

Unexpected Blessings

November 30, 2021



A couple of weeks ago, I posted (on Nextdoor) a short video of Claire dancing in my doorway to a tiny selection from the very cool and fun song, Colorado, by Milky Chance. It's just a bit of silliness that I thought may amuse people (and - for legal purposes - a transformative parody of modern day society's obsession with just about anything that will move to music on DWTS).

Anyway, the video got over 300 likes and a lot of comments, so Nextdoor reached out and suggested I create a group, which I did, called Claire The Mule.

I never thought anyone would bother signing up for it. Nextdoor is a really noisy place where people discuss serious issues, like Covid, vaxx, masks and mandates, with the passion and resolution of the arbitrary egg breaking debate in Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels.

I also had no idea what I would do for content. I mean, I know, from my day-to-day contact with her, that Claire is, indeed, a magical creature. Hell, she has dictated her entire trilogy (if her

hooves could hit the keyboard with any accuracy, I would be instantly redundant). But how much of what I experience in my warped mind will translate to the printed page?

But people did sign up. And I have been trying to wrap my head around how I'm going to provide them with anything worth tuning into. The fact that I'm a Luddite and constantly post things that disappear into the Inter-Web ether, never to be seen again, doesn't make this project any easier. I have to hit the target.

Anyway, yesterday, I received a notice from a new member of the CTM group, and its simple message blew me away:

"thank you for the add. I love Claire! Some days I have a hard time trying to find something to smile about. My husband suffers from Multi System Atrophy of the Cerebellum. I opened the video with Claire and her head in the screen door and all I could do was smile. Thank you for adding me to this group".

If I never do anything else in my life, never write another word, never post another blog, never take another breath, knowing that something I was involved in brought a smile to this woman's face, will sustain me through eternity, even if it is spent sitting on pineapples next to Lenny on the third ring of Dante's hell, like the muppets, Statler and Waldorf, blaming each other for being there. For the record, it will be all Lenny's fault.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14njUwJUg1I>

And so I will continue to figure out silly things to post in the CTM Group. I will try to make them amusing. Because you never, ever, know who will be reading or watching what you post, or what that person may be going through.

And that is the unexpected blessing. You see, I didn't start out trying to be funny. For example, TWA was written in the first person with the observant eye of a Bronx born New Yorker. A wise ass. It deals with a lot of things, family, alienation, love, acceptance, and even death. However, the fact that the readers find some humor in it, and it puts a smile on some of their faces, makes everything about this journey so worthwhile.

I think the creative genius, Preston Sturges, said it best through the words of his character, John L. Sullivan, in his classic Sullivan's Travels:

"There's a lot to be said for making people laugh. Did you know that's all some people have? It isn't much, but it's better than nothing in this cockeyed caravan."

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0034240/>

So mam, the woman who posted that message to me. If you are reading this. I am forever in your debt. I will try not to disappoint you.

The rest of you fine five readers, go out there and find something to laugh at.

And have a great day!

Dopamine

November 29, 2021



The above photo could have been snapped at any 12 step meeting in the United State (if photos were allowed). A vacuous (because your mind is on serious shit) smile and a cupper (thank you v&b for the amazing mule cup).

I've mentioned many times that I have an addictive personality. I get hooked quickly on anything that gets that dopamine flowing. It explains why I have made most of the major decisions in my life, good and bad. I promise to share as much of that as I can work into The Riverdale Chronicles without being arrested, sued or killed. As Clint said, "a man's gotta know his limitations."

This is why I am drawn to things that give me pleasure. I am the experiment rat who keeps hitting the paddle to get the treats. Don't get me started on ice cream (which may be a euphemism).

When it comes to my writing, the same rules apply. As I wrote each chapter of each of the books, the writing itself gave me pleasure.

Dopamine

I couldn't get those chapters out to my inner circle of readers quickly enough in order to receive their immediate feedback (the only rule I impose), after the first few experiments resulted in positive responses. More dopamine.

Then I sent out the finished book to BRW publishing, I must have looked at that acceptance email a thousand times. Kaching!

Dopamine.

Then it was gazing at TWA's cover when it first appeared on-line - and made me a published author in the eyes of the world - lots and lots of dopamine. The same held true for the covers of AAA and KMAG. Instant fix.

When the books started charting - both TWA and AAA have hit number one on a couple of Amazon charts (fingers crossed for KMAG) - mother lode dopamine spikes.

And of course, there are the 5 star Amazon reviews (the 4 star reviews are almost as intoxicating) the crack that keeps pumping my bloodstream with the true nectar of the gods.

The problem with addiction is that its a building process. Once hooked, it requires a consistent and often growing supply of the

intoxicant to keep you in nirvana level dopamine. Plateaus don't cut it. And of course, the higher you fly, the further you fall.

I'm not going to lie. While I thank the universe that I continue to regularly build on my total number of 5 star ratings for TWA (the stand-alone star rating system is methadone to a writer - it staves off the pain, but doesn't give you the same rush as the positive words), the actual number of written reviews that go with those stars has finally started to taper off. Whereupon I was originally getting a few a day, the new packets of words that accompanying the stars have slowed to arriving on a weekly basis. And I am feeling the withdrawal. The sleeplessness, the itching, the paranoia, the delirium tremors.

Thank the stars that when I woke up this morning there was a hit of the good stuff, waiting for me. And this one was a twofer, pure grade. A repeat reader that enjoyed TWA both times. That is the sweet stuff:

Lee Copp

5.0 out of 5 stars Great Book with a couple short comings ! Looking forward to the next one!

Reviewed in the United States on November 28, 2021

I read this book twice in 2021 .. The first shortly after I found it on Kindle .. the second was during Thanksgiving week when I wanted a good read and didnt want to work too hard to get there! You know, a book that you already knew and liked.

The book didnt disappoint me the second time.. still great characters striving to do the right thing.

So what were the short comings .. no dwarves or elves !

It had anthropomorphic critters, space aliens and technology, a little "Good Fellows" vibe, and a touch of "Alice's Restaurant". So Mr McCaffery can be forgiven the slight short coming .. perhaps he can include them in a sequel.

Happy Days

Lee in Florida

Thank you "Lee in Florida!" I am back on the dopamine dragon.

Love the Alice's Restaurant reference, a Thanksgiving weekend

event and mention of nearby Hygiene railroad tracks in TWA -
<https://youtu.be/m57gzA2JCcM>

I have my small and eclectic library of repeat reads. The ones that you want with you on a shipwrecked island. I would run back into a burning building to save them. The fact that TWA may be reaching that level with anyone is the ultimate trip for this humble writer.

And as far as the referenced short comings - SPOILER ALERT - the elves (and sprites) arrive en masse in AAA and I substituted gnomes for dwarves throughout The Claire Trilogy (one actually took a bullet), so as to not offend the wonderful constituents of the LPA.

So, for the rest of my fine five readers, if you or anyone you know want to keep this guy in la la land, post a positive review and let me chase that white rabbit. It will do wonders for my writing.

And have a great day!

Never Forget Where You Come From

November 28, 2021



The day I left New York, I had my Mini Cooper all packed for the drive cross-country. The dogs, Phoebe & Jeter, were in the back

seat and Lucky my black cat, was in her traveling case. I hugged my youngest brother one last time, and was about to take off when I realized I was missing something.

I hopped out of my car and ran into the garage where I was able to locate a Martinson Coffee can, which was a little weird because no one I know drank Martinson coffee, and then ran to the back of the yard where I filled the can with soil from an area where Spaghetti had created a raised garden bed around the huge Tulip Tree (which then doubled as a Pet Cemetery - we always bury the dead). Then I ran back to the Mini, waved without making eye contact and tears, and pulled out of the driveway for one last trip south on Mosholu Avenue.

Two days and a few thousand miles later, our two car caravan (Luke drove the other) pulled into my new home.

As we slowly unpacked our new lives, the Martinson can was placed in the garage with the remaining "do later" projects.

But at some point, Lisa retrieved the can and created a terrarium out of it. I believe my DIL, Georgie, found the glass container and created the cap which originally read "A Wee Bit Of The Bronx."

The Terrarium was moved from place to place in the new house trying to find its perfect spot.

When Lucky and Phoebe passed within the same year, they were both buried next to each other on the rise in my back yard. It overlooks the house in one direction (I can see it from my office window) and the back property in the other, where the much larger grave of Mr. Rogers now rests. I call it Boot Hill. It was after Phoebe passed that I realized that there was a perfect place for my Bronx Earth Terrarium.



That simple jar of Bronx earth connects my past with my future, through the creatures that I love, and the rich soil that was

generated by the likes of the mythic Pepper, Clancy and Cindy (and countless others), now keeps company with the tough, stony soil that carries on the tradition of accepting the remnants of our Colorado dead, my familiar Lucky and my darling Phoebe, and the mystical Mr. Rogers, so that their souls always know how to easily find the living.

So never forget where you come from, and always keep an eye on where you are going.

But while you are at it, savor today. Remember, there are no guarantees. . .

And have a great one.

SCHEELS (BETTER THAN AN AMUSEMENT PARK)

November 27, 2021



Yesterday afternoon, after my firm's close of business (we are 2 hours behind NY Time), I accompanied Lisa on a quest to locate the perfect pair of gym shoes (what Bronx people call "sneakers" - which were also referred to as "felony shoes" back in the day). Up right off of I25, in North West Johnstown, right by Liberty Firearms Institute, is this amazing store called SCHEELS. It is a national chain with I believe 30 stores whose largest branch is in Texas (which is unfathomable given the size of this store). It has absolutely everything you could possibly want or need in the realm of athletic, exercise, outdoor and hunting/fishing equipment.

It has huge - I mean Public Aquarium sized - fully stocked fish tanks - connected overhead - that you walk under as you enter its main common section, which is also the location of this amazing Ferris Wheel. It also has an arcade section and a great restaurant (although in the Bronx, we spell Gina with one "n"). It has padded benches throughout for those suffering husbands who are just not built like their spouses for marathon shopping. And in true Disney style, it has animatronics of everything from large wild animals, to historical figures, and most recently, one of Colorado's favorite son, John Elway, the latter two categories more than willing to entertain you with a speech or two.

I forgot to mention that outside there are these magnificent Bronze statues of historical figures and large animals created by a local family of famous sculptors.

But most wondrous of all to this New Yorker, is the fact that every single worker in this store is as nice and helpful as ANY I have ever met in any store in 65 years. No exceptions. In fact, take the nicest and most helpful associate or manager you have ever encountered and triple it in the nice and helpful factor. I swear its almost cult like.

I study people for a living. This is not an act. A barrage of my most silly and obnoxious wise cracks doesn't even make them flinch. They make Shmoos seem testy (http://www.deniskitchen.com/docs/new_shmoofacts.html).

It turns out that SCHEELS is a lifetime career kind of place that pays their workers a sustainable salary and provides great benefits and upward mobility. Also, if you want to move to any state where they have another store, they arrange it for you.

Anyway, after Lisa found, with this one Ginger associate's invaluable assistance, the perfect pair of sneakers for Lisa's foot-punishing lifestyle and profession, she unhooked my lead and allowed me to run off and explore the store (confident in the microchip she had inserted in the base of my skull - which I fear may also be a dynamite cap). I knew right where I wanted to go. I'm sure there are all kinds of psychological reasons that men find guns exciting, some of them Freudian. But the gun department at SCHEELS is a gender neutral area. Yesterday's Black Friday crowd in the munitions section was easily a 50/50 split between us

and the fairer sex - and I mean that term in they way women judge, not with a condescending connotation. Just walking through this section alone raises any man's testosterone level by 200%. But when you throw into the mix a bunch of bad-ass, gun-totting mammas, daughters and sisters, a man could feel like he has truly died and gone to heaven. I'm not objectifying women or being sexist here. I am just thrilled to see all citizens, at least in this section of God's country, showing an interest in the Second Amendment and self-defense. This represents women's equality on a whole new level. Well done.

Anyway, after slowly ambling through every aisle and past every glass case (leaving lots of nose and fingerprints to mark my territory) - at museum speed and with just the same reverence - stopping on occasion to lift some of the unlimited number of long-guns from their racks and imagine myself - pure Walter Mitty - in every action movie I have ever watched, including every zombie movie, and finally wishing for a way to sneak a couple of thousand dollars worth of purchases past my ever vigilant spouse, I inhaled one last deep breath of this pheromone laden atmosphere - snapped the above photo like a Times Square Tourist - and went off to locate Lisa through cellular communication.

So, gentlemen of my age, the next time you are experiencing a Low T moment, don't go grabbing for that supplement bottle, just take a day trip to the closest SCHEELS in your geographic area and head to the appropriate department. You will not be disappointed.

Well, today is a outdoor and weekly prep day, so I better get at it (before my T level drops).

The rest of you fine five readers (although only four answered Eileen's clarion call the other day - which is indeed worrisome on the "I'm really in a coma" level) please go out and have a great day!

READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

November 26, 2021



The above photo captured the underlying theme of yesterday's Thanksgiving celebration. Books.

That is a photo of my darling wife, Lisa, reading a book to two of my entranced granddaughters, Scarlett and Savanna - the genesis for their corresponding characters in The Claire Trilogy (Lisa is going to kill me for posting that photo - so if there is no blog tomorrow, someone call the Larimer County Sheriff's Office - and BC, don't use this as your alternative theory and cover for a Milk truck assassination). It was a Hallmark moment.

If you have read TWA, you'll further appreciate how important reading is in the magical ascension of the foal Claire.

Forty years ago, Lisa was reading just like that to my children, who have all grown into amazing adults.

One of those amazing adults is my oldest, Luke, who at the exact moment I snapped this photo from afar, was sitting on a stool at the counter from the same kitchen described in TWA, having a lengthy and wonderful discussion with me -- sitting in the same dining room area as described -- about his final editing work on his novel, *Lebanon Red*, which will be published in August 2022. I know this novel is going to be amazing and a breakout hit for Luke. It's an international thriller with an every-man lead character.

Breathtaking.

We also talked about the different writers in our lives that have made a difference to us (Colin your ears must have been burning - Christy and Margaret as well), including those we studied under.

Luke got his writer's bug studying under Tim McLaurin at NC State: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1_carhfZdE

But this conversation at the end of a day of family, fun and food brought my adult life full circle. My wife's engagement of the imagination of my son Luke four decades ago (she taught all of our children to read and they were all brilliant students as a result- and smart-asses), echoed in the way she was now engaging my granddaughters, led to this moment where he is about to embark on the thrilling ride I have been experiencing this past year seeing my own writing manifest publicly. Listening to Luke discuss his novel, which will excite the imaginations of hopefully millions of readers in the future, at the same moment I was watching L excite S & S, made me fully appreciate the importance of writing, and reading, and how thankful I am that my family has embraced both.

So I am going to leave that thought here, and not go off on one of my mental diversions.

If you have a child, or a grandchild, or even an elderly parent, turn off the television and read to them (preferably something written by a McCaffrey - Anne & Todd included - we are a broad church).

The dividends are both immeasurable and unforeseeable, until you have one of these epiphanies, like I did last night.

And have a great day!

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

November 25, 2021



There is an old Irish proverb that appears on a magnet on my fridge: "When I count my blessings, I count you twice."

**When i count my blessings
i count you twice!**

(irish blessing)

This morning, after returning to this warm house from being outside where it has to be in the low teens, I am counting my blessings. I am thankful . . .

That my youngest and his spouse (or her sister) were not the two NYPD officers shot in the Bronx yesterday. . .

That the two officers that were shot are expected to survive. . .

That Lisa and I may have forgotten how to dance (not a euphemism) but we haven't forgotten how to laugh (could be a euphemism). . .

That the barn's heaters are working nicely and Claire and Honey are now standing safely underneath them eating breakfast. . .

That my wife and immediate family (spouse, children & spouses/ s.o., grandchildren and siblings) are all healthy and happy and have put up with me for another year. . .

That I will be sharing a meal with some of them. . .

That my extended family (in-laws, nieces, nephews, cousins, adopted family) are also healthy and happy and ditto. . .

That Claire and Honey remain healthy and happy and have come into my life. . .

That Claire continues to be a close confidant and daily inspiration, and can dance. . .

That my legal practice continues to keep this roof over my head. . .

That I have established some new amazing friends out here in Colorado (Everett & Michele, Jim & Kathy, Mike & Amy, Dianne, Pam, Grandpa's Crew, A&W Crew, Side Tracked Crew), and I have maintained and/or reestablished connections with my old friends in NYC and elsewhere (Helen, OFC, PWIC, anything Collins. who all fall into the "adopted family" reference above, and, oh yeah, Ex-Pat Cruiser, and if I have forgotten anyone, a review of the files in the 50th Precinct should refresh my recollection). . .

That I have friends who are real-deal mediums and psychics, like Bobbi Allison and Kim Russo. . .

That my law partner (and his spouse Adrienne), both of whom I love dearly, have become grandparents for the first time. . .



That Reagan Rothe and his crack production team at Black Rose Writing are my publisher. . .

That *The Claire Trilogy* is complete . . .

That *The Wise Ass* continues to do well in sales and reviews. . .

That *An Alien Appeal* is doing well in pre-sales. . .

That *KMAG* looks great and should be on-line for pre-sale early next week. . .

That I made it into *The Writing Irish of New York*. . .

That Luke McCaffrey's novel, *Lebanon Red*, is being published in August 2022 (Matthew 3:17). . .

That Colin Broderick is a friend and mentor, that he continues to explode as a multi-faceted artist/auteur and that he and his family remain happy and healthy. . .

That Billy Collins, multi-time Poet Laureate of the US and New York, mentioned me in a letter. . .

That I have made great friends in the writing community like the amazingly talented Christy Cooper Burnett, Margaret Reyes Dempsey and Richard Lamb and will hopefully continue to expand that circle. . .

That I have my fine five daily blog readers and a couple of more reading *The Claire Trilogy*. . .

That I am able to blog each morning. . .

That I seemed to have inherited Nana Burke's Eccentricity & Magic and Spaghetti's Obstinance & Love of the Earth and all its creatures. . .

That I am looking forward to writing *The Riverdale Chronicles*. . .

That I am slowly adapting to social media and the Inter-Web. . .

That I wasn't taken out in that recent car accident. . .

That my magical Toyota wasn't totaled and is now back home with me. . .

That Blue, Jeter and Smokey seem to be enjoying life. . .

That Skyclad continues to warm and revitalize these skyclad old bones. . .

That I continue to see the magic in the world. . .

That I grew up with the siblings and friends I was blessed with, who are all crazier than I am, and would each take a bullet for me, and I them . . .

That there is a real Jimmy Moran. . .

That I have met amazing characters in my life - including Dan Pearson - that would make *Big Fish* proud (and that I can still remember them). . .

That the great Milk Truck hasn't taken me. . .

And that I know there are so many more things for me to be thankful for, and if I could sit here a little longer I would continue to extend this list, which is neither comprehensive nor complete. . .

Now the rest of you fine five readers, please take a good look around yourselves this morning and make a few mental notes as to why you are thankful on this day for such things. Ignore anything you cannot personally control. It really puts life in perspective.

But most of all, have a great day!

PS: I have a big favor to ask anyone of my fine five readers, who have not yet posted any comments up until this point. . .

Go Daddy is shutting off the ability of readers in general from posting comments by December 15th. If you are one of my five readers, and have a moment, could you do me a favor and post a comment just saying hi (or maybe, more creatively and boldly, "Fuck Go Daddy!") and letting me know you are out there, just so I can prove to myself that I am not doing this all in my head during an extended coma. I would greatly appreciate it.

Votive Candles

November 24, 2021



Growing up in the Catholic Church, I was introduced to the concept of votive candles when I was too young to pray. After making a small donation through a metal slot built into an adjoining panel, you got to light one of the candles that were usually included in a regimented group on ascending racks positioned at certain spots along the back or sides of a church. I was fascinated by the process itself. Once your donation was secured, you would lift one of the many wooden taper sticks - very similar to chop sticks - that were sticking out of a small box of rice or sand, like a burnished pin cushion, select the candle you wanted - I was always fond of those in the highest level of the rack, they were closer to God so my intentions would flow unimpeded to Heaven - and then you lit the wooden taper on someone else's candle (I always wondered if that gave that person's prayers an additional boost) and then ignited your own. Then you said a short prayer which usually included asking for special help with a problem (never a shortage in my youth), or acknowledging someone who was sick or passed. I could just imagine the lower level angel who was in charge of receiving those votive candle prayers, sitting there in front of what may have appeared like one of those old fashioned telephone exchanges, who pressed the corresponding button to your candle on the panel before him/her, then jotted down your released prayers on a tiny piece of paper. He/she would then tear the memorialized prayer off its pad and slip it into an ergonomically placed vacuum tube that had a sign on it: "The Big Guy" and you could hear that vacuum sucking sound as your special prayer disappeared through the tube into the cloud cover above.

When I was first a patent bearer (the lowest level of altar boy - analogous to the votive angel), one of my Saturday morning tasks was to replace the expended votive candles in their colored glass jars with nice new ones. I was always careful to replace only those that had burned themselves out, because I didn't want to interfere with the complete transmission of the accompanying prayer. You never knew whether the person lighting the candle was saving the disclosure of the name of the deceased/ill person being commemorated until the very end of their prayer, and I didn't want

to cut them off before the name reached its mark. I could imagine the old lady just finishing up her decade of the rosary with a fevered flourish - "And finally, most of all, God, I want you to receive and protect the soul of my recently deceased husband (pfffft) -----"

That would suck.

Anyway, even though my Catholic faith has lapsed just a bit (I keep forgetting my automatic excommunication due to my apostasy when I became a Minister with the Universal Life Church - thanks for sharing that, Ferd) I will still pop into a church I may be passing and light a votive candle, just to make an anonymous charitable deposit and say a prayer for one or more of my deceased, very religious, Irish Ancestors. I will do this especially for my poor mother, who was so worried about getting past St. Peter, that I actually lit votive candles directly addressed to my dead friends asking them to make sure she did so. That in itself was a leap of faith, given that my friends, like me, may never have received the secret password to get past St. Peter themselves. But if they did get in, I'm sure they have made a copy of the key to the back gate. Long may they reign, wherever they are. See you soon (a relative term), but don't rush me.

So, over the years, I have taken the candle-burning out of the church, and changed their title from "votive" to "intention."

Tomato . . . tomato.

Now, when I have something really important that I want the Universe to focus on, I will write it in indelible marker on the glass casing of the candle, which I buy by the case. I find writing it down crystalizes the thought. Mental prayers can be a little erratic - a lot of "oh yeah, and. . ." The lawyer in me is very careful with my word selection. You must be very precise in what you ask for. Best to be a wordsmith.

In my view of Spirituality, there is no telephone exchange or low level angels acting as middlemen/women to my intentions. My mystical entreaties go directly to the boss (who, as that perfect entity, is neither male or female, angry, jealous, or vengeful, but is pure love, always listening, and may be prone to a giggle or two).

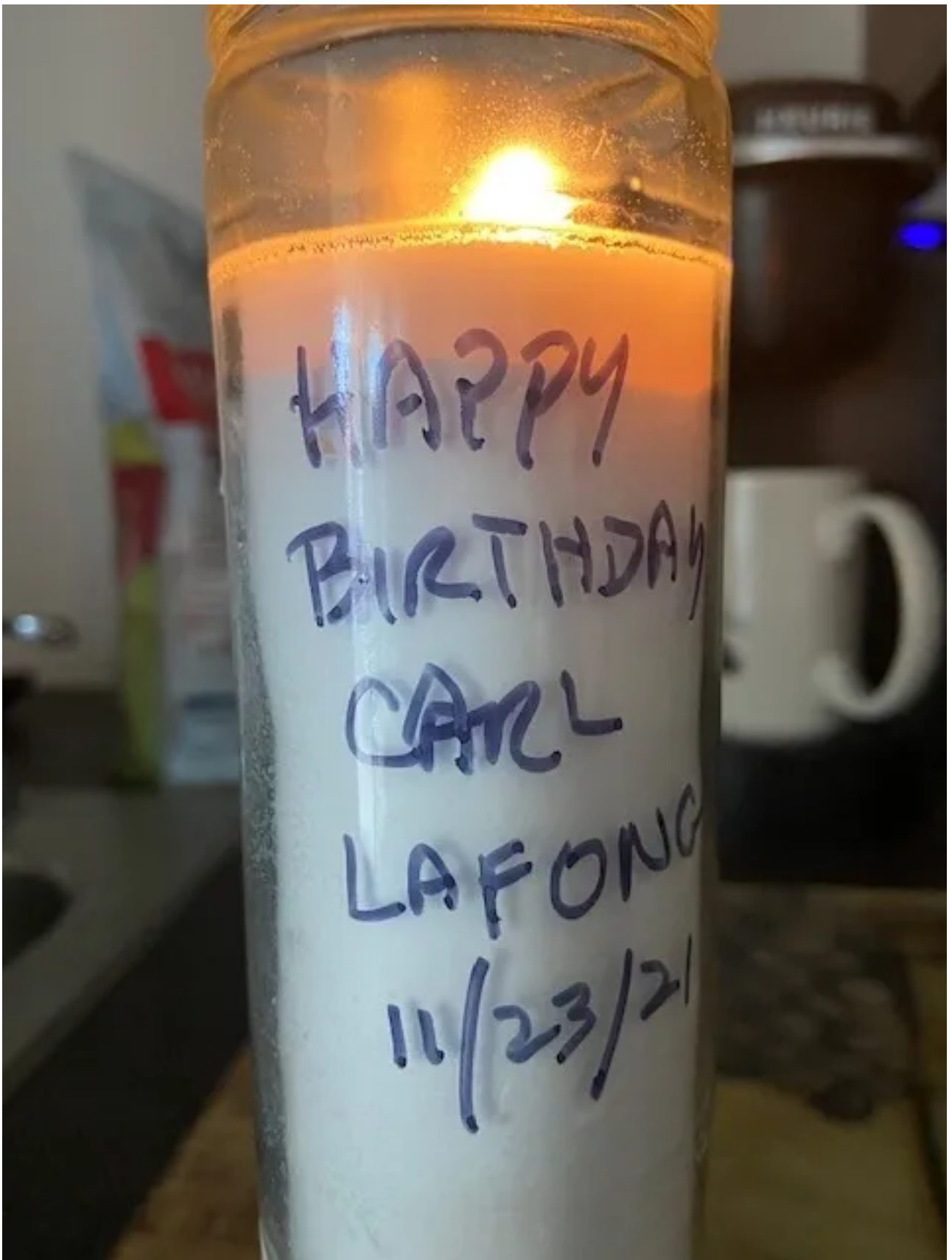
And I don't have to pay the ecumenical broker's fee to light the candle.

Of course, I usually light these candles and set them outside to burn overnight. I leave them out on a well protected concrete altar, inside a hurricane lamp case, where they will not accidentally ignite a wildfire (I don't want any warm-ups, so to speak, for my afterlife), something that we Coloradans (did I actually just say that) take very seriously. The genetic Druid in me (as a lover of nature) likes to follow the lunar cycle, saving certain intentions for certain phases of the moon, which I consider the nightlight of the universe.

But when it's all said and done, this candle ritual is just an extension of my childhood religious training. I focus my intention and then light a candle to release it on its way. Just like my very Catholic ancestors. Magic. Amen.

The really weird thing is that this process really seems to work for me. It has gotten to the point that I often receive requests for a candle launch from family and friends who are looking for that belt and suspenders approach. All roads lead to Rome, as they say. I am happy to oblige.

Anyway, the above photo is of a candle carrying my most recent intentions. I would share what they are, but after 65 birthday cakes, I know not to tank a candle wish by disclosing it in public.



So, as we approach our national holiday of Thanksgiving, tomorrow, if you get a chance, pop into your local place of worship (or at your

own little spot at home) and send off a votive candle or two commemorating all that you are thankful for. I know I will, as I have been truly blessed in my life.

So you fine five readers go out there and get the final trimmings and sides for tomorrow's feast, put aside your petty family squabbles (we all have them) and prepare to give thanks for all the blessings you may not have paid attention to. And have a great day!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JOE SERRANO

November 23, 2021



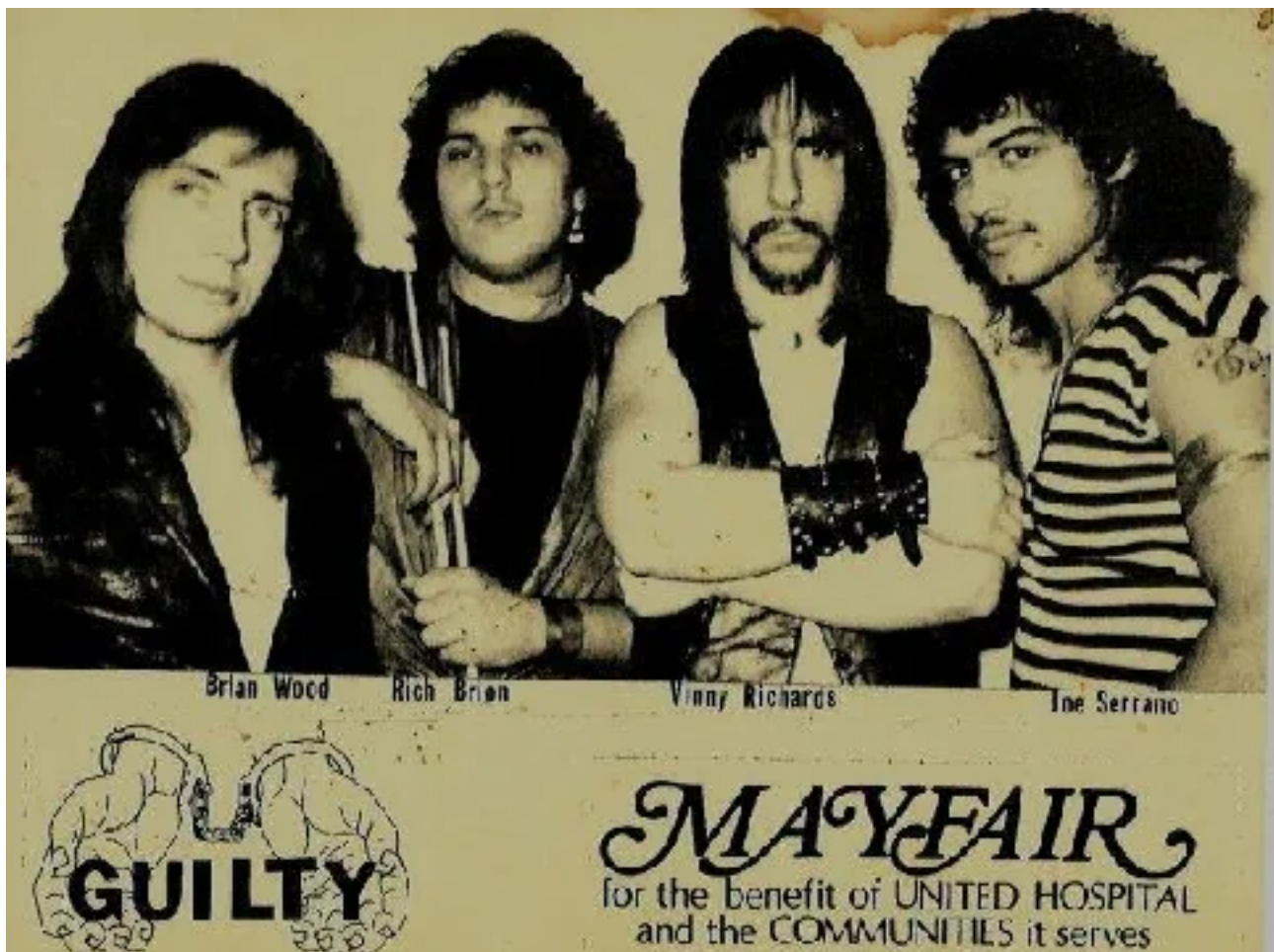
I really wish I had better editing software.

The above photo was taken of me and my dear friend Joe Serrano on Riverdale Avenue right outside St. Maggy's school yard when we were in sixth grade. 1967. It is the oldest photo I have of the two of us. The photo was taken with my Polaroid camera. I'm guessing one of the crew of girls we hung out with snapped it for us.

Joe was wearing his ubiquitous P-Coat (He was the first to wear one, we all soon adopted the look). I believe that was the year I experimented with Sun-In, which gave my dark brown hair a different hue (again, no wonder I am bald now).

Joe and I stayed friends - indeed we shared the wildest years of our lives living as roommates with Lenny (the real instigator of all things insane) at Aunt Violet's Flop House -- until we both got married (we were in each other's wedding parties and I wrote "help me" on the bottom of his shoes at his first wedding which remained visible when he kneeled on the altar) and started living our separate lives.

The below photo captures Joe in his AV years.



Carlos Santana, eat your heart out. If I should outlive this bastard, I will chisel "Guilty" on his grave stone.

During the AV years, we (and by that I mean the members of the OFC - including BC and Stein -- the latter of whom I would have to say was considered by all to be Joe's best friend -- lost some friends, did incredibly insane things, many of them illegal (the statute of limitations has run on them all), had the wildest brawls, and learned what it was like to fall in love, some repeatedly (all of which will all appear as thinly disguised events in The Riverdale Chronicles). But most of all, we were loyal to the death to one and other. We helped clean up each other's messes, often in the middle of the night. We had each other's back. We know where the bodies are buried.

Then the real world happened. We all entered our different professions - mine legal, Joe's Medical (surprisingly, the OFC were a lot brighter than people thought and we have all become somewhat accomplished in various fields, however, none of us

suspected it at the time). We got married (Joe a few times) had and raised kids and moved to different places. We lost touch.

I'm going to admit it, I sucked at being an adult friend. I was too focused on my own shit. Lenny was the only one left in my immediate circle who remained local enough to have any regular contact with me when he wasn't traipsing off across the country being the Bukowski version of Chef to the Future:

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

Lenny was like a feral cat, he entered your life when he wanted to, and left just as spontaneously. Completely undemanding of your attention. He remained my mental lifeline to the wild and adventurous universe.

BC was the one out of our group that, despite moving to Rochester to be a computer genius, made it a point of maintaining his connection with my family (he was also friends with all of my brothers and my parents loved him - God knows why ;)). So he would roll into town unannounced during his sporadic vacation trips and camp out at whatever family home was unlocked. You haven't lived until you come down into your kitchen in the middle of the night to see BC slithering through your kitchen window The recurring holiday squatter. To give him his credit, he was the constant reminder, indeed, the keeper of the flame (at least an ember), to attest that our crew's friendship meant something, and should be maintained, even if only in BC's photographic memory. But for all intents and purposes, the crew was estranged. Life happens.

Fast forward four decades. Lisa and I have moved west. TWA was willed into existence. Out of the blue I got a call from BC, who was updating his memory bank, had learned from Jackie Vaughan (another vital member of the Riverdale crew and a character in KMAG) at a Fordham Prep reunion that I had moved to Colorado and was wondering if the rumor was true and I was indeed in the Witness Protection Program. BC, ever the opportunist, was probably confirming the rumor, all the while calculating collecting the bounty.

Then, once TWA was published, I got a strange email through my website from Stein, who also shared a lot of photos he has from

back in the day. He was like Deep Throat in Watergate (You young folks look that up).

And that got me thinking about the other members of the OFC. And the insane life we lived.

Oddly enough, I cannot put it together chronologically, because it all happened relatively quickly, but one thing led to another and the next thing I knew I was back in touch with a lot of the old gang, including Joe, who I learned was living in upstate New York in an area first colonized by the northern contingent of the Collins family (Eileen has been monumental in extending those re-connections).

Now the thing about surviving to our age is that there are not too many really death defying things left to do in life (although I have not given up on Pamplona in July 2022), and indeed, you ultimately realize that the defiance you so proudly wore on your younger armor, now rusty and worn, could be soon overcome by the Reaper.

So, when reestablishing this contact with Joe and the rest of the crew, the memories and recollections of our exciting lives well-lived have returned with a vengeance.

And no one defied death better than Joe Serrano.

It seems, he still does.



Indeed, I am struggling to recall at this moment one event at which the Grim Reaper danced with us all that Joe wasn't calling the tune. But he never paid the piper. He always laughed when that last note was played. Exit, stage left.

Joe has led an amazing life (which I will mine the shit out of for TRC), and I want to take this opportunity to publicly tell him that I and all of his friends, especially the members of the OFC, love him dearly.

Old friends are best friends.

So Happy 65th Birthday Joe, from your old friend Smokey!

The rest of you fine five readers, have a beer today in Joe's name, and wish him well. And have a Great day!

IRISH STEW: Colin Broderick - Searing Storyteller of the Irish

November 22, 2021



I think I've done a double posting just once since I started blogging.

I just listened to *The Irish Stew* podcast interview with my friend Colin Broderick.

You can find it here: <https://www.irishstewpodcast.com/s3e6-colin-broderick-searing-storyteller-of-the-irish/>

Here's this guy I thought I knew for decades, having read his books and watched his films, broke bread, and just shot the shit with him. I've even watched other interviews. After this hour was over I realized I probably knew only one-tenth of what makes Colin the multi-faceted artist that he is.

I knew the bricks that went into the imposing wall of a career that he has built, but this interview gives you the cement that holds it all together. Total honesty.

When it was all said and done, I came away thinking I was even more proud and honored to call him a friend and mentor.

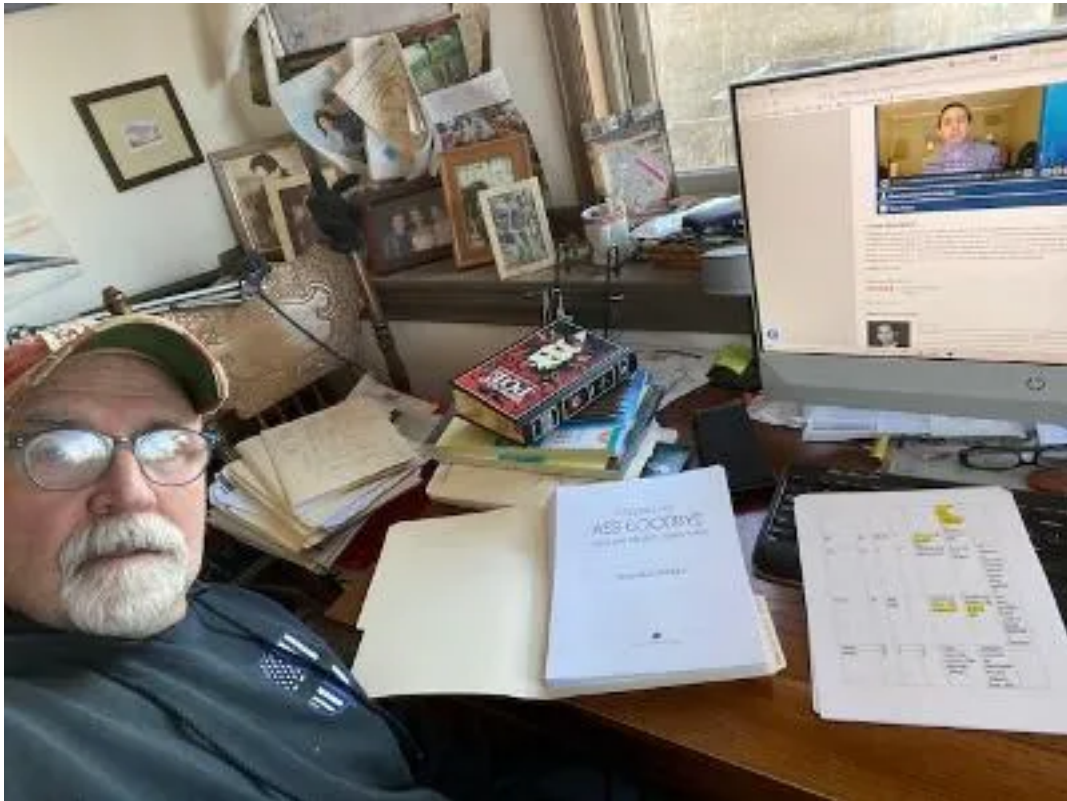
I'm not going to write a book report here, despite taking ten pages of notes, because I know I cannot convey the nuances that only listening to this interview will provide. Maybe its the brogue. Just give it a listen when you have an hour to spare.

One clear takeaway is that whether you are off-the-boat Irish or, like me, Irish American, Colin makes you fully appreciate that it is a false distinction, and that the threads of the diaspora travel down through generations and across oceans and continue to bind us all together through our art and culture.

Well done, Colin.

KMAG

November 22, 2021



The gods smiled upon me yesterday when David King, the Design Director at BRW, sent me the "final" pdf manuscript of KMAG for review and approval. It arrived at a perfect time, given that I was chained before my computer completing my CLE review, so I was able to spend the time advancing both my dual professions simultaneously. Don't think I did not notice that this poor man was working on a Sunday. Such is the devotion of my publishing team. You cannot out work them.

Now I have to mention that, after my prior review of the first PDF publisher's manuscript back in October, I had sent David a 32 page schedule with corrections and revisions (that's a copy of the infamous schedule on the right of the photo), which would have made any editor weep. David did an amazing job of capturing them all - even further correcting a couple of my changes. Brilliant David.

This time, as is always the case when you read something fresh after a month, I only sent him a 2 and 1/2 page schedule of further

and final edits. But this is it. I swear to God. I told David he doesn't even need to send it back to me for approval. I trust this man.

Of course, no sooner did I send the final corrections email, when my loyal sister from another mother, Eileen Cotto, who was also checking the edits, noticed that I had overlooked a misspelling of the word "propagate." My version of that word had two "o"s (my only excuse is that I was spelling it phonetically with a Bronx accent). And given that I wasn't reading for errors and the pdf didn't apprise me by putting a little squiggly line underneath the offending word, it slipped by me. So I had to send that sheepish "bye the way, fix this too" email right afterwards. Come on Eileen (too loo rye ay) - my clumsy (and fair use transitional) homage to Dexys Midnight Runners!

I am praying that, after the appropriate amount of cursing my every breath, David makes these final changes and gets KMAG up on BRW and Amazon's websites for pre-sale before Black Friday. That would indeed make this Thanksgiving very special. The Claire Trilogy as a complete collection would make a wonderful Christmas present, even if KMAG does not drop until March 24, 2022. You get to reread TWA and read AAA before hand so you are fully up to speed.

Now my multitasking abilities were further taxed by the fact that the members of the OFC were in true texting form yesterday, and that every ping from my cell phone evoked a Pavlovian response to check the text and laugh at whatever was written. Of course, there were accusations flying that, given my blog, there is nothing safe from disclosure on the OFC text, which I denied most adamantly.

But just to prove them right, here's a recent photo of Joe Serrano's poor man's impersonation of *moi*:



Of course, if I were a petty bloke, I could use this visual comparison - and all of the jokes that went with it - we even have the same wrinkled forehead - to transition into a childhood story (note for the record - everything I say here is a lie) of how, one dark and rainy night during my perm days (which may explain my present hair follicle challenge)



(that is the infamous perm and the equally infamous MIA Stein in the above photo)

.as I was entering Joe's Javelin (the one time he allowed me to borrow it - I may have been transporting a stolen industrial sized fire extinguisher in the back seat), which was double parked before Coaches 2 - I only had one beer - I was surrounded by an anti-crime unit of gun drawn, plain clothes officers. But I won't. Instead, I'll post this much more interesting photo of Joe, shortly after he had the plastic surgery done so that he could look just like me:



I think the end result was well worth it. Oh by the way, Joe's 65th Birthday must be falling about this time. So happy birthday brother! Welcome to Medicare.

Or I could venture into mentioning how BC has expanded his breakfast cereal brand with hopes that I may partake of it before he gets me with his milk truck, in his twisted effort to prevent KMAG -- in which he appears as the most evil of villains - from seeing the light of day.

https://www.lowes.com/pd/Corry-s-1-75-lb-Snail-and-Slug-Killer-Pellets/4185465?cm_mmc=shp_-c_-prd_-lwn_-ggl_-PLA_LWN_241_Chemicals_-4185465_-0_-0_-0&ds_rl=1286981&gbraid=0AAAAAD2B2W9D2Xc0Hv4-6g3J1a721m7wa&gbraid=0AAAAAD2B2W9D2Xc0Hv4-6g3J1a721m7wa&clid=EAlalQobChMI6aX96euq9AIVEoaGCh1FIQHdEAQYASABEgKlg_D_BwE&gclid=aw.ds



But that would be telling.

Finally, I could even post a photo of an interesting young woman that one of the other OFC members shared (a bastard who has a thing for flautists and Ian Anderson), but I won't give that rat bastard the satisfaction of being right.



Instead, I will share extended family photos taken this weekend at the birthday celebration of Young (at 50) Brian "Peanut" Collins, standing in as a placeholder for his sister Terry, in this photo of the Collins women (who make their brief appearance in KMAG as the gnomes on Gnome Island):



That's Eileen C towards the right side, brandishing her perfectly natural dark hair. Thank you EC for all of your reading/editing work on KMAG. Left to right, my Collins sisters: Anne, Maureen, Brian/Terry, Mary, EC and Jeannie. For the record, Terry is much prettier in person and does not have a stash. As a long lost (and very blurry) photo of Terry will attest:



I believe that was a pen in her mouth (not a cigarette, or a joint).
You have not lived until you have partied with this family.

Wonderfully incorrigible.

Not to be outdone, below is a photo of two of my Collins' little brothers, Billy (you really need to read the family texts) & Brian (Michael - the eye socket stoner - was unavailable):



Now, for the record, I used to take young Peanut to school in the morning in my infamous yellow school bus. He was 5. Where did that time go?

Billy, on the other hand, recently recalled (I will state for the record that his hypnotically induced recollections of alien abduction have more validity) that I once allowed him to visit Aunt Violet's Flop House while he was still in single digits and that somehow he managed to consume a couple of mislabeled cans of coke that had a barley taste. I believe Joe's name was also mentioned in that contrived recollection. I'm certain Billy confused me with Lenny, that happened a lot back in the day (it's a well known fact that when young men live together in an Animal House setting, they begin to look alike - just ask the cops). Upon Billy's return home, he was immediately relegated to the showers by Dutch and Momma C to remedy his sudden onset of the flue.

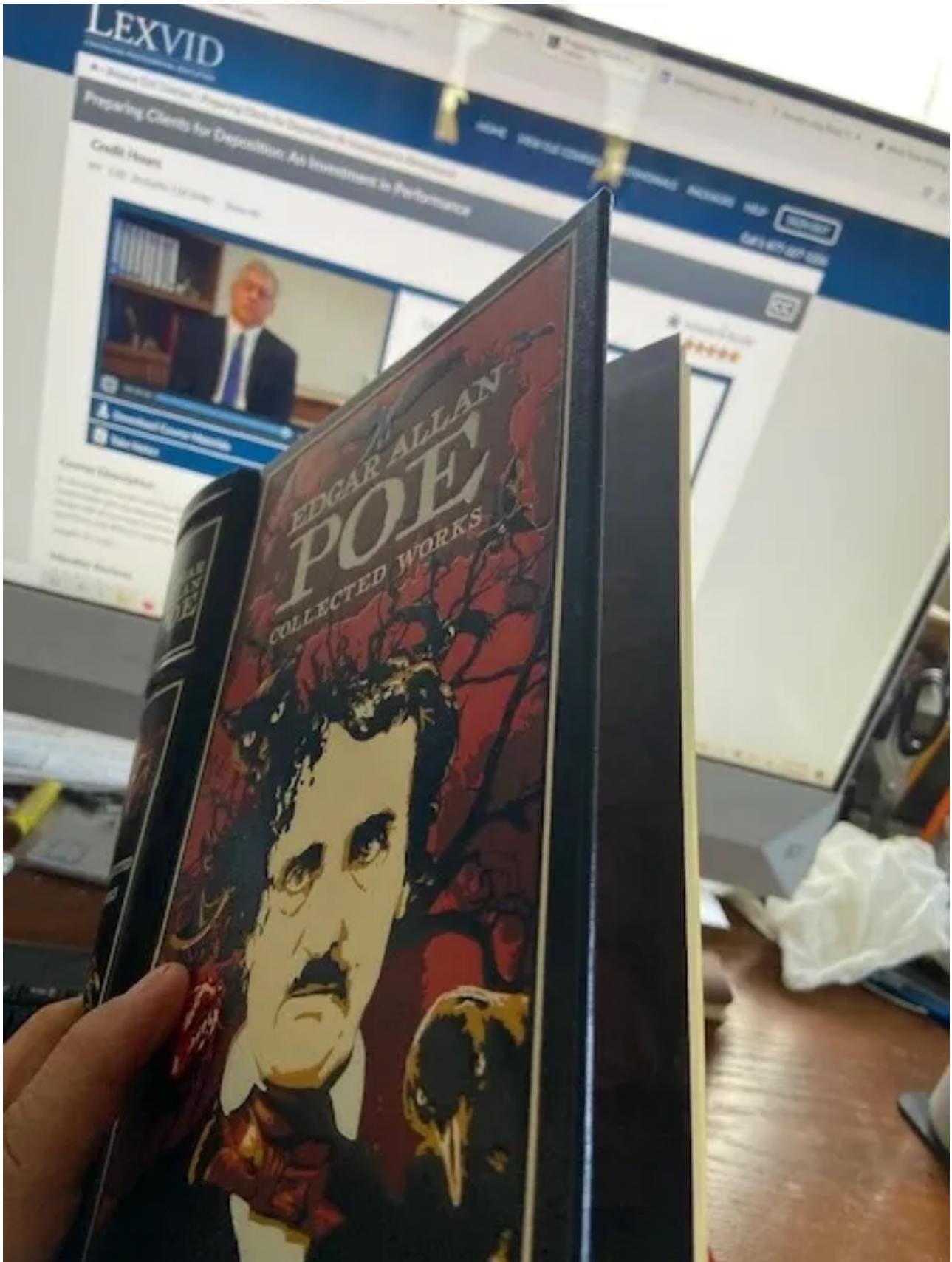
Anyway, I love this family. (Special shout outs to Murray, Kevin and John, now rocking the celestial penthouse view).

But the night is ending and the lark does sing, so I must be gone:

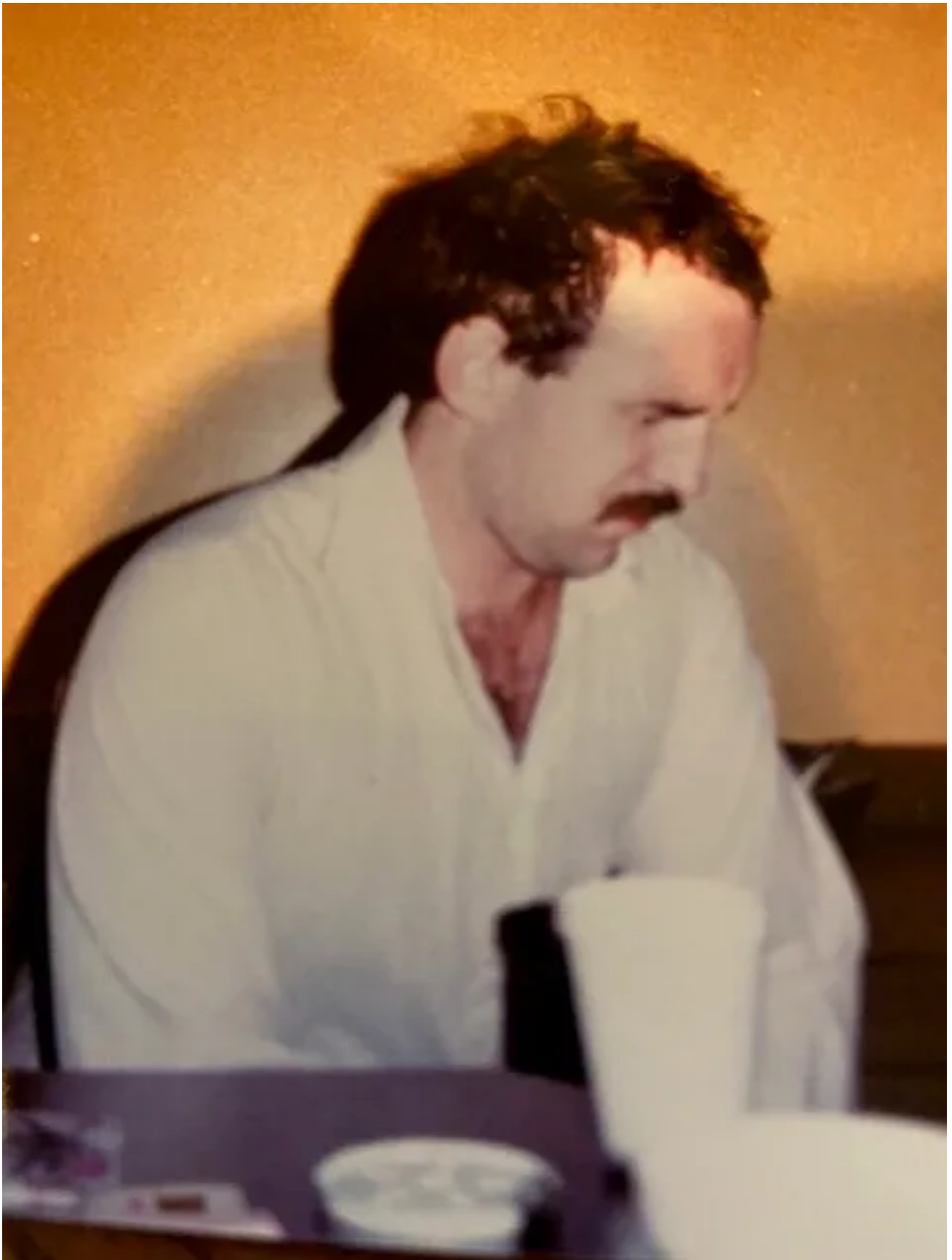
" It is the lark that sings so out of tune,
Straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps.
Some say the lark makes sweet division"
The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, WS, Act II, Sc V.
Now that's how you stick an ending.
Have a great day!

Multitasking

November 21, 2021



One more day of CLE review and then I'm done for the next two years. (And if Claire lands that movie deal, possibly for good.) I think the above drawing of EAP on the book cover has pretty much captured how happy this compelled continuing legal education process makes me. I see EAP shares the McCaffrey brow and our haunted look. I even sported a similar mustache into my thirties.



For those of you that have not read my earlier blogs, the above photo captured the worst hangover I ever suffered in my human

form. And that was all BC's fault! (You will no longer wonder why I named the most evil character in The Claire Trilogy after him in KMAG). But, if you want to know more, you'll just have to go back and find that blog. (To tell the truth, my sitting chained to my computer doing this CLE review must be invoking a similar visage). Given EAP's own fondness for alcohol, I wonder if he ever used his protruding brows to open a beer bottle?

The above particular book was a 65th birthday gift from my son and beautiful DIL, Georgie. It was the perfect gift, as I had lost my last Poe compendium (given to me by my daughter, Jackie, on an earlier birthday) when I left the treasured tome on the backseat of a cab in Chicago in 2016. Luckily, I had just finished that book. It had taken me a year, because, as brilliant as Poe is, you have to be careful not to overdose on his writing. There is a certain melancholy that can creep into your soul.

Yesterday, I was determined to multi-task, given I was chained to the computer on a weekend day. Claire demonstrated her own displeasure at my absence by repeatedly banging on the side metal gate like an angry cellmate.

EAP's collected works was sitting on the desk, staring mournfully at me, so I picked it up and started reading the introduction by a professor named Adrienne J. Odasso, PhD. It turns out that EAP had a rough time of it. To begin with, he was orphaned at a young age and then raised by the Allans (hence the middle name). While he was prolific as a writer, he only wrote one novel: *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pyn of Nantucket*. He had his demons, alcohol and gambling (must have been an Irishman in that woodpile), and his monumental failures - court marshaled and expelled from West Point. His wife, Virginia, died of tuberculosis (which inspired his poem *Annabel Lee*), and finally, despite his objective success as a writer, he was found unconscious, alone on a park bench in Baltimore. He died shortly after on October 7, 1849. He was just 40 years old.

Back in the seventies, I visited the Poe Cottage in Poe Park on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. This was not as easy as you would think. The visiting hours were extremely limited, even then, given the City's desperate financial situation. The only thing I remember was how tiny it was and how the rooms had weird shapes to some

of them, caused, I believe, by the slope of the roof. The Poe family must have been tiny in stature. Not one of my brothers would have fit through the doorway. I also remember the possibly apocryphal story that the house had to be moved from its original location, which was right in the center of where the Grand Concourse now ran. However, this was where EAP and his wife, Virginia, lived. So there had to be great tragic energy in that building. I hope the cretins that repeatedly vandalized the cottage in the 70s have gotten there just desserts. "Quoth the Raven, Nevermore."

To tell the truth, I spent more time drinking in Poe Park during my misspent youth, than thinking about the writer whose name it bore. So maybe I honored him in a more natural way back then.

Speaking of drinking and EAP, I do love the story about the Poe Toaster (drinks, not bread). It is a series of unidentified persons who, for over seven decades, paid an early morning tribute to EAP on his birthday, January 19th, by visiting the cenotaph marking his original grave in Baltimore, dressed in black with a wide-brimmed hat and white scarf, and toasting the writer with one glass of cognac, before disappearing while leaving the bottle of cognac and three red roses on the once upon a time grave site.

I would gladly put playing that role of the PT for one year on my bucket list. I would even swallow the cognac.

Personally, even though I am not (yet) the household name that EAP remains, and I was not published until I was 24 years older than that writer will ever be, I would not trade the life I have lived for his. And hell, by next March I'll have three novels published. But I would be lying if I did not admit that it would be pretty cool to have some person be my Poe Toaster whenever the opportunity arises. Note to potential applicants, instead of booze and flowers, just leave a bag of Smarties.

But to you young struggling writers out there, who believe they would sadly sell their souls to be as successful as EAP, be careful what you wish for. It appears that the glamour and adulation were primarily posthumous. So, don't go signing any documents in blood without talking to a lawyer (now there is a CLE I could get behind - how to negotiate a contract with the Devil, taught by Daniel Webster - the former must by his very nature be another member of the Bar - no CLE for Satan).

But, for the rest of my fine five readers, get out of the house, go out for a long walk, share a meal with a friend or loved one, read a short story, poem or novel, but most of all enjoy your day. And have a great one!

The Little Things In Life

November 20, 2021



As the weather gets colder I worry about all of my outdoor feral family, in particular, our feral cat, Smokey. So I was thrilled to see that he has fully acclimated to his outdoor, now heated, nuclear bomb shelter.



Over the past month Smokey has put on his winter coat, but when the wind blows and the snow falls the best of coats will fail you. You need that solid and warm roof over your head,



And where I used to find Smokey waiting outside for me on the porch each morning, he now has shown the good sense to wait inside his home until I bring the food and warm water out to him and set them their bowls - sometimes it is so cold I have to bring the water bowl back inside and run it under hot water to get the ice block out of it. The first thing Smokey goes for is the warm water - I'll have to see if I can find some catnip tea.

Now, the funny thing is that while I was the first one to put a cat house outside for Smokey, I could only find a relatively cheap firm wool model at Walmart. I wasn't sure it would withstand the elements. Lisa was the one who went on-line and ordered this very expensive version of a cat-house crock-pot. So I took the Walmart version and placed it in the thicket of bushes out by the front of the property. Oddly enough, Smokey preferred his Walmart Special through out the summer months, even though the crock-pot came with special insulation (able to withstand radiation and force from a 100 megaton detonation), had a very comfortable circular pillow inside, and had special air vents at the top to allow for cooling. It probably tapped into my Wi-Fi as well.

Nothing I could do enticed Smokey to use the crock-pot, not even spraying it with cat nip.

But once I added that electric heated cat bed to its interior, voila.

Now Smokey spends his time napping with head or paws in its doorway enjoying the warmth while keeping an eye on the other inhabitants of the Jack the Spruce Grotto -- the fairies, dragons, and Pan-- and also my front door. And that will keep Smokey in good stead, when our occasional blizzards strike.



It is the little things in life that give us the most pleasure.

Speaking of pleasure, I am pleased that Christy Cooper Burnett's latest book, Escaping Home, has started out strong over its first couple of days. With winter approaching, I cannot recommend a better way to spend a weekend than tucked away on your warm couch reading Christy's Time Traveling Trilogy - No Way Home, Finding Home and now, Escaping Home.

On another happy note, one of the locals, David Young, who is an amazing violinist and quite creative, has agreed to collaborate on a dancing video with Claire.

Here's David sharing some of his musical talent on Nextdoor:

https://d16kzk4negkp9h.cloudfront.net/1d/9c/e6/1d9ce6f602db69dbdc08b0f351d462d7/transcoded-BD74384F-D1B1-4725-B2B8-A81C15C95394.mp4?Expires=1637414819&Signature=QmtpMEqv2q6IrlqfQC0UoaJfqvTPDkDdnwbjvTV9Jq3BvMzOVHEV-ISf1MZr~6cJP6YwAifZuDuz0rfJh~97nt7Eb4QqSRmcQ2pDI-3jw84vo2DNsd-B67jDoHZOS~3n-gbT18UzX~LWu7SI5dNoot-fxm3mVZPiuw6oaofV7n4_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAIXBZNN3ZZBIBSIDQ

During his day job, David is a local contractor.

https://nextdoor.com/profile/34909214/?ct=Jv_m69L-rSNvAEMq4occwmFR0uPu7evCxaHPn9QrTkVotYlqk9G5XNsDrXvPwQn4&ec=3eTlbrgZZZs1yfgyBoPgZA%3D%3D&mobile_deeplink_data=eyJhY3Rpb24iOiAidmld19wcm9maWxlliwglInByb2ZpbGUiOiAzNDkwOTIxNH0%3D&link_source_user_id=&lc=1

Anyway, I will keep you posted as the idea develops. Claire is very excited.

Now, I have to get back to my CLE review.

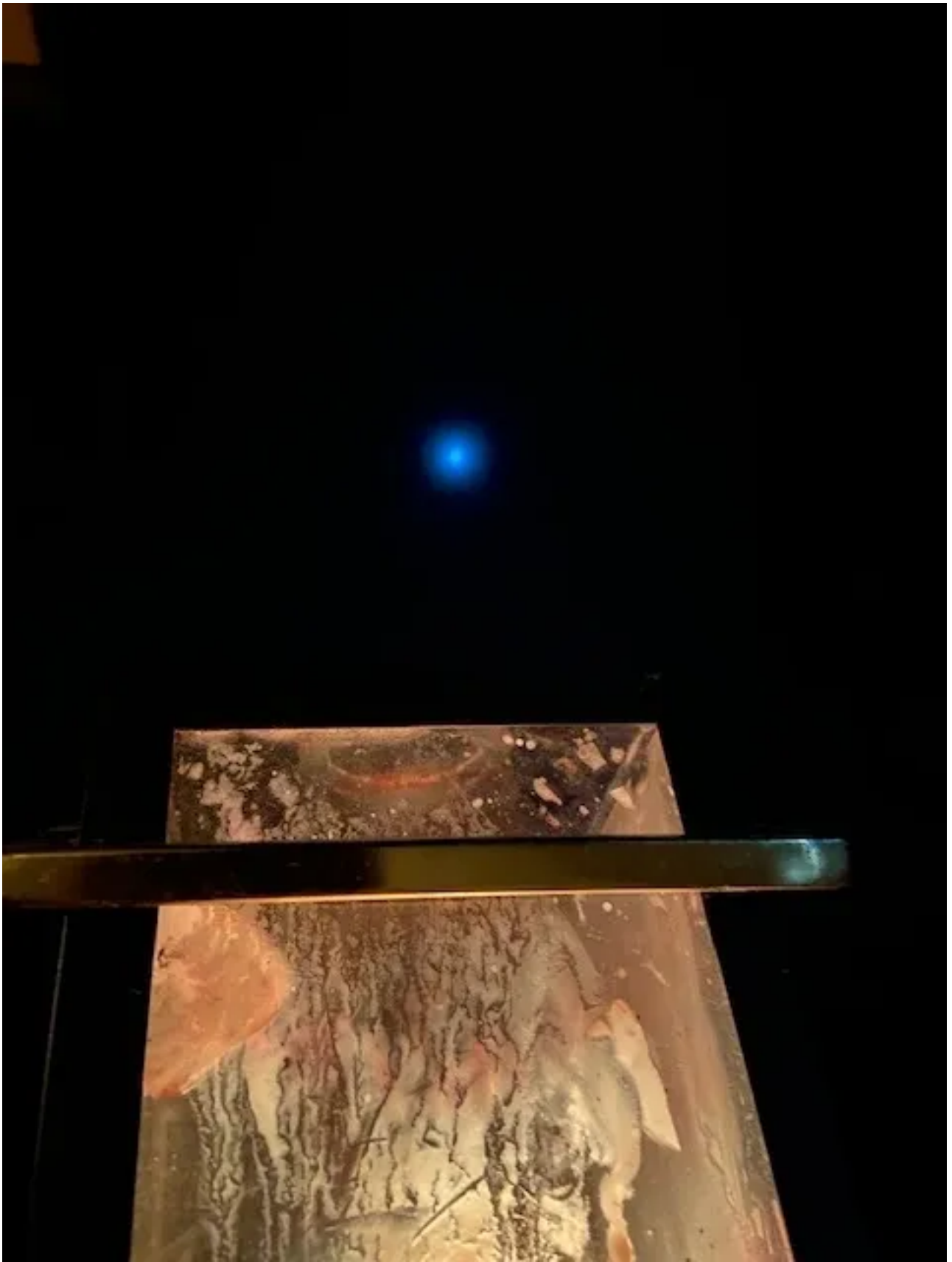
But the rest of you fine five readers, enjoy the little things in your life. And have a great day!

A Beaver Lunar Eclipse

November 19, 2021



When I awoke this morning, just after 2 am, all I could see in the night sky was the little sliver of crescent of light on the far lower left side of the moon. The property was almost as dark as during a new moon. When I tried to capture it with my iPhone, it looked like the photo above, which is cool enough, but doesn't do it justice. I'm thinking that the aura is a result of smoke particles from the local Estes Park forest fire in the atmosphere. Once I got back from feeding the mules, I snapped another photo from outside by the intentions candle. Again, cool enough in its own way. To my colorblind eye, that registers as what I consider blue. Neither camera shot captured what my eyes witnessed.



Now the moon looks particularly small (a micro moon) because it is at its farthest distance away in its orbit around the earth (the opposite of what we would describe as a Super moon).

Just so you can witness what actually occurred, I'm including video footage Brian Emfinger shot of tonight's lunar eclipse and was kind enough to post on it Twitter. Brian does a brilliant job of capturing the event using time lapse filming. Thank you Brian.

https://twitter.com/brianemfinger/status/1461631078251352067?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Etweet

Now, if you think I am making too much of this Beaver Moon (I can hear the members of the OFC giggling as I type those words), consider that this particular lunar eclipse is the longest one in 580 years. The next one like this will not be seen until 2669 (I've just jotted that down in my calendar book - mutation has its benefits).

<https://www.independent.co.uk/space/lunar-eclipse-live-full-moon-2021-b1960257.html>

It is also a Blood Moon:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/space/lunar-eclipse-2021-full-blood-moon-b1960111.html>

The phenomenon of the Blood Moon is nicely described here:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/space/what-is-blood-moon-dangerous-b1960396.html>

The unique energy from this conflation has that perfect psychosomatic effect and provides big bonuses for my intention candle. Watch out world! Claire is coming.

Anyway, I have to complete my biannual CLE requirements this weekend so I can maintain my active NY legal license for another two years. The good news is that it gets me out of my non-essential chores (Claire/Honey chores are essential, house work is not). The bad news is that I would rather do my chores. The courses are interesting enough, but after practicing as long as I have in a relatively specialized field, there is rarely ever anything new under the sun that becomes particularly useful for my practice. But I will soldier on. I respect the profession -- can you believe I entered law school four decades ago -- too much to shirk my responsibilities.

The rest of you fine five readers, embrace the concept of Friday. Go out there and have a great one!

Beaver Moon and Smart Mules - Escaping Home

November 18, 2021



Entered the Beaver Moon full moon cycle last night. Looking forward to Friday's 97% lunar eclipse: <https://denver.cbslocal.com/>

[2021/11/17/partial-eclipse-full-beaver-moon-visible-friday-morning/](#) Hope I can snap a photo to share. Got my intentions candle burning for the cycle.

Cold and clear this early morning, in the teens. Claire & Honey have access to the open barn where the heaters keep it fairly warm. I know they access it during the night because the hay in the racks (and sometimes the storage area) diminishes and they always leave some mule muffins just to assure me. That's also where I leave their food bowls and a 15 gallon water bucket so it always draws them in for a nosh. Haven't started putting their coats on yet, as it has remained dry and I am trying to allow their winter coats to come in fully. But I am prepared for when the temperatures start to stay low.

When Claire first entered my life, I was a basket case with the cold weather, to the point of trying to figure out if I could actually get Claire through the basement doors on those really cold nights.

Lisa, an extremely patient woman concerning most of my machinations, drew the line. If I went forward with it, I would be sleeping in the barn with Claire. By the time Mr. Rogers arrived, and later Honey, I had figured it out.

Now, I make sure I have the nicest and warmest coats for my mules, with insulated cowls/collars for those really cold times. If you reach beneath those coats you can feel just how warm it keeps them. I make sure there is open access to the heated barn, and that there is ready access to water and hay.

Mules are extremely hardy and bright. If it snows heavily, they retreat to the barn and stand with their heads peaking out of the opening, like a couple of New Yawkers, standing under an awning, waiting for a cab. But the colder it gets the more regularly I go out to check on them. And given that I am usually out there each day before 3 am, I can see the weather at its worst and act accordingly. The one thing I have to watch for in those snowy streaks is to make sure I keep knocking the accumulating ice off the inside of their hooves or it can make it uncomfortable for them to walk.

Sometimes they allow me to do it and other times they knock it loose themselves. As I mentioned, they are hardy and bright. And that is why I took a chance on adopting Claire. I knew that she could handle the heavy load and was resilient enough to not die on

me if I made a few mistakes during my learning curve. By the time the others arrived, I was pretty comfortable. They know when to tell me "I got this, go back in the house you puny human before you hurt yourself." Which begs the question: Who is caring for who? Anyway, the time has come for other things before I need to become a lawyer for the day.

But wait. Before I sign off, let me provide one final reminder that Christy Cooper Burnett's *Escaping Home* drops today.

Give this author a try, she will not disappoint you. Start with *No Way Home*, *Finding Home* and finally *Escaping Home*. Perfect cold weather reading that will feed your imagination. It will give you something to read while you are waiting for *An Alien Appeal* and then *KMAG* to drop.

The rest of you five readers, stay warm, and have a great day!

Floki On A Hot Tin Pan

November 17, 2021



I mentioned yesterday, in passing, that my daughter, Jackie, has a familiar named Floki. Has we hurtle towards Thanksgiving, I could not help but think that he looks a bit like a small Turkey in the above photo. Although he also bears a resemblance to the Schmoos that I first discovered in Al Capp's syndicated cartoon, Lil Abner. All you youngins can look that up:

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

Floki's look is the absolute visual definition of the "stink-eye," which is given, no doubt, in anticipation to any comparison of him to a Turkey or Schmoo. Or, even better, to give BC the evil eye as a prophylactic measure in protecting his grandpa, *moi*, from any misplaced and poor-intentioned milk trucks. Well done Floki.

Anyway, as demonstrated below, this fascinating familiar is a loving member of Jackie's family:

This is Floki with the intuitive Jackie:



And here's a shot of him protecting the napping, nine year old, Prince Lucian:



Floki is definitely the coolest familiar ever. This branch of my family is in good paws.

Much to my dismay, I learned yesterday that Go Daddy is removing the Comment feature to their websites on December 15th. I will miss those comments as they confirm that there are indeed about five people who read this blog. The only work around I can imagine at this time is for my readers to send me an email with the title of a particular blog in the heading, and I will copy and include those comments as an edit to, and at the tail end of, the blog they apply to. Necessity is the mother of invention. Still, I am not a happy camper. Cue Floki's stink-eye!

One more day before CCB's *Escaping Home* drops on Amazon and other major distribution centers. My order is in!

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09BK59ZS8/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1

Happy to report that Claire's *transformative* two-hoof to the wonderful song Colorado, by Milky Chance, is trending well as an acquired taste with the Colorado locals on Nextdoor:

https://nextdoor.com/news_feed/?

[post=207900014&comment=686831409&s=&reactor=3130170&ct=bEwnYhRPaM0MMQbWc1ADUOgcyraVheGNfOwgdasnE_y5XmAt4sfdQKAP7YPQQC9I&ec=0aq8TnLEBDXgXCuYo_4LkQ%3D%3D&mobile_deeplink_data=eyJhY3Rpb24iOiAidmld19wb3N0liwglBvc3QiOiAyMDc5MDAwMTR9&link_source_user_id=25016281&lc=3](https://nextdoor.com/news_feed/?post=207900014&comment=686831409&s=&reactor=3130170&ct=bEwnYhRPaM0MMQbWc1ADUOgcyraVheGNfOwgdasnE_y5XmAt4sfdQKAP7YPQQC9I&ec=0aq8TnLEBDXgXCuYo_4LkQ%3D%3D&mobile_deeplink_data=eyJhY3Rpb24iOiAidmld19wb3N0liwglBvc3QiOiAyMDc5MDAwMTR9&link_source_user_id=25016281&lc=3)

Great song. Cool video. The character (and real person) Bobbi A - <https://www.facebook.com/PsychicMedium.BobbiAllison> - would appreciate MC's nod to the mystical aspect of this state at 1:54.

You can find the original video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7asb7B3cH-o>

For anyone who wonders, I do not control when Claire will stop by and dance for me. I play my playlist on Alexa (whose basement version I have renamed "Computer") and leave the window open a crack (or the door itself open if the weather is warm enough), while she and Honey graze and forage in the backyard area. When she hears a song that she likes, she's pops over and starts to bob her head. I really think she started dancing because she wanted to get my attention. Now, like anyone else with a soul (sorry Ginger), when the music moves her, she dances. I would be lying if I didn't admit that when she's starts, I will sometimes join in, but that will never be captured on film. It would make Elaine Benes (Seinfeld) look like Baryshnikov.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQu_NLRvULM

I will leave video dancing to Claire. Honey will not dance, but she does come over and peek in the window to see if I am dancing.

She can be quite the heckler.

Anyway, the real world awaits. I have my scoobies and veggies to dispense. Then back to the virtual legal mines.

So the rest of my five readers, please continue to post right up until the 12/15 deadline.

And all of you have a great day!

Colin Gets The Nod

November 16, 2021

9:33



Gerry Adams
35.5K Tweets



buzzsprout.com/991288

© #TimeforUnity leargas.blogspot.com

📅 Joined January 2011

1,097 Following **193.1K** Followers



Followed by gearoid.tath, LucyQ, Peggy Whyte, and 527 others

Tweets

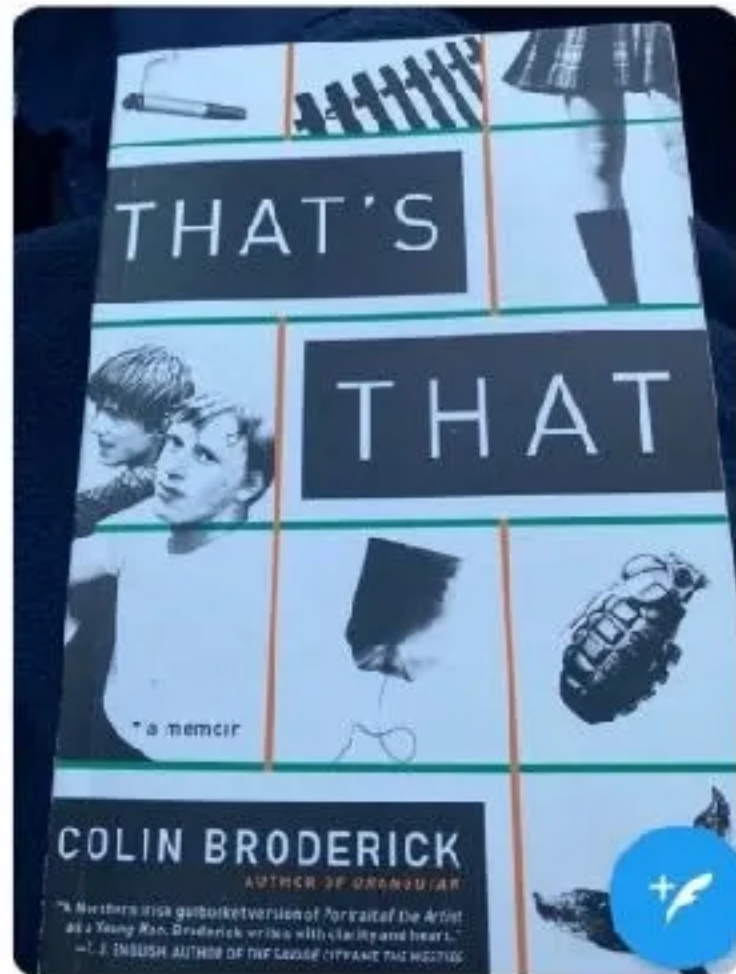
Tweets & replies

Media

Likes



Gerry Adams @GerryAdam... · 44m ...
Luk what I got. Great reports of this book.



Was thrilled to learn yesterday, that Colin Broderick's second installment of his memoirs, *That's That*, received a well deserved nod from none other than the great Irish patriot, Gerry Adams.

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

Given the nature of Colin's memoir, that is something akin to the Lord looking down from heaven and saying, "Ah, look, someone finally got it right."

To those of you who have not read Colin's two part memoir, *Orangutan* (in which I appear in a short scene as the *unidentified* (sigh) lawyer/friend from whom he seeks advice in his bookshop) and *That's That*, I include here a summary of the second volume from its Amazon page to put Gerry Adams' comment into perspective:

"Colin Broderick grew up in Northern Ireland during the period of heightened tension and violence known as the Troubles. Broderick's Catholic family lived in County Tyrone --the heart of rebel country. In *That's That*, he brings us into this world and delivers a deeply personal account of what it was like to come of age in the midst of a war that dragged on for over two decades. We watch as he and his brothers play ball with the neighbor children over a fence for years, but are never allowed to play together because it is forbidden. We see him struggle to understand why young men from his community often just disappear. And we feel his frustration when he is held at gunpoint at various military checkpoints in the North. At the center of his world—and this story—is Colin's mother. Desperate to protect her children from harm, she has little patience for Colin's growing need to experience and understand all that is happening around them. Spoken with stern finality, 'That's that' became the refrain of Colin's childhood."

<https://www.amazon.com/Thats-That-Memoir-Colin-Broderick/dp/0307716333>

The fact that Colin and the mythic Spaghetti come from the same area of Ireland, only added to my pleasure in reading his memoir. It gave me a more recent perspective to an ancient issue.

So those of my five readers who want to get their Irish up, pick up a copy of both *Orangutan* and *That's That* and put the kettle on. I also

highly recommend Colin's auto-fictional novel, *Church End*, and of course that fine book of Essays, *The Writing Irish Of New York*, to round out your CB literary collection. I can also strongly recommend CB's films, *Emerald City* and *A Bend In The River* for those looking for engaging cinema. Well done Colin!

Speaking of talented writers who are also dear friends, let me remind my fine five readers that Christy Cooper Burnett's third installment of her time travel trilogy, *Escaping Home*, (along with *No Way Home* & *Finding Home*) drops this Thursday (11/18). I have read all three of the books and can attest to her writing talent, the well developed and totally likeable core group of characters (indeed, her lead character is the female version of Jimmy Moran), and the satisfying resolution to an amazing story line. I would highly recommend adding all three to your bookshelf.

Still awaiting the final, clean copy of my *KMAG* manuscript for final approval. Nudge, nudge. Would be wonderful to see a complete set of *The Claire Trilogy* up for (pre) sale before Thanksgiving.

Well, until then, it is back to the legal mines for me.

You other wonderful five readers, sort out your reading lists and have a great day!

Turning Into Spaghetti - Happy Birthday Cruiser and Danny Mo

November 15, 2021

I'm not sure when it happened, but at some point over the past few years, I turned into my grandfather, Spaghetti. When I saw this photo of myself and my eldest child, Luke, whose own novel, *Lebanon Red*, will be released August 11, 2022, it provided irrefutable proof of the transformation.

I should have suspected the mutation a few years back when I started to become adept at watering gardens with a hose (no euphemism) back at the family property in the Bronx, and fighting the urge to turn the hose on passing pedestrians, as was a favorite trick of my grandfather.

But since I have arrived here in God's country, I have become more adept at manual labor around the property. I have brought the family full circle in three generations back to tilling the earth and caring for large creatures. I pick hay out of my clothing at night. I also have the recurring urge to repeat his favorite line: "I'll give you a clip between the lug and the horn." Which translates into a hook to the right side of your head.

But this photo taken yesterday at my family birthday party confirms the transformation. I am beginning to look like the man Himself.

(Although my goatee bears a slight resemblance to that of the actor James Cosmo - <https://mobile.twitter.com/mrjamescosmo>)

And that's okay by me.

I spent the day surrounded by my wife Lisa (earlier we actually laughed and danced, badly, to some songs in the living room - again, no euphemism - there are some things I just don't do badly), sisters v&b (who prepared a wonderful lunch which included vegetarian chili), my son and DIL, the lovely Georgie, and my mystical granddaughters, Scarlett, Savanna and Stella, with whom I shared stories about the monsters that lurk in the high grass they love to run through, the magical qualities of large pieces of quartz they keep pinching from my candle wall, and how giants once walked the land and built the Giant causeway on my property. They are convinced I am insane.

Savanna (left in the photo below) is showing some true McCaffrey promise. Once I had her convinced that I could turn her into a Monkey, she resolutely offered her grandmother, Nona, in her place.

Survival is paramount.

But they did make me a delicious birthday cake and helped with the preparation of my card:



Earlier that day, I shared a laugh filled Skype with my daughter Jackie, a rising Master of the Universe, and her son Lucian, who is

growing into a fine young man and athlete. They live in Smyrna Georgia, with Jackie's man, Zack, and a menagerie of magical creatures, including her familiar (she's truly got the gift), Floki:



I did share a short text with Mark & Sara, but they were off protecting Gotham with the NYPD, so familial dispensations have

been given. Bless the Blue! Hope that the new Mayor (ex-NYPD) will salvage the once great city left in ruins by Mayor Big Bird, who like Nero, fiddled while Rome burned.

Anyway, if my newly manifested Spaghetti genes buys me the life-span and life he lived, I'll take it.

I want to thank all of those who wished me the wonders of the universe, including, without limitation, all of my siblings and their spouses, and some nieces and nephews, my friends Colin B, Helen L, Christy Cooper Burnett (whose third novel - *Escaping Home* - drops later this week), Margaret Dempsy & Richard Lamb, Lenny, Joe & BC and Jimmy & Kathy F, Chrissy T, Cousin Christina, and Eileen C.

I want to thank Colin Broderick for sharing the Claire dancing to *Colorado* video with his trove of followers, and my dear friend and law partner Robert Meloni for sharing the Claire dancing to *Levitating* videos with the artist, herself. Unlike me, Claire knows how to cut a rug.

Oh, and before I forget, yesterday was also the birthdays of ex-pat Riverdaliens Cruiser (Karen Beck/Anderson) and my cosmic twin (and Cruiser's cousin), Danny Boy Moriarity. I shared that entrance day with excellent company indeed! Happy Birthday!!!

So the party is over. Monday awaits.

I am looking forward to this next year, and the decades that follow. The rest of you fine five readers, go out there and take no prisoners.

And have a great day!

A Birthday Wish

November 14, 2021



On this particular birthday, I ask the universe for only one thing. Wisdom.

As I have explained in prior posts, I will take wisdom over intelligence any day of the week. I quote now from a scientific abstract that provides an interesting description of both:

"Intelligence can be defined as the ability to think logically, to conceptualize and abstract from reality. Wisdom can be defined as the ability to grasp human nature, which is paradoxical, contradictory, and subject to continual change."

Vivian Clayton, *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 1983, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2190/17TQ-BW3Y-P8J4-TG40>

I think "the ability to grasp human nature" is far more useful to me as a writer, lawyer, friend, and family member.

My wisdom is still a work in progress, by its very nature it has to be, given that the sources of my *oeuvre* remain "paradoxical, contradictory, and subject to continual change."

That keeps me sharp, and requires that I remain in the moment as I continually observe those wonderful people around me, and then draw upon my observations when I sit down to write. And if I can truly capture and present through written word the paradoxical and contradictory nature of my characters in my fiction, then I have truly accomplished something worthwhile in this lifetime.

And that will make me a happy camper.

So the rest of you five readers go out there on this fine day and observe and appreciate the wonderful people who surround you.

Wisdom is there for the taking. Have a great day!

Flowers For Algernon

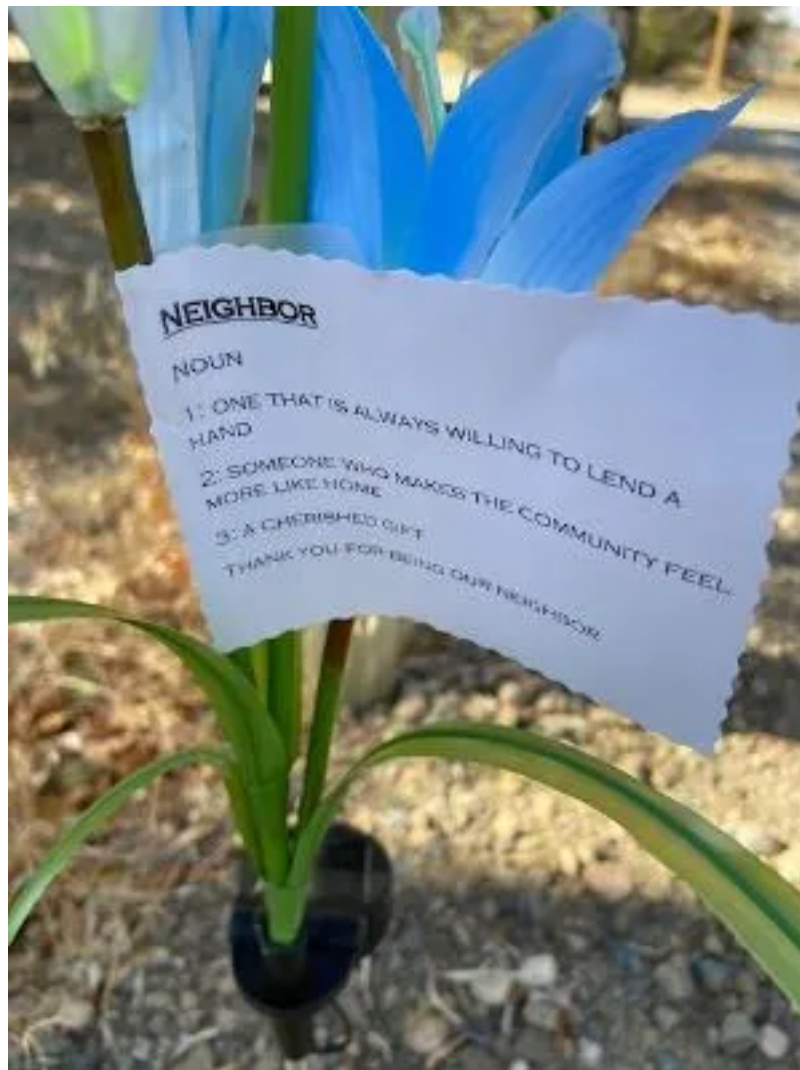
November 13, 2021



The above photo is a fuzzy shot taken from a distance, through my front window, using my iPhone camera. It is of a solar flower light beaming on Gnome Island. That's the silhouette of the King Gnome directly to its right.

The flower was left at my mailbox with the note attached below:





Now at first I just left it there, suspecting with my New York primordial snake brain that this was some form of Trojan Horse. Indeed, the flower looked somewhat familiar:

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

And I did not want to be randomly kissing my neighbors, after all, Lisa knows the password to my gun safe. So I did a quick spot-check investigation and learned from some of my neighbors that each of them had received a similar gift by their respective mailboxes. No one knew the identity of the generous culprit. And all of them hung up their phones when I asked them if they had the sudden urge to kiss their neighbor.

Well the flower may have spored Spock, but it wasn't gonna spore Tommy:

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

Indeed, it has been said that I resembled Spanky as a child, and for a New York minute, was referred to publicly by that moniker by my eldest brother and some of the PWWC members. Due to Eddie's intervention, my Maroon Key football jersey bore that name. You be the judge:



The connections were all there and the plot was all falling into place in my fractured brain. So, I was not taking any chances. However, my far more sensible wife (who may indeed be in on the conspiracy) insisted I go out front and retrieve the flower, so as to not offend the nice anonymous neighbor who had left it there. After sufficient cajoling - since women have never been on the sharp edge of cajoling by their men, I've included a quick reference for those few females that actually read my blog:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=cajoling> -



(this is the image I am imagining of all the women's faces right about now). I carefully went back outside and, after looking both ways for any sign of BC's milk truck - indeed, I placed my ear to the cold asphalt to see if I could hear anything coming - I raced across the road, snatched the flower from its spot and - holding the petals carefully away from my face so as to not incite the spores -- ran back across the road and into the front yard, where I hurled its pointy base like Zuess' thunderbolt into the earth on Gnome Island. When I returned to the house, I kissed Lisa passionately and began to recite poetry, just so she would not suspect that I was onto her game. It worked. She immediately ignored me. Anyway, I peeked out front this morning when I woke up to make sure the Gnomes were not engaged in any 1970s style pornographic reenactments (I only know of these things because Lenny and Joe S used to tell me about them in graphic detail when we all lived at Aunt Violet's Flop House. Thank God I had my well-worn copy of Gideon's Bible ready to fight off their demons) but all seemed quiet on the height-challenged Southern front. Still, I'm not taking any chances. The flower will stay where it is. For now.

But on the odd chance that one of my five readers is the Beverly Drive flower bandit, let me take a moment to publicly thank you for your kind and generous gesture, and for giving me a random topic to blog about. You rock!

For the rest of you five readers, should you come upon such a flower in your own lives, don't pull a Bill Clinton, lean into it and **inhale deeply**, you never know where it will take you.

Especially if you have a cute neighbor.

Well the weekend chores await, *a demain!*

Welcome Guy Joseph

November 12, 2021



My dear friend and law partner, Robert (never Bobbie) Meloni (that's him in the insert channeling Uncle Fester - our code name is *Bald Brothers Law*), was thrilled to inform me that he and his lovely wife, Adrienne, became Grandparents for the first time on Wednesday night, when oldest daughter Isabella and her husband Calvin, became proud parents with the delivery of their son, Guy Joseph.

Rumor has it that GJ did not come easily into this world, but heralded the import of his arrival by entering as a balls-first breach.

Talk about cocky confidence! This boy is meant for big things. So, welcome GJ. The world awaits! Congrats to Isabella and Calvin.

Well done Adrienne, Isabella's got your moxy. And welcome to the world of grand parenting, all the fun and none of the work. And to my dear friend, henceforth known in family circles as Gobby (isn't that a Harry Potter character? No, that's Dobby: <https://heroes-and-villain.fandom.com/wiki/Dobby> - still, I can see the resemblance.)

you will be the best grandfather young GJ can ever hope to find. And just to make sure GJ gets off to a good start, may I offer an Irish blessing:

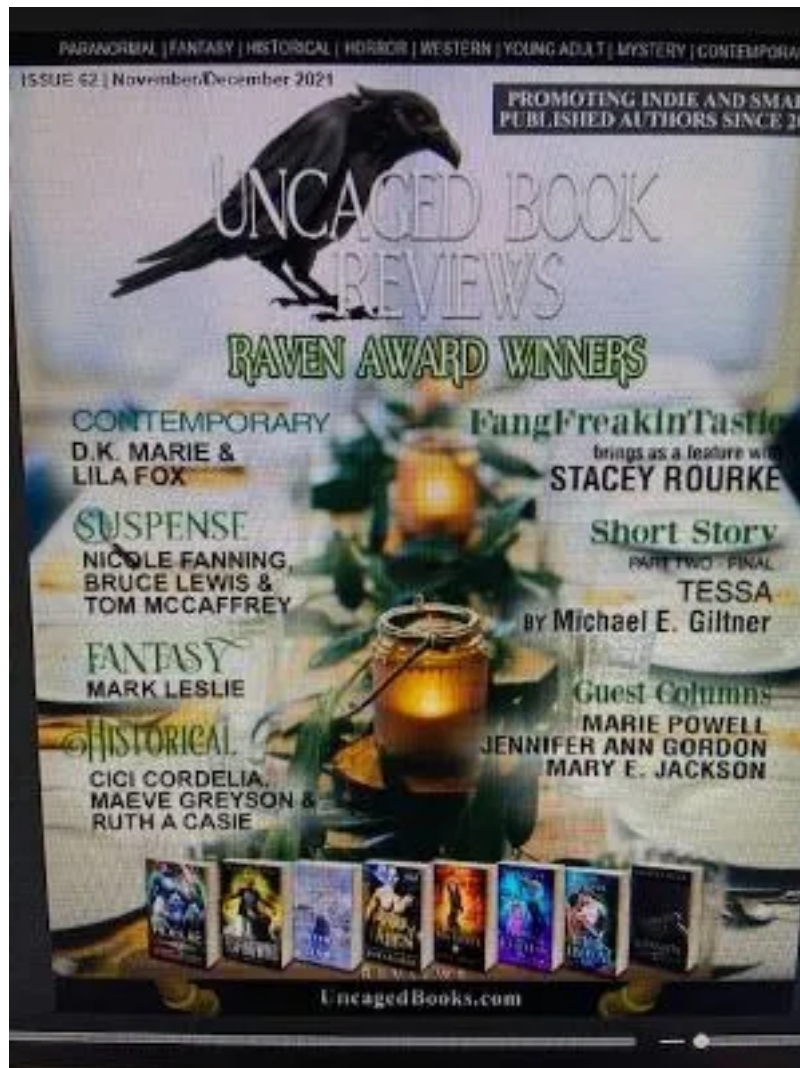
Wee Little One, may you always walk in sunshine, may you never want for more, and may Irish Angels rest their wings beside your nursery door.

With that, I'm going to end this blog so that the Meloni family can have this moment in the sun all to themselves.

The rest of you five readers have a great day!

Finally Uncaged Magazine & Terrence Shannon

November 11, 2021



Christopher Miller, the wonderful PR person at BRW, sent me an email last night alerting me to the publication of the November/December 2021 issue of the On-Line Literary Magazine, ***Uncaged Book Reviews***. As a quick perusal of the left side of the cover will suggest, I appear in the issue that lists the magazine's Raven Award Winners. There, on the left side, is a reference under the "Suspense" heading to me.

Just click on the embedded link below and go to page 156:

Direct Link to use with attached cover

https://issuu.com/cyreneolson/docs/uncaged_book_reviews_-_nov-dec2021?fr=sZjkyMjM4MDcwNjU

Of course I'm over the moon over the short interview about my reading and writing preferences and loved the photos they selected. That one of Claire and the 3 covers is an instant classic. I also loved the promotion of the upcoming release of *An Alien Appeal* (including the excerpt) and of my existing release *The Wise Ass*. It also plugs the final installment *KMAG*. I am truly blessed. Thank you Uncaged, BRW and Christopher Miller.

If this magazine gets me in front of one more reader than I had yesterday, it is a huge win for me. Like with Colin Broderick's *The Writing Irish Of New York*, I'm honored to even be included with this bunch.

Finally, I was also able to plug this website, so it may bring my total number of daily readers to six, but let's not count those chickens just yet. Always be selling!

One new reader I can count on is Terrence Shannon, a young Riverdalian and good friend of my dear Ginger Nephew, Malachy (a future Dr. Steve Zissu - I highly recommend the classic film *A Life Aquatic with Bill Murray*). Terrence reports to my nephew that he has purchased *TWA* and has enjoyed it. I've included a photo of the handsome young Terrence, with his Colin Farrell brooding Celtic look holding *TWA* (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0268199/>), who could be a poster boy for anything Irish-American. So let this be his first modeling campaign (Terrence, send me that book for your inscription). As you can see I've flipped the photo so as to fix how the book appears, but just so you won't strain your eyes, the ribbon says, with just the right tone of Twenties' Machismo: "Just finished, no there aren't tears in my eyes."



Just finished, no there aren't tears in my eyes

This is Graham
on mushrooms
—Colin Broderick
author of
Orangutan
and
That's The
and
writer/direct
of Emerald

Now of course, if I were a young man, I would never publicly admit that I was moved to one saline drop by either Claire's or Mr. Roger's heart rending backstories in *TWA*. (Hint to Terrence & Mac, women - of all ages - love smart and sensitive bad-boys.) However, I challenge young Terrence to come back here after reading *An Alien Appeal* and *KMAG* and make that same representation. Game on! Now the true importance of Young Terrence's public endorsement of the novel is that he is the demographic I must reach if I do not want to be considered a flash-in-the-pan author whose following will otherwise pass with my generation. And if his photo brings one more female to my readership, or male for that matter, I am chuffed.

I recall how my generation discovered JRR Tolkien's *Lord Of The Rings* back in the 1970s. I think I spotted Jimmy Betz with a copy and it then spread among us like a virus. I became a life-long fan of that author and have read almost everything he has written, including *Farmer Giles of Ham*, which I found, in all places, on the rotating rack in a La Guardia airport bookstore.

So I'm hoping Mac and Terrence (and all of my children, nephews & nieces of that generation) start carrying around their worn copies of *TWA* and put it down before them when they belly up to the bar, or the table in a coffee shop, and allow the title alone to be the conversation starter with the surrounding patrons, baristas and bar staff (bartenders are the second highest rated book promoters behind Oprah Winfrey) I know it can become. I'm hoping for one new sale arising from each such conversation. So you young folk, go out there and start trending my novels - old school.

Well, this has been a fun morning, but it's Thursday, so the garbage and recycling - real men recycle (and read) - must be gathered, bagged and walked down that long driveway to the street. Then its a few more chores, coffee with my wife (not a euphemism, sigh), my morning walk, and a day in the legal mines.

But I do ask the rest of my five readers, and Terrence and Mac, to go out and check out the *Uncaged Magazine* article. It was fun. And have a great day!

Herding Elephants

November 10, 2021



Elephants are wondrous creatures. They are self aware - will recognize themselves in a mirror (no body shaming for them) - can wield tools and solve problems, and, most famously, have incredible memories. They are social animals that live in small, strongly bonded groups of 8 to 12 individuals, usually led by a matriarch, who is usually the oldest female in the group, and who passes her wisdom down to the younger members. All members of the group share babysitting duties over the young. The herd will step up en masse to protect any of its individual members.

In a perfect world, all poachers would be stomped to death, slowly, and you would never find an elephant in captivity.

Elephants also have mystical qualities. For example, the Hindu Deity, Ganesh, has an elephant head on a human form, and is known to represent intellect and wisdom. He is the god of beginnings, the remover of obstacles, as well as the patron of arts and sciences. <https://www.mysticalone.com/blog/the-magical-power-of-elephants>.

My eldest brother has an amazing collection of carved elephants.

I'm not sure how long he has been collecting them, but I came upon them one day during a visit to his NJ home and found them lining his library shelves. Dozens of all shapes and sizes. Lot's of good mojo in that room. Who knew?

I almost swiped one. Really. But at that point I was too old to live dangerously.

I have a much smaller collection.

I call the fellow above "Horton." I found him this past summer in a local curiosity shop and could not help but bring him home with me.

He sits approximately 18 inches tall in our center hallway staring straight at our front door. Protecting us by preventing any evil from passing through it. Like his Dr. Seuss namesake, he is faithful, 100%.

I obtained my first carved ebony elephant from my father, who had brought it back with him from his military service in the pacific. I'm not sure if I ever remember when this fellow had tusks, but they are long gone. He usually sits out on a window sill in the basement's sacred area (yes, I have one), protecting the lower floor of the

house. I've never given him a name, beyond "Dad's Elephant," and he seems just fine with that.



Finally, my wife maintains a small herd of pachyderms on her desktop in her office.



The lighter wood colored one was given to her by my father way back in the day. The smaller group of ebony elephants she saved from being separated in another curiosity shop. They have brought her much luck. I say, it brought me into her life. She says, it allowed her to survive me. And I have learned over the decades that, like an elephant, Lisa never forgets.

There is another elephant that has been floating around in the McCaffrey history books. Paki, of the duo, Paki & Pierre, the latter being a mouse. Paki is the very creative cartoon character developed in the 70s by my very talented SIL, Tara (né Sullivan), who married my youngest sibling many years ago. She drew the characters and made up stories to entertain and woo my brother. She was very wise, as she knew the best way into the heart of a McCaffrey was through a good story. We actually uncovered one of her drawings on a basement wall when my brother was remodeling my parent's home. Who knew Tara was a graffiti artist back then? (Although we should have suspected the criminal element because

her family comes from Cork). Anyway, I'm hoping that she still may set those illustrated stories down into book form so that they can be shared with the masses.

Well, my time for stories this morning must come to an end. It's hump day (take that any way you like it).

All five of my readers must remember, like an elephant, that the magic of the world is out there just waiting for you. So, have a great day!

My Dad

November 9, 2021



That is a photo of my Dad taken during his stint in the Navy. I'm guessing he was in his early twenties. So young. He served towards the end of the Korean Conflict (although a war is a war whether or not Congress declares it). At this particular moment he was stationed in the Philippines. I believe he was assigned to the SeaBees at the time. I find it interesting that he was carrying a camera around with him (I'm so glad I have an iPhone). I don't recall seeing any other photos taken, so his camera must have been service related.

I never saw too much of my looks in the McCaffrey side of the family, but I definitely have my Dad's Cro-Magnon brow. I remember once bumping into a very stoned Peter (Rabbit) Betz (RIP) and Michael Collins who volunteered, amongst their stoner giggles, that they believed they could open a beer using the overhang of my eye socket. They even wanted to test their hypothesis right there and then. Since I was friends with both their older brothers, and they were friends with The Ginger, they lived to tell the tale. And hell, it was funny.

That thick bony overhang was very useful in preventing a closed fist from actually reaching the recessed eyeballs themselves. Probably contributed to our familial respective successes in the boxing ring. Certainly helped on the street. Never take your eye off your opponent. My supra-orbital ridge actually withstood my older brother's best shot (the story is recounted in one of my earlier blogs). Not many others can say that. In fact, I remember a Rugby enthusiast approaching me my first day of law school to ask if I had an older brother (always a dangerous opening question), and who then recounted the damage to his own supra-orbital ridge, requiring emergent medical attention and a brief hospital stay, after he made the mistake of whistling at my brother's future wife in the Manhattan College Quad. Small world.

Anyway, its only now, after I have done my time as a Dad, and I am now coasting as a Granddad (a/k/a "The Dude"), that I realize how much work goes into that role. I am thankful that my Dad had his family to help him raise his five rambunctious children, at least one of whom, my sister, was born at the time of this photo. My family, in turn, helped raise my three children, because, even though my wife was remarkably brilliant in her role as a mother, we weren't any older than my father in the photo when we started our family. And what the hell did we really know in our early twenties about raising kids. So, we were truly blessed that we had the older generation and our siblings around to pitch in and pick up the slack during a time when my wife and I were not even fully formed adults. Every one of them contributed in their own way and time.

So, to any of you young parents out there, do not be too quick to dismiss the offers of assistance from your family members when it comes to taking care of the kids. They may not believe in the latest

theory of child rearing being shared among the coffee klatsch, but they will keep your kids from learning about electricity by sticking their fingers in the outlets, and they will take a bullet for those little ones should the ugly world come knocking at your door. And they may teach them a trick or two that can get them out of a jam if need be. And that assistance will give you a chance to finish working on yourselves, so you will have more to offer your kids when they get old enough to appreciate it. And as much energy as you may think you have, everyone can use a break now and then.

It may not take a village, but it definitely takes a Clan. So here's my thanks for every member of my Clan that pitched in when I needed it.

And thanks Dad, for never giving up, and for sacrificing all of those dreams you may have had that day you wandered the Philippine jungle with your camera, to make sure you got us all to adulthood. I wonder now what you were staring at so intently in that photo.

Maybe your future.

Anyway, I may no longer have children to get ready for the day, but I still have commitments I must see to.

The rest of you fine five readers get out there and conquer the world. And have a great day!

Lighting The Darkness

November 8, 2021



Thank God I'm back to 2 a.m. rising.

Just coming off a new moon last Thursday night leaves the back a little too dark for Jeter to be wandering on his own (he stays up in the back and west side yard area while Blue and I go back to the mules), so I will sometimes hit the back patio lights just so he can find his way back from his patrol in the hinterlands - it also scares away predators - and through the doorway.



I otherwise don't put them on unless we are entertaining. As I came back up from feeding the mules, I noticed how nice it looked and

snapped the above photo. They actually have a mode to change colors. Of course, I shut them off once back inside, so as not to spoil the star-scape with ambient light.

Got through my chores this weekend, including cleaning the basement (which I hate more than anything). I rewarded myself by taking Lisa out to dinner after her workday at O'Shays in Longmont.

Always a nice meal and service. While I waited for my meal I checked the TWA Amazon website to find a new 5 star review by "Kindle Customer" from Whidbey Island, Washington (an artistic haven in the Puget Sound), that made me laugh out loud with the description of the character Jimmy as an "egotistical jerk," and otherwise continued being wonderfully perceptive.

Came home afterwards, fed Claire & Honey and then put my feet up. I was shot from the even earlier than normal wake-up call, so its fair to say I stayed in my recliner until I went to bed at 8pm. Since I ordered my Yellowstone season 4 through Amazon, it turns out I get each episode the following day (so no one send me any spoilers). I would never have made it through the 2 hour premier, so I will be in much better form watching it this evening.

I have been informed by my dear friend and fellow author Margaret Reyes Dempsey (Mind Games) that there is new series coming to the US market called The Outlaws, with Christopher Walken (who is always amazing). I will definitely keep my eye out for it. Margaret also sent me the cutest video of a nine year old girl named Ellen Alaverdyan playing the base guitar. She is not only talented, but adorable. Great smile at the end. Check her out: t.co/ziX2otWTbA Thank you Margaret. Best to Richard (Portsmouth at #14 in EFL League One).

As promised, I did go out and perform my own stargazing last night and saw two magnificent streaking meteorites crossing the Western sky, South to North, and wished carefully on both. But no extraterrestrials.

Speaking of. . . I did have a wonderful visit with Everett and Michelle Saturday afternoon, and they showed me their ingenious, Rube Goldberg, humane mouse capturing system (mice like to find their ways indoors in the fall in the most cleanly of houses -- don't blame them - so its always great to be prepared). I won't kill mice either, so I made notes so I can create my own system should the

need present itself (or I can just ask E&M to build me one - much easier to do for extraterrestrials).

Finally, my dear SIL Mary (né Moran) sent me an interesting article from the NY Post: Wisdom of Heroes: 13 WWII veterans give advice to young Americans

https://nypost.com/2021/11/06/wisdom-of-heroes-13-wwii-vets-give-advice-to-americas-youth/?utm_source=email_sitebuttons&utm_medium=site%20buttons&utm_campaign=site%20buttons

We all can take a lesson or two from the men and women of the Greatest Generation. Thank you Mary.

Well another Monday in the legal world awaits. Must get going. The rest of you five fine readers, have a great day! *A demain!*

Daylight Savings Time Is Going To Kill Me

November 7, 2021

Search Nextdoor



Katherine Witvoet

Glade & Buckhorn • 2 days ago

...

Did anyone happen to notice a "swarm" of flying objects in the skies above Loveland besides myself? I took a video of what I was witnessing, but I could only catch 2 large orbs. I saw at least 20 different objects that were coming in and out of view as though they were "cloaking" and the way they were maneuvering, I have not seen before. I videotaped 5 minutes worth but only 2 large orbs showed up on the video.

Posted in **General** to **Anyone**

👍❤️👍 54 Neighbors

71 Comments

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share

🔄 Repost

See 30 previous comments



Micah Parrish • Fort Collins, CO

...

I saw something like this once during the day flying east over s. fort collins. I thought it might be an r/c plane towing a clear-plastic bag full of something lighter than air.

11 hr ago Like Reply Share



Augustus Sullivan • Fort Collins, CO

...

Saw some very strange cloud like orbs disappearing and reappearing around 12:30 on my drive to Foco from Longmont. Wonder if it was the same thing. Berthoud area. Thought I was losing my mind lol

10 hr ago Like Reply Share

❤️👍 6



Jane Adams • Mariana Butte

...

Often they "cloak" with what look like clouds. Amazing!

6 hr ago Like Reply Share



Teresa Suggs • Alford Meadows

...

Where's the video

9 hr ago Like Reply Share



Teresa Suggs • Alford Meadows

...

Take some screen shots of your video and share them

9 hr ago Like Reply Share

❤️ 2



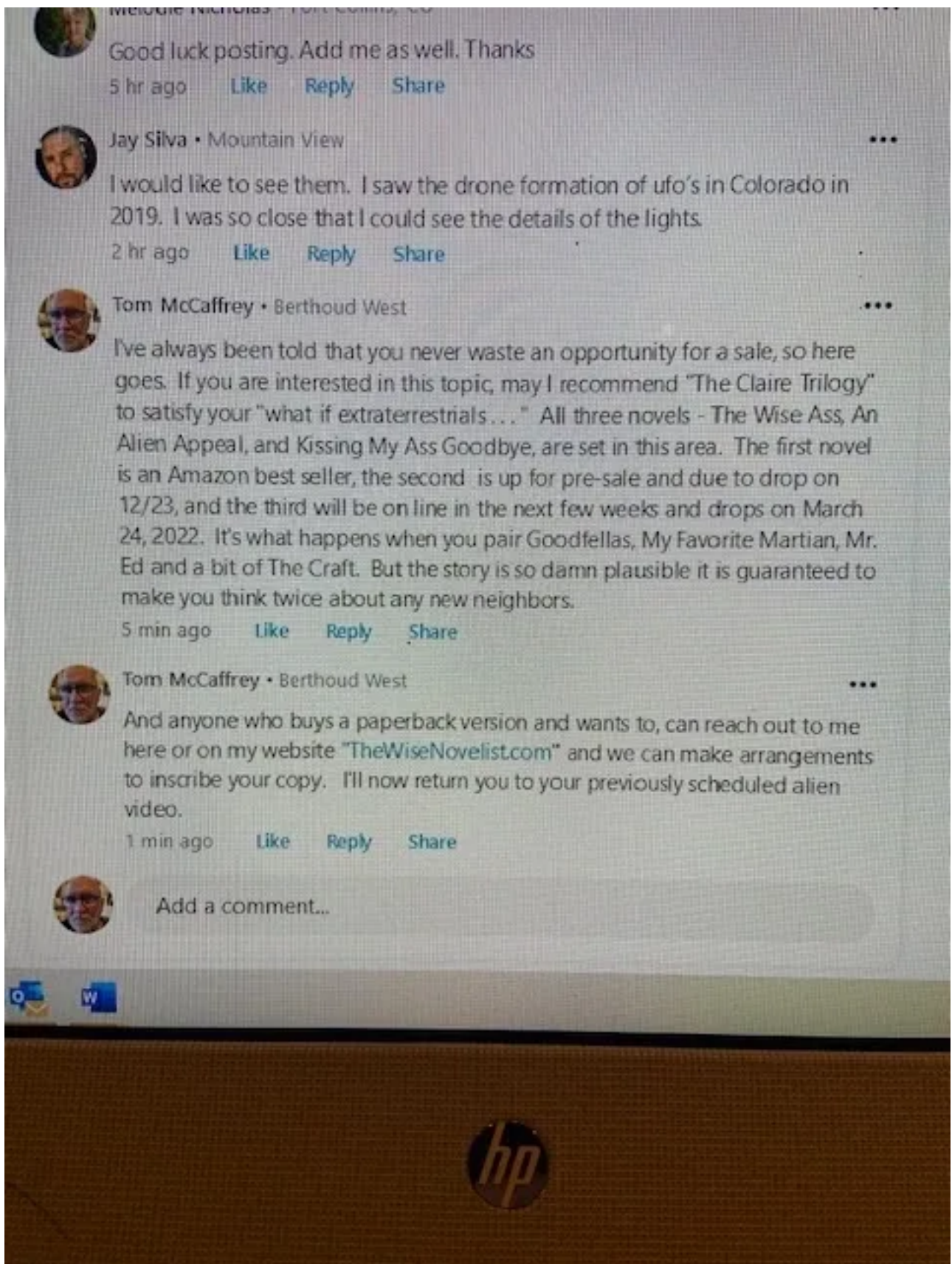
Leyah Borron • W 29th / N Taft

...

You can post your video to YouTube and then share the link here. 🙏 Would love

Of course, my manly manual mule-related labor from yesterday made me fall asleep at 7 pm, so, 6 hours later, here I am, like

clockwork sitting before my computer screen at what has now become 1 am, instead of my normal 2 am, thanks to Daylight Savings Time (although I've now been informed that we actually came off DST - but if we did not go on it, we would not need to go off it - so the killing me argument stands). I can only pray that my East Coast Circadian rhythm will allow me to shift at least one more hour into sleeping over the coming weeks, or I may just have to start writing the prequel. Anyway, the good news is that there seems to have been a recent UFO event in the area, which has all the interested locals on Nextdoor abuzz! Now I hope and pray that someone on our Nextdoor app can walk Ms. Katherine Witvoet through how she can load her video of the event onto this website, or another website like YouTube that the rest of us can access. But in the meantime, I took full advantage of the excitement to pitch The Claire Trilogy, voila:



Now, don't get me wrong, I am as desperate as the others to see Ms.Witvoet's video, or even better, make my own multiple UFO

sighting, but while I have a captive audience just sitting there, excited in their anticipation of that one member stepping up and taking Ms. Witvoet by the hand and getting her video on screen, and therefore reading every new post, why not capitalize on this opportunity of reaching a ready market of local potential readers, to pitch my novels. Every sale counts! I've learned to be a shameless self-promoter.

So now, while the starlit sky is perfectly clear and it's not too cold out, I'm going to take my cup of coffee and go out on my deck, iPhone ready, and stare up at the sky for that extra hour DST has provided me. If I see something interesting, I'll be sure to post about it. If I don't post ever again, then I have obviously taken an Extraterrestrial up on doing a book signing tour of the Cosmos.



The rest of my five readers, stay tuned. And have a great Sunday!

Eugène François Vidocq - The True Embodiment of the Antihero

November 6, 2021



after the Original by G. Kneller

VIDOCQ.

How has someone in Hollywood not made a film about this guy?

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eug%C3%A8ne_Fran%C3%A7ois_Vidocq)

[Eug%C3%A8ne_Fran%C3%A7ois_Vidocq](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eug%C3%A8ne_Fran%C3%A7ois_Vidocq)

I was reading an article about Edgar Allen Poe (https://www.thesmartset.com/poe-boy/?utm_source=pocket-newtab) and found a reference to the fact that he may have drawn inspiration for one or more of his characters from Eugène François Vidocq.

Despite being a life-long EAP fan, and never before seeing a mention of this fellow, I just had to scratch the itch and read up on him.

It turns out that after 34 years of living the life of a total gangster, including, too-many-times-to-count, trips to, and escapes from, various prisons, he changed sides and became the first leader of the Paris based Sûreté. The French Security Police. The closest thing to EFV that I've come across in modern fictional characters is Jason Beghe's Hank Voight from Chicago PD. Great character, great show.

And that's a point I'm trying to make here, badly. I love the antihero/anti-villain. When you are writing, you should texture your characters with a light and dark side, no matter what role they play in the story you are telling. It makes them far more interesting if - at that crucial moment in the story - they have to overcome their opposing/conflicting tendencies to do either what is right or what is wrong. For example, the central character in my novels, Jimmy Moran, comes from a family who is basically good, but who will do whatever it takes to protect their own. And even though he is considered an outcast by his own flesh-and-blood, they remain loyal to him, on both sides of the veil, and he proves time and time again, throughout some of his most selfish and selfless decisions in The Claire Trilogy, to share in his family's darker tendencies. Indeed, throughout the story, he remains drawn to the good and bad sides of the concept of family - blood or love. By the end of the TCT he comes full circle but still ends up just barely on the right side of good versus evil. He even drags some of the once purely good characters back and forth across the line with him. As a

counterpoint, Dan Pearsall is a bit of an anti-villain. When we first meet him, we see that he is a devoted father and he then becomes a good friend to Jimmy. But despite his good qualities, he is ultimately a villain, although his own conflicting tendencies may result in his denouement. The good-natured Michelle character has a dark side that, over the course of the trilogy, once released, creates a powerful Jinn that cannot be put back into the bottle.

And you don't want her to be. The Lenny and Eddie character have their conflicts built right into their backstories. Even Claire has her dark side that surfaces at the appropriate times. And that is okay. The reader recognizes that nobody is perfect. We will always forgive the redeemed.

That is another reason I love the Dutton Family in Yellowstone.

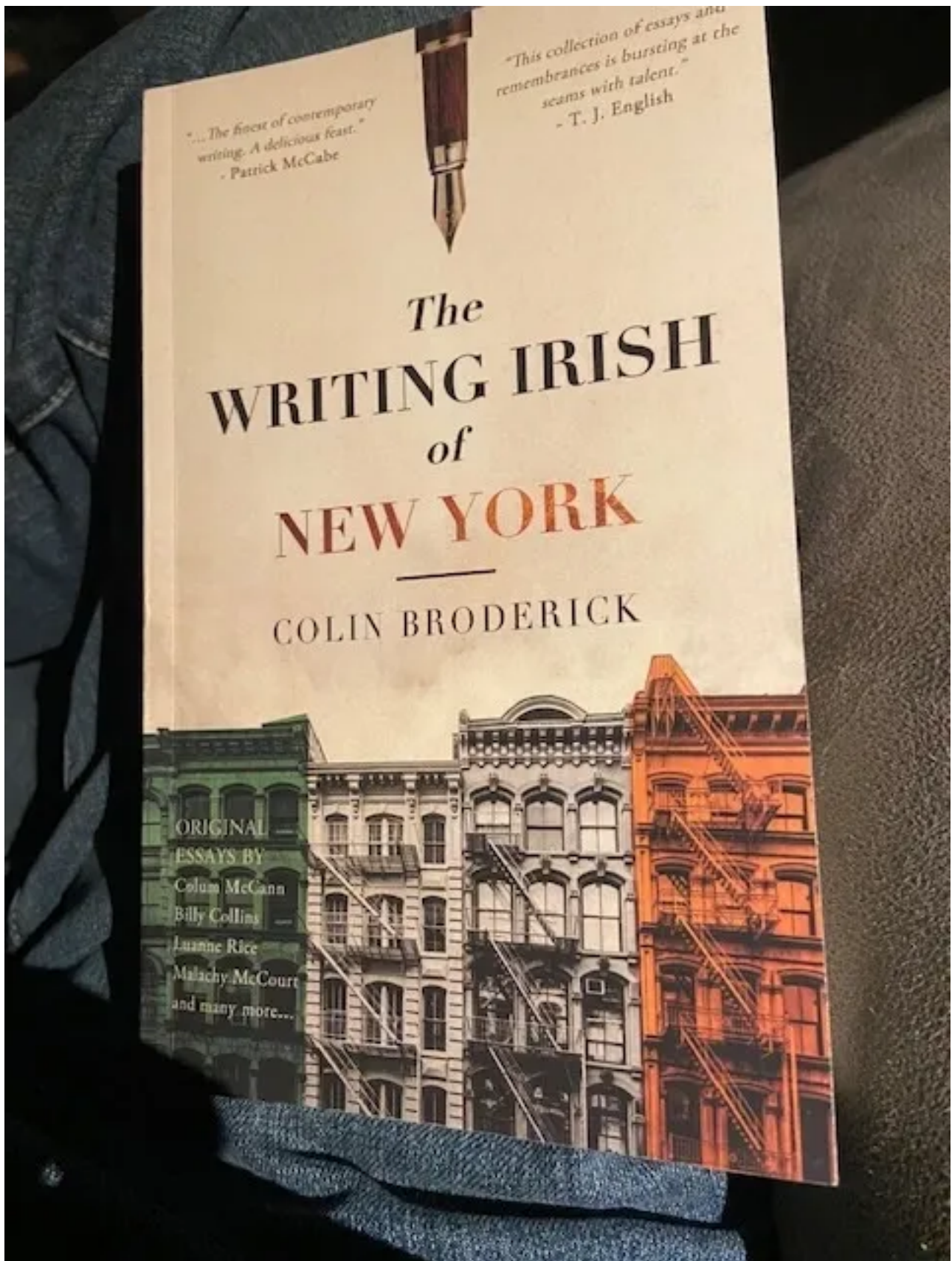
They cannot survive without their dark side, which consistently saves their family but always provides the hook for their potential undoing. Brilliant show. If you haven't yet done so, binge watch the first 3 seasons. All set to watch the premiere of Season 4 on Sunday. Cannot wait.

So now I have to get to my walk and weekend chores. You five fine readers go out and do something fun with your lives. And watch the Yellowstone premiere.

Have a great day!

And Many More. . .

November 5, 2021



Just got my inscribed copy of TWIONY back from Himself and I am thrilled!

When I inscribe copies of TWA for others, I have made it my practice to personalize my inscription beyond the generic "Best Wishes, Tom McCaffrey" because I want that reader, or maybe someone else years from now who finds that copy of the book, to know that this was a personal moment between me as the writer and that particular reader, where I took the time to learn a little bit about who they are so there can be no mistaking that they were the person(s) I identified on the inside cover. I want everyone to know how honored I was to be asked to do it.

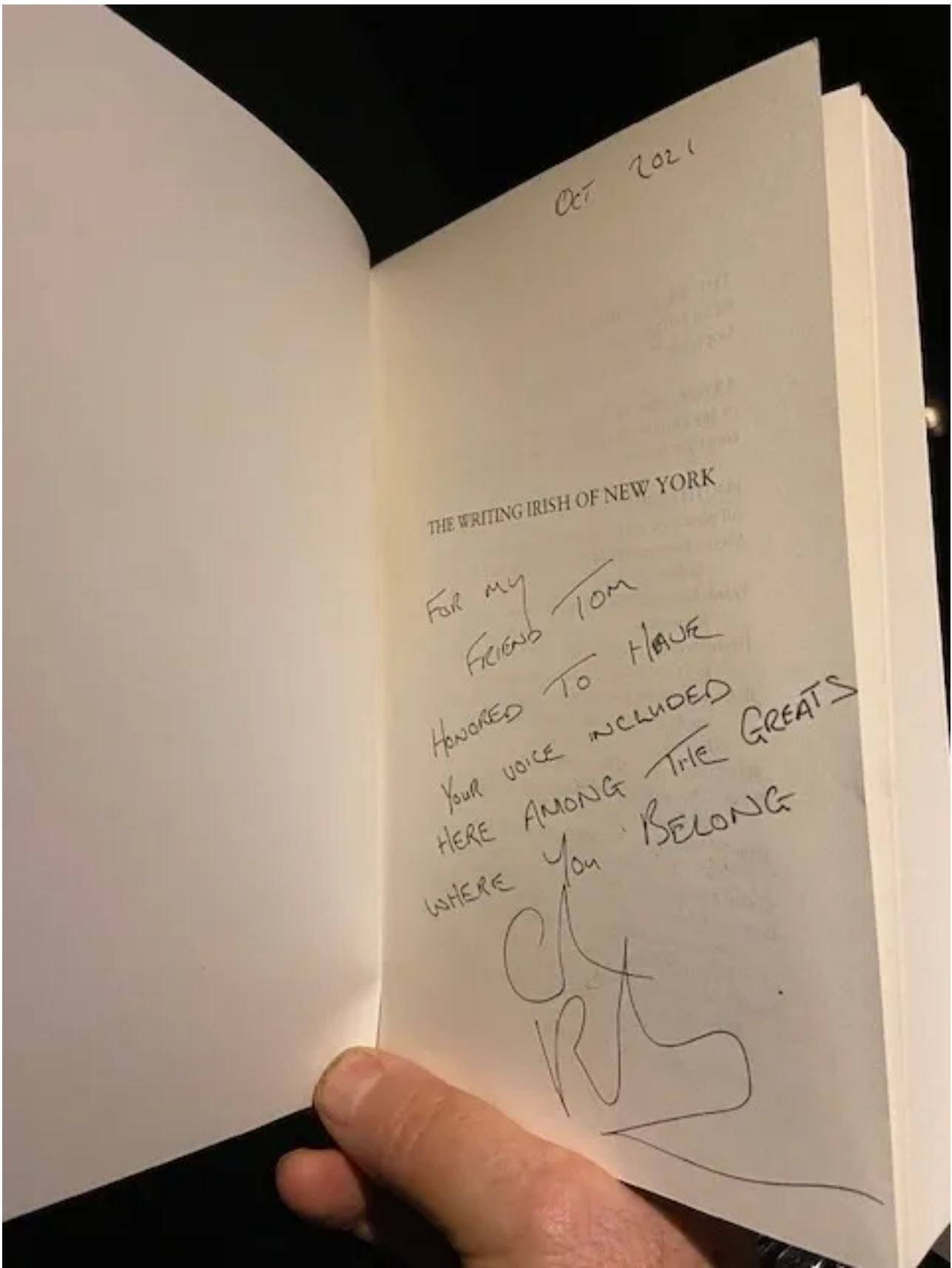
I do that because life itself is just a series of these moments strung together, and if I am going to appear somewhere in your string, I want it to have some meaning for you. Because every reader of my work appears as a moment in my string and has meaning to me. I also have made it my practice to support the other writers that I know through purchasing their work, and then sending that copy to them for an inscription. I've done the same in return for anyone who has asked. My collection has grown over this past year as I have gotten to know more writers. When we all shake off this mortal coil and become the voices of the dead, I want something left behind that shows my connection to these other writers. I am honored by their friendship and camaraderie.

Now anyone who has read at least 10 of my blogs will know that I consider the Irish writer/auteur Colin Broderick a dear friend and my writing mentor. He published my first short-story, "Why Kings Die," in his start-up literary magazine - Everyman - in the 90s. As his own success and notoriety increased over the decades, I've seen how the demands on his time and life have increased exponentially.

As a result, I've made it a point to never impose on either his life or time. I never even told him I was writing TWA until after it was complete and I had landed a publisher. The Irish in me did not want to ask that favor. Far too many others were already draining the trough.

So, I was thrilled when Colin offered to read the final manuscript and provide the "Grisham on mushrooms" blurb for my TWA cover,

honored when he asked me to submit an essay for potential inclusion in TWIONY, and just over the moon when my essay made the cut, and appeared in that collection among the Finn McCool(s) of literature. Of course, I bought a copy as soon as it was available, and sent it off to Himself for an inscription to add to my collection. When I tore open the envelope yesterday evening and opened the cover, I almost wept (who am I kidding, I wept).



It just doesn't get any better than this. Thank you, Colin.

In closing, I am considering pulling a Prince (I did some legal work for him back in the day) and changing my name to "And Many More. . ." so I can point to the last entry on the front cover of TWIONY and say to whomever is listening in that particular nursing home, "yeah, that's me, right after Malachy McCourt. . ."

So, the rest of my five readers, thanks for reading my blogs and listening to my rants. It's Friday; so full of weekend potential. Go out and have a great one!

Moments Captured & Worth Sharing

November 4, 2021



I love my iPhone camera. It never gives me what I expect, but it's always there for me to capture a moment. When I looked up at the moon yesterday during my early morning rounds, all I saw was the silver sliver. God's fingernail. So I took a photo. For some reason the camera caught more than my eye picked up. And I'm just fine with that. The moon is beautiful in all of its incarnations. We are blessed by its constant attention.

My dear friend and fellow author, Christy Cooper Burnett (The Christine Stewart Time Travel Adventures) is toiling away on her next project - the story is amazing -- and I am soooooo jealous that she is making the time to write it. You go girl!

I've been overly busy this fall with legal work, which definitely drains the creative juices. But it pays the bills and feeds the furry McCaffreys. Claire will not be denied. But I had to pass on a really cool adventure at a Wolf Sanctuary with my dear freind and supporter, Dianne Rosenfeld, because it falls on a Monday, which are always a legal quagmire. Keep me in mind for the next one Dianne. Absolutely love wolves. And you too!

What I need is for Hollywood to come knocking with a really big check (and back end deal), looking to turn my literature into film projects. The story is very visual. Did I mention I am quite adept at the screenplay form? Bruce Willis and Marisa Tomei, if someone mentions *The Claire Trilogy*, or its lead couple Jimmy and Gina, at a party, listen carefully, you would be perfect. Hey Joe Pesci, you could play one hell of a Ty Valachi. Ving Rhames (who will forget when he gave his golden globe to Jack Lemmon) would still kill in the role of Dan P. Claire demands to play the starring role (that was the deal when she dictated it!). Lucky she can't type with hooves or I'd never have a writing career.

Enough with the beautiful young stars and starlets (I know, I'm a dinosaur), let's put these more seasoned (equally attractive) actors (of both sexes - see I can evolve in one sentence) to work! (The Expendables franchise was a hit for that very reason). One of this Trilogy's underlying themes is that, until we take that last breath (and in some cases beyond), there is adventure waiting for us to come and play. So go play!

Sylvester or Clint could direct.

Anyway, I promised myself that I would begin writing the prequel once KMAG (and thus, The Claire Trilogy) is finally up and running.

Just waiting on the final review of a clean manuscript. Nudge, nudge.

Okay, this has taken me longer than expected to write this morning - I keep slipping off into visualizing the film version playing out in my head. Beautiful.

Anyway, its Thursday and I have to take out the garbage. Then my walk. So off you five readers go to your own special days. Make it a great one.

So Long Moshe! Blood Rituals, Cat Houses, and The Ginger!

November 3, 2021



Cruiser stopped by on her way North to collect Moshe after an enlightening weekend with Joe Dispenza. I felt bad because I could only spare ten minutes to accomplish the hand-off, due to an extremely busy legal work day. Sorry Karen. *Au revoir*, Moshe! Blue mentioned as she watched them exit the driveway that one should never sleep on the small dogs, or they will Bogart your thigh bone.



Speaking of McCaffrey animals, yesterday's mention of the McCaffrey Compound *circa* 1970s brought out memories (via BC and SIL Mary né Moran) of the mythic McCaffrey border collie named Pepper, the King's Hand to my Grandfather, Spaghetti, and Posie's Lady in Waiting, Clancy the Cat, both of whom were notorious for leaving a scar or two on the various visitors, family and friends alike, who were guests at the Compound. Those scars are now worn as badges of honor, and proof by the victims that they were welcomed into the fold *via* said ritualized bloodletting. In fact, should anyone ever claim to my five readers that they were there during the heyday of my youth, demand that they show you "the scars."

Speaking of cats, my sweet much younger cousin, Christina (Apples' youngest sister - the McEntees bore the scars), shared that her feral cats also have electric heaters in their outdoor cat houses. (Let me say for the record that the last sentence is not a

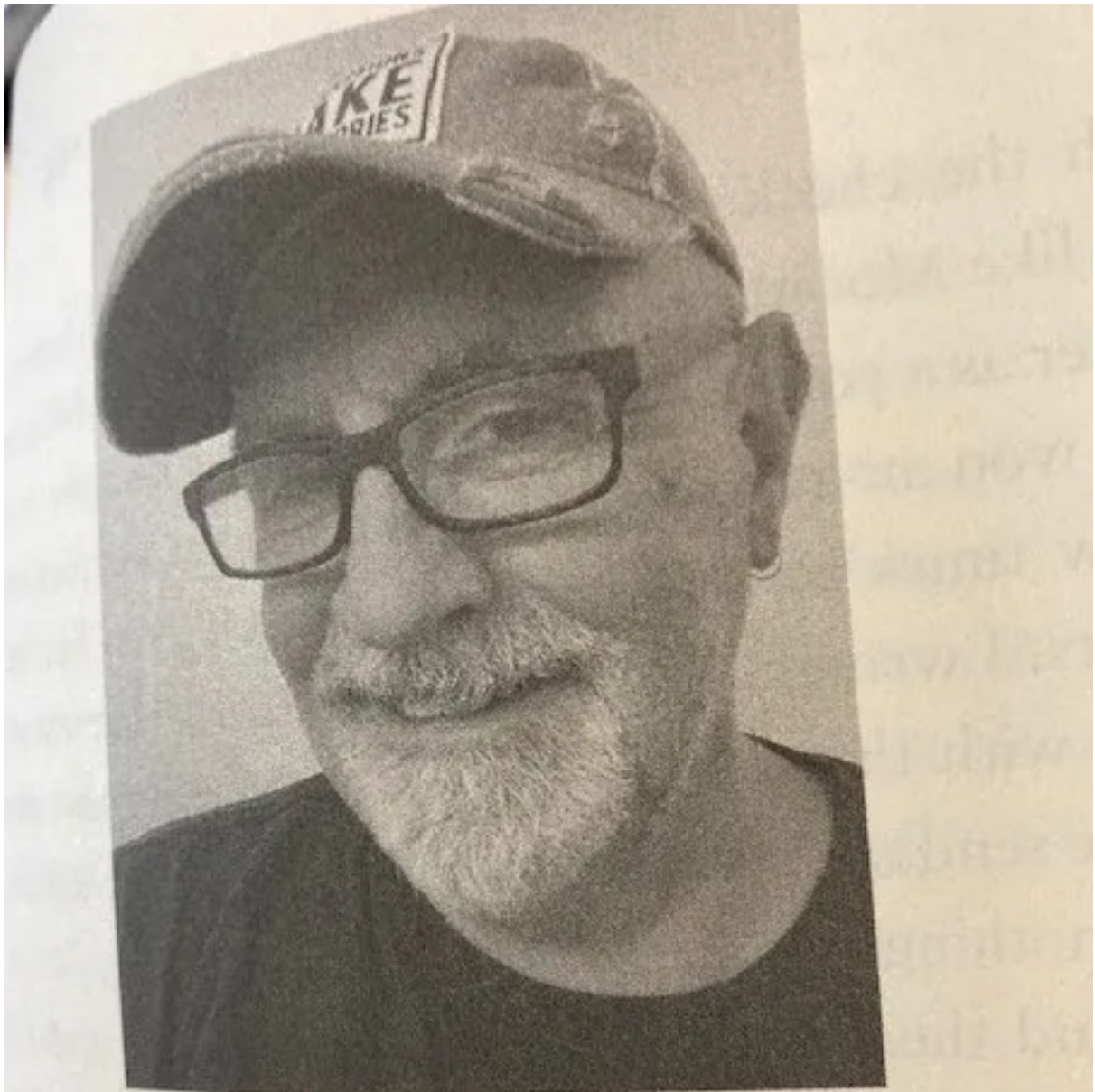
euphemism for my cousin running a house of ill repute!) Indeed, the following photos should put that rumor to rest before it starts.





(although I have to admit that McQ could have easily slept in that Cat House). Well done Christina! Glad to see that the Clan is looking out for the feral cats of this world. They make the best familiars.

Speaking of East Coast family, my dear and patient SIL, Denise (né Spiro), wife of The Ginger, just won a Louis Vuitton pocketbook on a bet with my brother, that the photo above my essay in *The Writing Irish of New York* (go out and buy a copy) was, indeed, me.



Tom McCaffrey

Tom McCaffrey is a Bronx born-and-bred, Irish-American, life-long New Yorker, who, after a successful career working as...

Sad but true, I am indeed just that ugly. However, given that my next younger brother spent all of his life escaping from the McCaffrey Compound - he actually ran away at the age of three dressed in Bunny pajamas and my mother's Easter

bonnet (women - and The Ginger - wore them back in the day) - and his other nickname growing up was "the Wind" because he could literally de-materialize right in front of you and disappear like said zephyr -- he was never around long enough to imprint my visage and could not pick me out of a line-up should his life depend on it. Well done Denise!

Speaking of Gingers, my nephew, Malachi, one of the many sons of The Ginger (sadly not a soul amongst them), is killing it at his post grad employment at a University down in the Lone Star state. Well done Mac! You are destined to be the next Jacques Cousteau (or preferably Steve Zissou).

Speaking of Mac, one of his Riverdale buddies, Terence Shannon, sent him a photo of Terry's copy of The Wise Ass, which Terry is enjoying immensely.

THE WISE ASS



**TOM
McCAFFREY**

*"This is Grisham,
on mushrooms."
—Colin Broderick,
author of
Orangutan
and
That's That
and
writer/director
of Emerald City*

Thank you Terence Shannon, and any of your friends and family that may buy a copy of TWA, I appreciate it. In fact, Terence, get my address from Mac, and mail me your copy for inscription.

Speaking of my novels, I am waiting anxiously for BRW to deliver a clean manuscript of KMAG for my final approval, so that it too can go live for pre-sale on the BRW and Amazon websites along with TWA and AAA. Nudge-nudge! Only then will the advertised *The Claire Trilogy* actually be three books.

Anyway, my legal world awaits. So no more fun talk of writing. Or fun writing itself.

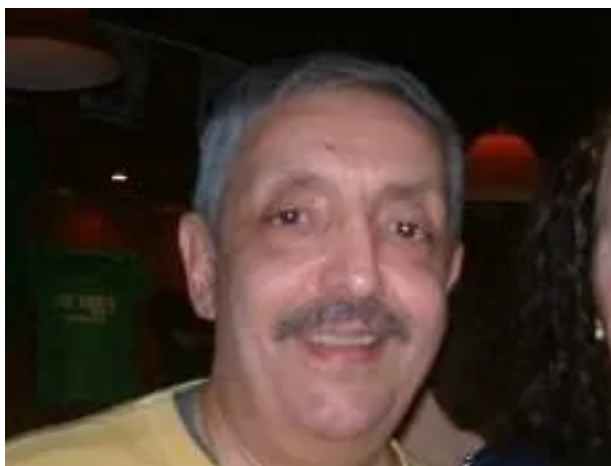
You five readers go out and have a great day. See you tomorrow.

Another Old Photo With Once Young People (But Not Me)

November 2, 2021



The characters in the above photo, left to right, are Lenny, Naz (Billy Antinopolus - phon?) and Finny (Tommy Finnegan). Lenny we all know by now (I always thought he bore a familial resemblance to the actor Donald Gibb from *Revenge of the Nerds* and *Blood Sport*). True to form, Lenny appears to be wielding a pipe wrench in his free hand (an interesting accessory). Naz, was a staple Riverdale character. One of the cooler older kids that broke the age barrier and allowed our group to hang with his. Here is a more recent photo shared by Cruiser (just to prove Lenny did not strike him with that wrench shortly after the first photo).



Finny, is a contemporary of The Ginger, and was and remains, right behind Snapper, one of the most famous and beloved Riverdalians. If there was (is) an event of any kind that require(s/d) the organization of food and drink, Finny was/is involved. Our parents were close friends. The fact that there was representations from three different age groups establishes that this was a time when all the above had left the Rocks and attained their entrance to Coaches II, where, for good and bad, the gene pools all mixed. It is summer in the mid seventies, these three are standing outside of Coaches II on Mosholu Avenue, most probably continuing a party from the night before. It might have been taken before yet another spontaneous road trip. Youth is definitely wasted on the young. Back upper right, behind Lenny's head, is the roof of my childhood Bronx home (the McCaffrey compound). My life in Riverdale was always within walking distance of everything fun and notable. Although, having reviewed yet another old photo, I'm now beginning to develop a theory. As more and more old photos are dug out of the recesses of the past and sent to me by Riverdalians, I realize that I never appear in them. So my theory is that I didn't really exist in 1970s Riverdale. I am a figment of someone else's imagination. I am a character in someone else's play (maybe Lenny's dark writer's mind - the Horror). The omniscient narrator. This theory gained some traction after I recently reconnected with Cruiser at Casa Claire. She confessed that she had no visual memory of me growing up, other than the name (and I'm not sure she was sure about that), and when I showed her my photos from

back then (both solo shots), I only have one or two, she was surprised and confessed that it was not a visage she remembered.

I was stunned. And now worried.

This leads me to wonder whether I really exist now. Maybe every amazing thing that I believe has happened to me over the past few years is in fact happening in the mind of someone else. Maybe I am the escapist daydream of some unhappy lawyer slaving in the legal mine. Or worse, I am the figment of the imagination of some poor bastard lying in a comatose state in some forgotten hospital ward.

Or maybe even worse than all, I am an imaginary character in the tortured mind of BC, and this whole imaginary world has been created just because he is retired and bored. It couldn't be Joe Serrano, I suspect he's fictitious as well, since, out of all of us, his life has been the most unbelievable.

Could be that Stein is the little man behind the curtain, because he was the member who brought the OFC back together then literally disappeared from the face of the earth.

Somebody pinch me!

Anyway, while I await the enlightening pain, the rest of you five readers - who may only be figments of this figment of the imagination's imagination, go out there and have a great day. The good news is, since this is all imaginary, there are no limits, you can all do and be whatever you want, so cut loose and enjoy yourselves. Go back to the seventies and see if I exist.

Weekly Prep

November 1, 2021



Now you have heard me mention my weekly prep. That is when I spend a few hours either Saturday or Sunday chopping and bagging carrots (see those 5 pound bags on the middle shelf - they are converted, one to one, to the chopped bags below) and apples (the bags in the two crisper compartments) (and sometimes pears) to use during the week, so I can just grab them when I get up at 2 am (in that case its the large bags on the bottom shelf of the door) and go out and feed Claire and Honey. One of the large bags of chopped carrots (lower shelf) and the smaller bag of apples (upper door shelf), gets placed in my canvas bag (with a bag of scoobies for the dogs) and all goes out with me for my morning circuit. I usually have some carrots left over, to which I then add some more chopped carrots and apples from the very top crisper shelf, and they go out in the late afternoon for the mules second meal for the day. By having this all set up on the weekend, it makes my weekdays much easier.

Speaking of animals, my feral cat Smokey's heated bed arrived yesterday so I installed it in his nuclear bomb proof outdoor cat house. Hope he uses it. Cats are very independent creatures. Well this morning I have to cut this short because I have to go upstairs and feed Smokey and then its my walk and finally, since it is Monday, my legal world awaits.

The rest of you five readers, have your coffee and then go out and conquer the world. And have a great day.