamed into overcoming a life long fear of heights by my children, when they all, at separate times, decided to go skydiving. They of course, decided it was to their advantage to goad me into skydiving with hopes that some mishap would heighten the chances of an immediate payout in Life Insurance. I made the mistake of mentioning it to one of my other lifelong cohorts, the namesake and basis for the character **Mark Lenahan**.

Suffering from a life of hedonistic pleasures and challenges to Death Himself, ML immediately scheduled our respective fates with destiny to make sure I could not reconsider.

On the day in question, I spent the whole prep time meditating (and by that I mean standing off in a corner muttering to myself) and focusing on not chickening out. I knew that if I could will myself onto the plane, I would have no choice but to jump (and not disgrace myself before family and friends and die instead in ignominy).

Anyway, just before we reached the stairs leading up to the prop plane that was to take us to our 14000 foot destiny, Lenny said to me, "Wait, do you have any money on you?"

Since I had paid with plastic, I did not have any cash on me and told him so. I then asked him why (always a mistake with Lenny), at which time he withdrew a quarter from his pocket and handed it to me saying, "Here, take this, you never want to die without money in your pocket." I still have that quarter. The underwear I was wearing that day barely survived. And people wonder why I am mad as a hatter. I intend to pay all surviving members of the OFC back for their multiple attempts on my life -- who all know I can be talked/shamed into anything (gotten much better since I stopped drinking) -- by publicly goading them into another rendezvous with the horned Reaper in Pamplona a year from now. Stay tuned.

In closing I cannot help mentioning a wonderful 5 star Amazon review over the weekend by fellow Celt, **Jackie Jarvis Sullivan**, who after identifying with the comical Irishness that permeates TWA, closed with the sentence, "My favorite author is **John Irving**, he should read your book." Thank you JJS!!! If anyone out there knows how to make that happen, or is friends with that brilliant author in Exeter NH, please deliver JI a copy and I will reimburse whatever it costs and send you a thankfully inscribed copy of TWA for your troubles. Since we are on the subject of wishes, I would also love to get copies of TWA to **Bruce Willis and Marisa Tomei**. . . . LOA!

Busy Social Day - Moshe Arrives - Mule Mani/Pedis - Mind Games

July 11, 2021



The early morning was spent performing last minute tidying by Lisa and watering the outdoor plants by me in anticipation of the arrival of two sets of guests -- my sisters, v&b, and then Riverdale Ex-Pat, Karen "Cruiser" Anderson (sister of Ferd Beck) and her wonder dog Moshe. Between those two social events we had the Farrier to the Stars, Jason Bastemeyer, by to give Claire and Honey their 6 week Mani/Pedi. Jason was happy to report that both mules' hooves looked very healthy. We also used the time we had Honey haltered to administer her daily dose of medicine. We were very efficient and productive. Later in the day Claire & Honey had some fan-visitors (so they were glad they got their nails done) but I will save that for tomorrow's blog once I have the photos to post with it.

Today's photo is an artistic selection as it depicts one white mourning dove among a flock of red-wing black birds. It was great as always to see v&b. They stopped by to perform their Fairy Godmother, matriarchal, post-pandemic visit, share some love, and conduct a little family business on route to a visit with my son & daughter-in-law, Luke & Georgie, and my three magical granddaughters, Scarlett, Savanna and Stella (their presense and alliteration are gifts from God), the three of whom (and their cousin Lucian) are characters in The Claire Trilogy. I love my sisters, who also appear as the characters Bonnie & Tessa in The Claire Trilogy.

Cruiser & Moshe arrived just around 11:30 a.m.

To say that Blue is obsessed with the tiny and feisty Moshe is an understatement. The two dogs spent the day acclimating while Jeter observed with amusement.

Blue also welcomed Cruiser by planting her 80 lb frame into Cruiser's lap on one of the recliners, much to Moshe's chagrin. We then spent the next nine hours catching up,

sharing Riverdale stories of both the living and the dead, discussing the LOA, eating and laughing. People will not fully appreciate what a cast of characters we grew up with until I finally get as much of it down as can be legally recorded (must double-check those Statutes of Limitation) in its slightly fictionalized version in *The Riverdale Chronicles*, which will serve as a prequel to *The Claire Trilogy*.

Hopefully I can start on that this fall. Lisa served a wonderful fresh veggie pasta *prima vera* and mixed berries for dessert. The Riverdale crew exchanged their hello's with Cruiser via my group text. We also went out and spent some time with Claire, hence the photo, who was a gracious host.

At 9 pm, way past my usual bedtime, we all retired. Cruiser is settled in The Queen's Room, named, tongue in cheek (which is itself tongue in cheek), after our brilliant and campy nephew, present RN and future Anesthesiologist, Captain Fabulous (although there is also a queen sized bed), the first family member to visit and stay over there. Cruiser heads out this morning for a week long course with Joe Dispenza (I am a Wayne Dyer fan myself, RIP, and quote him in AAA). Tiny Moshe will spend that time being spoiled and hopefully avoiding being stepped on by the mules. Stay tuned.

Got a wonderful 5 star review yesterday from the ubiquitous "Kindle Customer" from Orangeburg SC, that ended with the line "James Herriot would be proud." What a magical way to close out my day!

Shout out to my dear friend and fellow writer, Margaret Reyes Dempsey, whose brilliant novel, *Mind Games*, is # 85 on the Amazon UK Conspiracy Thrillers Chart. Margaret's blurb is on the front cover of AAA. Do I know how to pick 'em, or what?!

IT'S ALL IN THE PREP

July 10, 2021



As you can see above, I have a fridge full of Claire and Honey's carrots and apples. It is located in my basement kitchen (yes, my wife is constantly telling me I need to clean it, but I'm a guy so we don't give a shit.) The mules have made a generous concession that allows me to keep milk there so I can drink the ten cups of coffee daily (equal numbers caffeinated and decaffeinated) that keeps the human engine running that properly and continuously services the creatures. Once a week I turn the whole fruits and vegetables on the top shelf and bottom bins into the bags of chopped items on the middle and door shelves. Its really like therapy for me. Lenny has taught me how to prep veggies over the years so that training has come in useful. (I still use a technique Lenny taught me during one of the summer trips to Maine as teens for use in chopping onions - has absolutely kept me from losing my fingertips). I am really a maistro with a knife. I can literally chop carrots and apples with my eyes closed and I often do it just to challenge myself. The large bags of chopped carrot medallions go out with me on my rounds every morning where I share them with about a dozen horses along my route. One small bag of the chopped apples, right up there next to the milk, also goes along for my favorite Arabian, Tique (Hi Pam), who doesn't really like carrots. She is the prom queen - which I know how to recognise because I married one (punched way above my weight). The combined bags of chopped carrots and apples on the bottom side shelf are split and dispensed to C&H during their actual twice a day feedings, along with their Timothy Alfalfa pellets. The magical creatures also consume lots of hay throughout the day. As an added bonus, my once a week shopping excursion, where I fill a carriage with my fruits and vegetables, has allowed me to develop a whole

series of Walmart friends in the F&V department. As I said, the repetitive prep process involved is therapeutic. Kind of like the monthly Keurig shucking required by my coffee habit.

Veggie prep has replaced ironing as a mindless therapy for me. Back in NY, I handled most of the needed ironing for the family created by Lisa and my respective professions - white button down shirts and nursing scrubs - and my children's various private school uniforms. Posie (matriarch and wife to Spaghetti) actually taught me how to iron, and to sew, which I am also pretty good at. Indeed, rumors about my ability to iron perfect pleats in a pleated catholic school skirt (my daughter's - The Ursuline Academy) are still shared in reverent whispers among the chinese laundries throughout New York (and please don't suggest that comment is racist, that is how those stores are (were?) advertised in above the store signage throughout my once great city - to indicate that each will provide you with above and beyond quality service a regular dry cleaner cannot and will not).

The mules respond to the rapid chopping sounds during prep day by arriving at my back door demanding their tithe.

My dogs get in on the action as well and will happily devour a tossed carrot medalion, like cats at a fishmonger - my animals all have amazing eye sight!

Often during this preparatory meditation, I play the movies of the stories I'm working on in my head. This helps pass the time, since there is really nothing else I can do with my hands engaged in rapid, repetitive motions with a very sharp knife. Like the actual writing process, I often return to consciousness at the very end of the prep, not really remembering how the last two plus hours have passed, and just finding my fridge restocked. Must be those damned

elves at work again. Thanks guys/gals, you rock! Must give them a larger Christmas bonus this year.

**JIMMY FRONSDAHL &
KMAG & CB & MK &
COUSIN CHRISTINA & OFC**

July 9, 2021



Had that farewell bro's breakfast with my dear friend Jimmy Fronsdaahl at Grandpa's Cafe (which is mentioned in AAA & KMAG). I base one of the new characters in AAA & KMAG, Whitey, on Jimmy. Jimmy has been The King's Hand for the first two novels. Got to introduce him to Malissa the waitress and Carl & Neil of Grandpa's boys fame and had some laughs with everyone. Highly recommend Grandpa's if you are looking for a great old school breakfast experience.

Jimmy and his wonderful wife Kathy are off to Idaho in about a week. They will be missed. Vaya con Dios!

Things keep heading North in the novel department. Must have been a healthy opening day with AAA, because I received notice yesterday that BRW was moving the release of KMAG forward over a month to capitalize on the momentum generated by TWA. KMAG is now being released on March 24, 2022. Thank you everyone who has picked up a copy of TWA and has made The Claire Trilogy a reality.

KMAG is in great editing shape -- may need a couple of passes in the PDF/editing schedule stage which always provides a new perspective and last minute tweaks. Richard Lamb, the British genius (who has terrible taste in Premier League football teams) behind the cover of AAA, is fully up to speed on the story line and will be creating a unique cover for KMAG. I've lined up the first author to provide a cover blurb. Will nail down two more over the next few months. It will be all wrapped up in a nice bow by September.

Got to catch up briefly with my Irish/Riverdale/Lehman literary brother, Colin Broderick, yesterday before work. He congratulated me on the most recent events, including the 650 - The Great Outdoors 2 Podcast - <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-great-outdoors-2/>

[id1562766207?i=1000528168500](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=id1562766207&list=PL1000528168500) - and sent me one of his Between The Lines podcast interviews with that brilliant NY actor Michael Kelly - <https://youtu.be/ozNsUtMeK9w> .

Michael Kelly is one of those ubiquitous talented character actors that regularly steals the show/movie from the purported leads. He is just so damn talented and you can tell he loves the craft of acting by the way he perfects it.

You've seen him in such movies as Man of Steel, Everest, The Adjustment Bureau, Law Abiding Citizen and most recently in Outside The Wire, but everyone will recognize him from his 4 time Emmy Nominee iconic role as Doug Stamper in House of Cards. Would make a brilliant Jimmy Moran should some really insightful Hollywood Movie Mogul be lucky enough to pick up a copy of The Claire Trilogy. But I digress. . .

I met Mike and his lovely wife Karyn, and chatted for all of five minutes standing on line in a Manhattan B&N, waiting to obtain an inscribed copy of Colin's book That's That. Colin does not play favorites and God Bless him for that, as I was thrilled to have the captured audience opportunity to chat.

Mike is an absolutely regular guy who could have grown up in Riverdale (instead of Philly) and been one of the crew. Anyway, Colin and Mike go way back to a card game they both regularly attended in Manhattan as well as their creative Irish in NY and overlapping artistic pursuits. I recommend watching their podcast, as you get a wonderful inside look at and appreciation for both men.

I want to give a shout out to my cousin Christina (ne McEntee), youngest sister of Apples. There were times after her mother's (whom we all called "Sister") early passing where Christina (and her siblings) stayed for extended periods with us on Mosholu Avenue. Family is family and she is a lifetime dues paying member of the Clan. My

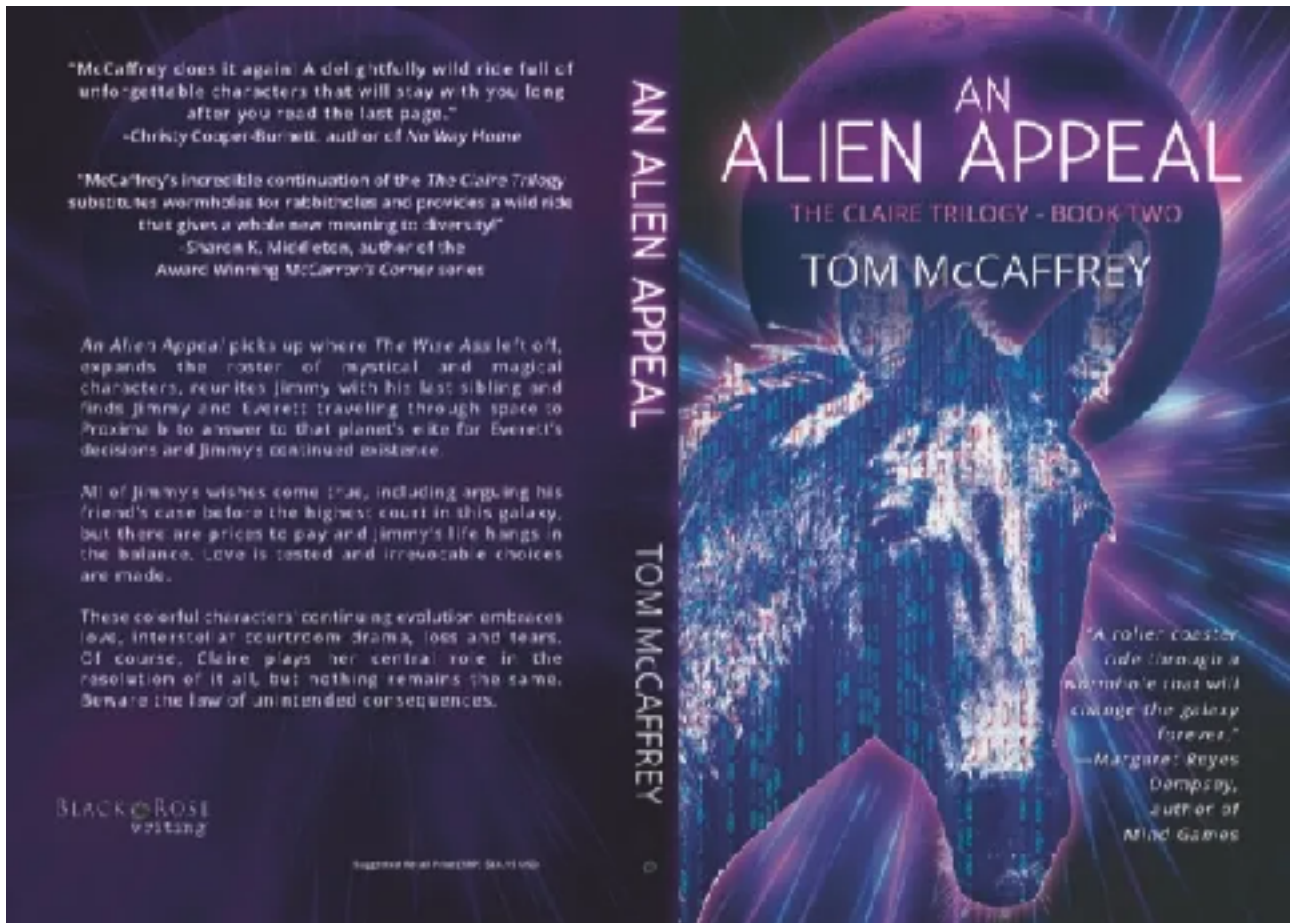
parents and grandparents adored her. We treated her like we treated Apples and each other, as another annoying sibling in a family of annoying siblings. She has shared that she is reading TWA and also these blogs. She also has an amazing memory. (To all the men reading this blog, is it me or do all women have infallible memories just to punish us? My wife Lisa is a perfect example.) Yesterday Christina mentioned the time that I stole one of the family cars at the ripe old age of 15, took it for a joyride around North & South Riverdale with Christina and her sister Nancy in the back seat, and that, once I returned the vehicle, there was hell to pay at the hands of the tiny but terrifying Posey as I pulled up the driveway. Posey, the then Matriarch of the Clan (a role now filled by my sister Veronica), was not to be trifled with. While her husband Sphagetti was more likely to pursue making good on his daily threats to "cut your feckin' head off" with his razor sharp set of lawn shears, it was a quick ending (just ask the McCarrols), while death by Posey was by a thousand cuts, inflicted with a wet dish cloth (although there was one New Year's Eve where she used a baseball bat on the feet of me and my oldest brother (yeah, that one), but that is a different blog indeed). Unlike erring family members, you cannot beat a good family story, especially when there are live witnesses that can corroborate them. I can't always be just living in my own head. Thanks Christina. I'm sure it will all make its way into The Riverdale Chronicles.

Finally, I have thrown down the gauntlet to the Old Fuckers Club (hereinafter "OFC") membership to commit to a group post pandemic engagement in the July 2022's Running of the Bulls in Pamplona. My son Luke, a brilliant writer and fearless Fireman (DFD), was the first family member to perform the feat during his Grand Tour across Europe (and

the Middle East) in the first decade of this Century. C'mon guys, what's a potential goring between friends and I need to get this off my bucket list. The bulls have already reached their quota on a different set of Lenahan brothers, Joe Serrano is the most likely one of us to draw a bull's ire and he has a few lives left from the nine he was given at birth, and BC is protected by the Universe as the eternal keeper of group memories. I'm not sure of Stein's position on the issue as he has gone silent lately. Don't make me do this alone, you'll all feel bad if I meet my mortal demise solely among strangers in a strange land (why wait for the milk truck, eh, Eileen?) We have a year to get ready gentlemen. Stay tuned. . . .

An Alien Appeal Is Launched For Pre-Sales

July 8, 2021



Got to hand it to my publisher, Reagan Rothe, he does not waste any time. I literally handed in my final edits and cover approval for AAA to the BRW design guru, David King, early yesterday morning and by the afternoon it was up on BRW's website for pre-sale purposes:

<https://www.blackrosewriting.com/historicaladventure/analienappeal>

It should be up on all of the other major distributor sites in a couple of weeks. Something to do with meta data transfers

and quantum widgets. Release date remains at 12/23/21.

Would make an excellent Christmas present.

I am very proud to have cover blurbs from three talented women authors. Thank you all.

Vaya con Dios!

For those of my blog readers out there who have been waiting for the sequel, please share the news with your friends. I am really proud of AAA and do not want to go to my grave as a one-hit-wonder.

Now I just need to repeat the final editing and cover creation process for KMAG (release date 4/28/22). The former is pretty much at the final manuscript review stage. I'm sure there will be some last minute tweaking (sorry in advance David). Began the latter cover process with the brilliant Richard Lamb yesterday, sharing some important concepts and leaving it to him to figure out how to capture it for the cover shot. Looking forward to seeing what he comes up with. I'm thrilled with his cover for AAA.

Last night, I was honored to be one of the writers whose recorded essay "Real Writers Weep" was selected as part of Ed McCann's "Read 650 - Where Writers Read" podcast:

The Great Outdoors

2

650-Word True

Stories

- Personal Journals

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-great-outdoors-2/id1562766207?i=1000528168500>

My recording appears at 20:02 of the program. You never get used to hearing your own voice (especially with my Bronx accent). However, if any reader wanted a narrative voice in their head for the Jimmy Moran character in my novel, mine is pretty close.

I was introduced to Ed by that Irish creative genius, Colin Broderick. Thank you Ed. I am greatly appreciative.

Received my first identifiable review of TWA from north of the border yesterday, from Errol, of Edmonton, AB, Canada:

Errol

4.0 out of 5 stars A comfortable and enjoyable read

Reviewed in the United States on July 7, 2021

Verified Purchase

It is rare to find a unique premise for a story, and this book fits the bill. This is a well thought out and researched story that unfolded seamlessly, if bemusingly at times. Is it science fiction? Fantasy fiction? Men... who cares, it was a fun read that drew me into the story.

Thank you Errol, please tell your friends. I am thrilled that the Canadians get the subtle humor (and I can even live with the 4 star rating - each of them have been as substantively supportive as the 5 star group. Just tougher graders. Came across a great article that gave me some well needed perspective - <https://lithub.com/the-50-best-one-star-amazon-reviews-of-faulkners-the-sound-and-the-fury/>). Speaking of the Great White North, I am a devoted

fan of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's comedy series *LetterKenny*, with Jared Keeso. Best comedy ever! Highly recommend it to everyone who gets my humor. To take a page out of Jimmy Moran's book: "It's fucking hilarious!"

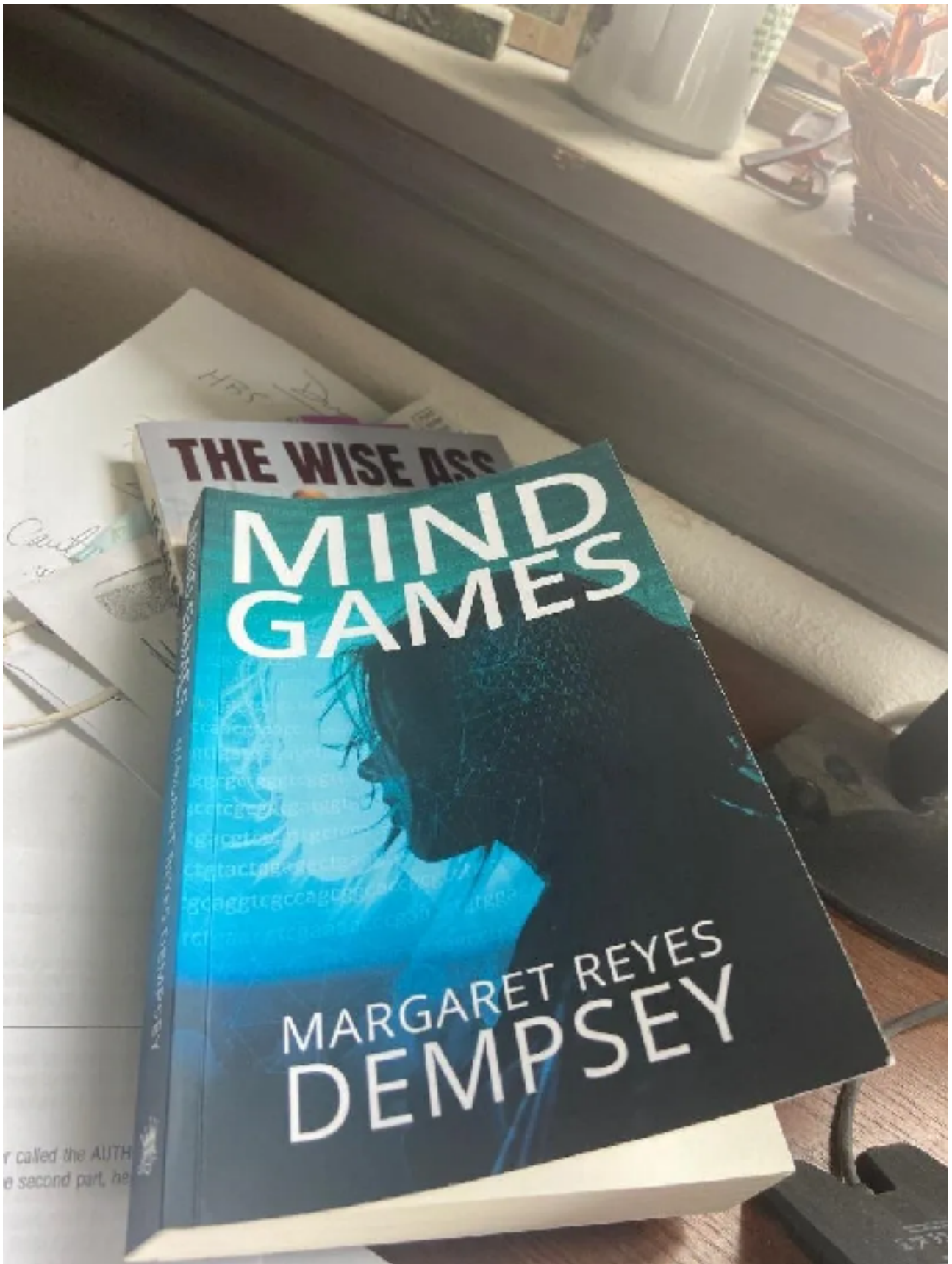
Shout out to Christy Cooper Burnett, whose third book in her Christine Stewart time-travel series, *Escaping Home*, also went live for pre-sales yesterday. Personality-wise, the Christine Stewart and Jimmy Moran characters could be fraternal twins. Good luck Christy!

Speaking of Jimmys, meeting my dear friend, Jimmy Fronsahl, for a farewell breakfast at Grandpa's Diner this morning. He and his dear wife Kathy, are off to Idaho. Bon voyage, bon chance!

Somebody pinch me. I am living the dream.

MIND GAMES - MARGARET REYES DEMPSEY - DOUGLAS KEVIN CORRY

July 7, 2021



THE WISE ASS

MIND GAMES

MARGARET REYES
DEMPSEY

r called the AUTH
e second part, he

Those who have been following my blogs have read about this talented young author and her book, which so impressed me that I asked MRD to provide the cover blurb for my second novel, *An Alien Appeal*. AAA's cover, which I saw in final form yesterday, is brilliant. Thank you Richard Lamb. Two other female authors round out the blurbs for the cover, Christy Cooper Burnett (*No Way Home/Finding Home*) and Sharon K. Middleton (*McCarron's Corner* series). When it comes to brilliant women writers, I am indeed spoiled for choice. I highly recommend their creations.

If you love strong female characters, which I do, then you will love the brilliant and feisty Emily Cooke, the lead protagonist in *Mind Games*. MRD's novel is presently on sale on Kindle for the "steal this" price of \$.99 cents. For the price of a small coffee you can discover and support a brilliant new writer. Put *Mind Games* on your book club list. You'll thank me.

Speaking of females and book clubs, yesterday I received a nice email from Chris Lawton, the sponsor of the Loveland Little Free Library I mentioned in yesterday's blog. Chris was kind enough to track me down to this website and graciously thank me for the donated copy of *TWA*. She also mentioned that her little lending library supported a local group of voracious readers, and that she is actually part of a book club. I offered to come by and do a reading of *TWA* (or any of my novels) should she so desire. Stay tuned.

Speaking of unexpected follow-ups, I received a text from my tree guy Codi, informing me that his fondue date, Becca, thanked me for her inscribed copy of *TWA* and that she "absolutely loves Claire." Marry that girl Codi, she's an excellent judge of character.

Speaking of discerning females, I had a phone conversation with the wonderfully eccentric ex-pat Bronxite, Karen "Cruiser" Anderson (sister of George and the McCaffrey Clan Merlin, Ferd Beck), who will be visiting this upcoming weekend to drop off her dog, Moshe, for a week at Claire's Doggie Day Care. Moshe is an absolute cutie. I just hope she doesn't pick up any of Blue & Jeter's bad habits during her stay. I must remember to snap that selfie with Cruiser to share with the Riverdale Crew (and the readers of my Blog). I also need to hide my hoard of Planters Peanuts, as Cruiser has a nut allergy.

Finally, speaking of Riverdale characters, I would like to mention a young man named Doug Corry. He was BC's youngest brother who died tragically young back in 2009.

But during his too brief a life, his wonderful personality and selflessness made this world a much warmer and more loving place. As my wife Lisa recalled when I mentioned him, Doug was "a sweet and beautiful boy with the longest eyelashes." He was a frequent flyer at Casa McCaffrey in the Bronx, my parents absolutely adored him, and he was, like his older brother, BC, considered one of our Clan. He has been dearly missed. I was thrilled this morning to read the Riverdale Crew (Lenny, Joe and BC) text thread from yesterday which commemorated and celebrated young Doug. You guys rock! Doug will definitely find his place among the other neighborhood legends in The Riverdale Chronicles. RIP.

Loveland Free Library & Planting a Tree & Codi & Fondue

July 6, 2021



Yesterday was a positive day. First part of the day I spent fixing things around the front of the property. Had to tweak a couple of the whirlygigs and then empty and clean the water fountain (and water pump) and level the ground beneath it so that it doesn't lean a tiny bit in one direction (one of those "I'll get around to it" projects that has been annoying me since last summer). Then had to assist my guy Codi, from the Loveland Nursery (great place btw - picked up Drogon and Pan-Mark there) dig a hole in the almost concrete sun baked back yard outside the back patio that was large enough to plant the fifteen foot tree lisa selected to offer shade and a wind break to the back deck while hopefully sucking up the water that can accumulate out back. Too hard for my power auger, so I left the pick axing to Codi's younger back. But I did help him shovel out the pit. Codi mentioned during his herculean labor that he was going on a first date that evening with a very cool girl named Becca. They were going to drive down to Denver for fondue. So I inscribed a book for Becca and sent it along with a nice tip (always pay it forward) and fond wishes for a memorable first date. Young love is the best. Good luck Codi.

Then I located and delivered another inscribed copy of TWA to the Loveland Little Free Library, and I have to say that this library was quite the artistic creation. Its even got a tiny furniture library at its top. Plus great little fairy houses around its base. There's Claire peeking out of the top right. I hope the locals enjoy the book. So now I have seeded Berthoud, Longmont and Loveland, the three local towns mentioned in TWA. Got to keep building that local fan base. Don't like to start a book unless I have a block of time to read it, I did get to read Finding Home by Christy Cooper-Burnett this weekend and posted my 5 Star review on

Amazon - highly recommend this series, but I had to take a peek at New Moons yesterday afternoon before life and other chores got in the way. I only got through the prologue before life interceded but learned beyond cavil that this woman can write. I regretted having to put it down but needs must and I am looking forward to getting back to it hopefully this weekend. I can tell this is going to be a complex tale that I am really going to have to pay attention to as I read or I may miss something. That is why I don't want to try and read it piecemeal, especially after a weekday of lawyering.

These old eyes only have so many miles to them in a given day. But I'm really looking forward to this story.

I did have some fun in the early morning yesterday while prepping equine fruit and veggies for the week. Claire came by the back door for her tithe and I had ABBA streaming (that's right, real men listen to ABBA, what of it?!) so I was thrilled to capture some video of Claire rocking out to the oldies by my back door. Unfortunately I cannot figure out how to post videos on this website. But I did share the videos with friends and family (thank you my adorable grand-pups Jax and Ella for posting your cousin's dance moves on your famous Instagram page Jaxinthebronx) so hopefully it is floating somewhere out in the Internet. Claire certainly is a Dancing Queen. What a truly magical beast! Got a peek at the final cover for AAA, awesome.

Thank God its a short week ahead but I need to turn my lawyer brain on this morning as we are filing some papers today and they are not yet finalized. So until tomorrow. . . .

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMERICA

July 4, 2021



Looking to spruce up the place for our great country's birthday, I spent yesterday doing manual labor around the house cleaning the entire basement level (I kvetch every time, while Lisa handles the two other floors on her days off without complaining). This included broom sweeping up the fine Colorado dust that permeates the house through every open portal, then vacuuming, and then mopping it all over again. It also included moving and dusting all of the furniture (except the furniture in my office, which, out of superstition, I refuse to dust until the last of The Claire Trilogy is put to bed). Then I had to clean the bathroom and then sweep and wipe down the outdoor (below the deck) patio, including the outdoor furniture, Skyclad Hot-tub cover, mirror and alcove. Claire and Honey have a tendency to drag mud across that cement area when they come by the back door to extort their treats. I think they drag their hooves on purpose, like a felon dragging a metal bat along the sidewalk, just to let me know they mean business. And Claire always leaves hoof-shaped mud patties that stick like suction cups when she knocks on the cement to get my attention. Took Wilson upstairs before I started cleaning so he could enjoy the Holiday weekend on the main floor without becoming a triangular version of Pigpen from exposure to the floating dust.

Before I started I had to pick up six 40 pound bags of alfalfa pellets from Murdochs so I swung by and dropped off an inscribed copy of TWA at the Longmont Little Free Library on Main Street in old town. Then I dropped off inscribed copies to Chris, Joan and Maria at the Super Walmart in Longmont. Chris went into the back storage area, not once, but twice yesterday, to dig out from behind numerous pallets the dozen five pound bags of carrots that Claire, Honey and the other equines in the area burn through on a weekly

basis. Joan is a sweet grandmother who works in the front area of the store and always has a pleasant smile and friendly demeanor. She had mentioned that she was intending to buy TWA, so she could share it with her kids and grandkids, so I figured I would save her the trouble and expense. Finally Maria was kind enough to ask if I was the writer she has heard other cashiers talking about as I passed through the self-checkout area with my basket of carrots. That kind of feedback is invaluable. Word of mouth among such a huge closed community subset does wonders for local sales. I also swung by the Berthoud Little Free Library and was pleased to see the copy of TWA already checked out by a local. This is why I keep copies of TWA in the car. As my youngest brother John likes to say, never stop selling.

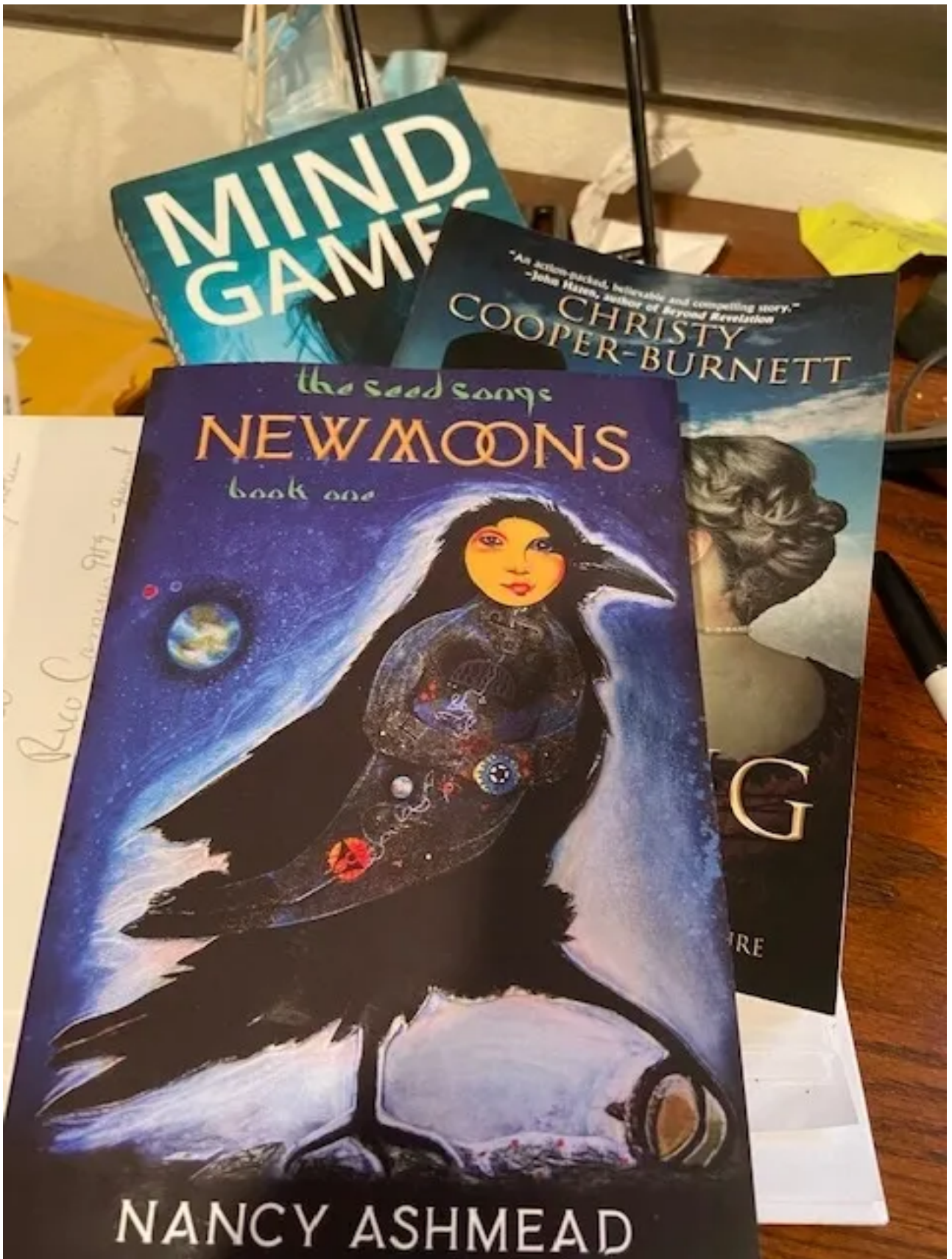
Needless to say, after such an arduous day, I fell asleep a little earlier than usual and when I woke up at 2 am I saw the coolest fingernail moon rising over the eastern horizon when I was walking out to check on and feed Claire and Honey. It reminded me of how blessed I am to live in this area of this glorius country. It also reminded me that we must never take the freedom we have for granted. On that note, I'm hoping to squeeze an hour out of this morning to exercise my Second Amendment rights at the Liberty Firearms Institute with some like minded individuals, before returning home to the outdoor chores that never take a holiday.

So Happy Birthday America!!!! And while you readers go about the day celebrating with family, barbeques and fireworks, take a moment to remember just how unique, wonderful and magical this country is. We have the opportunity to do and be whatever we want as long as we are willing to work for it. Where else can an old dog of a

lawyer reinvent himself as an aspiring writer? We are all
blessed to live here. Have a great day.

FEMALE AUTHORS

July 3, 2021



I've been a consistent supporter of females in general. Anyone who has ever met my wife, daughter and sister, her

spouse, and one of my long term besties Helen L will understand that I am very comfortable hanging around very strong and accomplished women. What can I say, I'm a big fan. And let us not forget the other female in my life, Claire, without whose divine intervention, I would not be sitting here writing this blog about writing. I also have a number of female friends from back east like Eileen Cotto (and the rest of the women in the Collins Clan) and another ex-pat Karen "Cruiser" Anderson, plus a number of newly collected female friends in the area like Michelle Coffelt, Dianne Rosenthal, Pam Ervin, Silja Knoll, Amy Honaker and Janice Erickson. Then there's Kathy Fronsahl, who shot the photo of Claire on the cover of TWA. Then there are those wonderful psychics I'm blessed enough to count as friends like Kim Russo and Bobby Allison. Absolutely amazing women.

Doesn't take a psychiatrist to determine that being surrounded by accomplished females has translated into my fiction being dominated by strong female characters. In fact, a lot of my friends and family members made the cut into The Claire Trilogy.

I think this is why I've gotten a lot of positive feedback from female reviewers, and I am thankful every day for their response and support.

Some of those reviewers turned out to be female authors, who have since reached out to me on this page and from there have developed into friends as well.

Female authors have been consistently amazing in general and certainly in the realm of fiction going back at least to dear Mary Shelly who wrote Frankenstein after a challenge one drunken summer night in Italy to all attendants at a house party that included two of the more notable Romantic

Poets, her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron.

Take that gentlemen.

I've identified a number of contemporary female authors in my blogs. Margaret Reyes Dempsey, Christy Cooper Burnett, Sharon K. Middleton and now Nancy Ashmead. I have read some of their work and posted my own reviews, and will do the same for the others just as soon as I get AAA put to bed (before I start KMAG's final editing and cover).

Thank God they make it easy because they all can write incredibly well (although I'm not going to deny some professional jealousy on my part, they are all that good. I stand by my personal assessment that I am at best a journeyman "writer" who can spin a yarn while these women are "authors" in every sense of that word). I have been amazed at their literary organizational skills, in that their natural ability to multitask is reflected in their consistency in multidimensional character development and complex plot lines. Mary Shelley would be thrilled to see what she started.

Anyway, I wanted to give them a shout out this morning, before I started my Saturday chores. You rock ladies!

Tiny Street Lending Libraries

July 2, 2021



Little Free Library

Dance · Theatre · Writing

Art · Poetry

Music

Take a Book ... Leave a Book

Never realized that there was such a thing as Tiny Street Lending Libraries before watching an episode of *Last Man Standing* (which is purportedly based in Denver) called *The Friending Library* which first aired on February 17, 2017, two months before I emigrated to Colorado. In that episode, Mike Baxter's wife Vanessa develops a new friendship with an old friend, Ed, over a shared love of English literature.

The "Free Lending Library" is based on the real-life "Little Free Library" movement. Its actually "a thing": <https://littlefreelibrary.org>. Someone takes it upon themselves to sponsor and build a small wooden kiosk with a glass door and places it in an accessible location on the street and fills it with books that people can share (24/7), and the public can add to the collection. I never knew it was really a thing, because, sadly, something like that would not last two minutes in the Bronx. But I was a big fan of the NY Public Library on Mosholu, and spent many a rainy day there going through random books.

Once I started to explore Berthoud, I spotted such a kiosk right outside the *Wildlife Art Studio* on Massachusetts Avenue. WAS looks like a really cool place - I must actually stop in there - having passed it a thousand time during my drive-byes coming from Ace Hardware, Mr. Thrift, or The Farmer's Wife. On Wednesday, a new shipment of paperback versions of TWA arrived. Yesterday, I inscribed the first copy out of the box and drove by WAS after my workday was over on my circuitous route to A&W (their beyond burgers are amazing -- thank you Brittany for the cheesy fries, delicious). I was so proud to be able to insert my first novel into the mix at this kiosk, I snapped the above photo. I hope the local community enjoys the read. I will certainly continue to add my other books as they become available.

I think there is another kiosk in Longmont, so I will drop another copy of TWA there this weekend.
Anyway, enjoy the read.

KISSING ASS - CHAUCER - NEW MOONS

July 1, 2021



Anyone who tells you that they succeeded in this world without kissing a little ass is full of shit. But you should be selective as to what ass you kiss. I refer you to The Miller's Tale by Geoffrey Chaucer.

This Absolon gan wyepe his mouth ful drie.
Derk was the nyght as pich, or as a cole,
And at the wyndow out she putte hir hole,
And Absolon, hym fil no bet ne wers,
But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers
Ful savorly, er he were war of this.

Abak he stirte, and thoughte it was amys,
For wel he wiste a womman hath no berd.
He felte a thyng al rough and long yherd,
And seyde, "Fy! allas! what have I do?"

First time I laughed at something written in Middle English, but don't let that put you off, it has been translated into modern English and is just as funny. Bob Mulvey (RIP), a close friend from the GF&M days and a brilliant man, used to recite TCT in Middle English from memory. The only time he didn't mumble. Seriously, you should read at least one of The Canterbury Tales before you die, and my recommendation would be TMT.

Claire, The Wise Ass, has changed my life. I will kiss her anytime and anywhere. Hell. I'd kiss her at noon in Macy's (34th Street) Window during the height of Christmas season. Although I'm sure she would just rather have a carrot.

The Hardback copy of TWA is now up on Amazon.

Absolutely thrilling to see. Must get a few copies for posterity.

Received notice that TWA landed on BRW's list of top ten books for pages read in Kindle Unlimited. Not sure exactly

what that means but you know how much I love TWA being on lists.

Received the revised publisher's pdf version of AAA yesterday. Hopefully will give AAA one last review once I have the legal brief I'm working on (day jobs are a pain) finished and off to my brilliant and very funny law partner, Robert (never Bobby) Meloni (I am in awe of his Copyright and musical genius). Definitely by this weekend. Then its on to finalizing KMAG. Good problems to have.

I ended my first accounting period yesterday on a positive note with Montanabarb's 5 star review which ended with "By the end I was clapping out loud. Can't wait for another installment." Anna tickled my fancy -- stop it -- a few days before with the closing comment to her 5 star review, "Oh and, Tom McCaffrey can write on par with the best."

Music to my ears. Thank you Montanabarb and Anna, and all of my other readers who made the time to read TWA and post a review. I read every one of them.

Was introduced to another talented BRW writer named Nancy Ashmead, who has lived an absolutely amazing life. Magical. (check her out on Amazon - https://www.amazon.com/Nancy-Ashmead/e/B09445BWVF?ref=db_s_p_pbk_r00_abau_000000 - see also <https://www.nancyashmead.com/bio>). Anyway, I have purchased her novel, *New Moons*, and it is sitting next in line behind Christy Cooper Burnett's *Finding Home* on my Summer absolutely must read list. I cannot wait. Did peek at the first page and can tell I'm going to enjoy it immensely. Love ravens.

