

A Berthoud Halloween - Memories of the Bronx

October 31, 2021



Yesterday, after chores, Lisa and I joined our grandchildren and neighbors for the Halloween extravaganza in Old Town Berthoud. The above photo is of my lovely Aussie DIL, Georgie, and two of my three granddaughters, Scarlett (the fairy) and Savanna (Elsa) (yes, the two little girls who taught Claire to speak). That's our neighbors, Drew, Kelly, Quinn,

Ada, and Felix - in the wagon - in the background. The town, as all good small towns do, organized a multi-hour afternoon event, where anyone who wanted to, came out and embraced the holiday, while commercial and private groups dispensed candy along the way. Entire family groups engaged in the whimsy, and dressed up in the coolest costumes. It did my heart good to see it, as I get no trick-or-treaters out in my neck of the woods. Hansel and Gretel couldn't find my house. Trust me, I leave breadcrumb trails out every year. Here are some random photos I snapped at the event.













I've loved Halloween ever since I was a child. I loved it long before I realized that it was a creation of my Celtic ancestors (which of course, only added to my joy). You see, it was the one day of the year where you could shed the mortal coil of your boring daily existence and assume any persona you cared to, and no one batted an eye. It was a day of ghosts, witches and monsters, pirates and super heroes, where children could challenge and master their fears in a controlled setting. You walked up to the homes of both friends and complete strangers, and with the push of a door bell and the one line - "trick-or-treat" - you landed goodies in your bag. It was a life lesson. Challenge your fears and you will be rewarded.

Back in the Bronx, we did up the McCaffrey compound houses - two side by side on Mosholu Avenue - big time. My sister-in-law, Tara (né Sullivan) loved Halloween as much as I did. It actually started out doing the two houses separately as a competition (Tara is extremely competitive - we still debate over who won the winner takes all, lifetime bragging rights, McCaffrey swim race), and then, after I trounced her Halloween decorations year-after-year, isn't that right Tara, we figured it would be better for the masses to throw in together.



It was a multi-generational family affair. We set it up every Halloween morning like carnival workers. We went all out, running all kinds of power cables hooked up to animatronic monsters, witches, skeletons, ghosts and ghouls, spooky soundtracks and every thing else in between. The younger folk dressed up and mixed among the curious and daring,

just to pop-out at them when least expected, and test their heart rhythm. Luke or Mark acrobatically scampered across the roof tops like Quasimoto, causing cars to stop on the street just to film them. When my mother was alive, we would station her by the front door to dispense the dozens of turkey tray filled collections of mixed candy to the intrepid children. With her wild long white hair and shawl around her shoulders, she looked every bit the witch. And she loved the job because it allowed her to steal and eat as much sugar candy as her diabetic heart desired. Of course, the deadly sugar rush made her crazier as the day wore on, which added to the ambiance. Mom was another un-killable McCaffrey. The local Russian population would come across the street from the Russian Mission and take photos of themselves posing with the creatures, artificial and human. And families from all sections of the Bronx, drove to Mosholu Avenue in van loads just to see the place and allow their children to experience the event. We easily spent over a grand on candy each year - and that's buying it in bulk from Costco's. Indeed, there were some years where we had to send out and buy more at retail mark up prices, just so no child would be disappointed. It was exhausting but satisfying to see all of those children overcoming their fears to walk the horror gauntlet to get to the front door and accept their candy, before proudly turning to those in the line that came after them with that look of "see, I did it!" We always talked with the children as they arrived to accept their treats and listened to how they were convinced, through the magic of the day, that they were indeed the characters whose costumes they assumed. I even enjoyed watching the older kids trying to balance coolness and fantasy as they desperately hung onto their childhood. And that was what made it all worth while. We had helped them

all transform their world into something magical, just for the day. And the parents enjoyed themselves as well, indeed, sometimes more than the kids. We went out of our way to scare the crap out of the more cocky of the bunch. And they would continue to hang around out front of the two properties socializing with the other families and enjoying the spectacle.

At around 8 pm, an EMS truck would appear on our street and blast the Ghost Busters theme song, Mr. Sandman from the Halloween films, and Tubular Bells from the Exorcist.

The crowd, and it was a crowd, loved it.

Finally, one of the local classic car groups would drive past with their cool cars all decked out for Halloween, on their way to somewhere else special just for adults, and everyone took it as the sign to disperse. We knew it was time to pull the plug and shut it down, another fantastical year in the bank.

So you five readers, put on a mask or costume, put out some candy at your doorway, and watch the magic happen.

Even if no humans show up.

Above all, have a great day. Happy Halloween.

Moshe's Back - Karen Beck Breezes Through

October 30, 2021



Karen (Beck) Anderson stopped by yesterday on her way to further enlightenment (a Joe Dispenza retreat - as my regular five readers know, I'm more of a Wayne Dyer (RIP), LOA acolyte, it definitely works, but all roads lead to) to drop her little Moshe for a spell at Casa Claire. Having done a prior stretch among my animals, Moshe quickly assimilated and was soon lounging around on the first piece of open furniture she could find. That meant snagging the last cushion open on Blue's sofa. Karen is the once nomadic sister of Ferd Beck, the family Merlin. We both attended St. Maggies, and hung with the same larger crowd in Riverdale during the cyclical migratory progression among the waifs from drinking on the Rocks in PS 81 park to bellying up to the bar in Coaches II. Back then "Cruiser" as she was known, rocked a Pat Benatar vibe, in both looks and danger. She even rode a motorcycle. None of us younger men

dared make a move on her. (I recently reconfirmed this with Lenny). Cruiser was intimidating.

One day at the end of the last century, Karen followed her dream of trading her iron horse for a real one, pulled up stakes and moved out west. She traded her 6th floor Manhattan walk up (she likes to say "I had killer legs") and her life as a legal secretary for a ranch bunk house and the life of a real cowgirl. I never knew what had become of her, as by then I had drifted from the greater Riverdale social group into marriage.

I reconnected with Karen once I got out west. Actually, she reconnected with me through her older brother Ferd, who had shared that I and my wife had moved out here. At that time Karen was still deeply involved as a traveling member of the Nomadland tribe. A modern Bedouin. She was the ultimate free spirit. Karen and Moshe followed the seasons in her converted SUV to congregate with other tribe members in various spots in the Four Corner States, with side trips to Mexico, always within driving distance to where she bordered her horse. She had her lifestyle down pat.

This was a choice. Freedom. In Ireland, Karen would have been considered a Tinker, or a Traveler. She is unique.

One thing about Riverdaliens is that once you are part of that tribe, you are one forever. You are thus honor bound to offer your full amenities when another Riverdalian visits, and to offer assistance to any of the tribe, where possible, during times of need. Beyond that, Karen is an honorary member of my Clan, through her sibling Ferd/Merlin. She receives all the added benefits that come with that title.

The last time Moshe boarded with us, Karen was transitioning from her nomadic life into a more anchored existence of life within four walls and a roof. As we are both facing the second half of our 60s, I understood her growing

need for comfort over freedom. So after a before-and-after stay at Casa Claire, Karen finally bit the bullet and found herself an apartment.

Karen now lives in a beautiful space about a half hour north of us in Ft. Collins. Its a great college town, centered around a historic downtown. It has anything you want and need. And we are only a phone call away and always open to a pop-in.

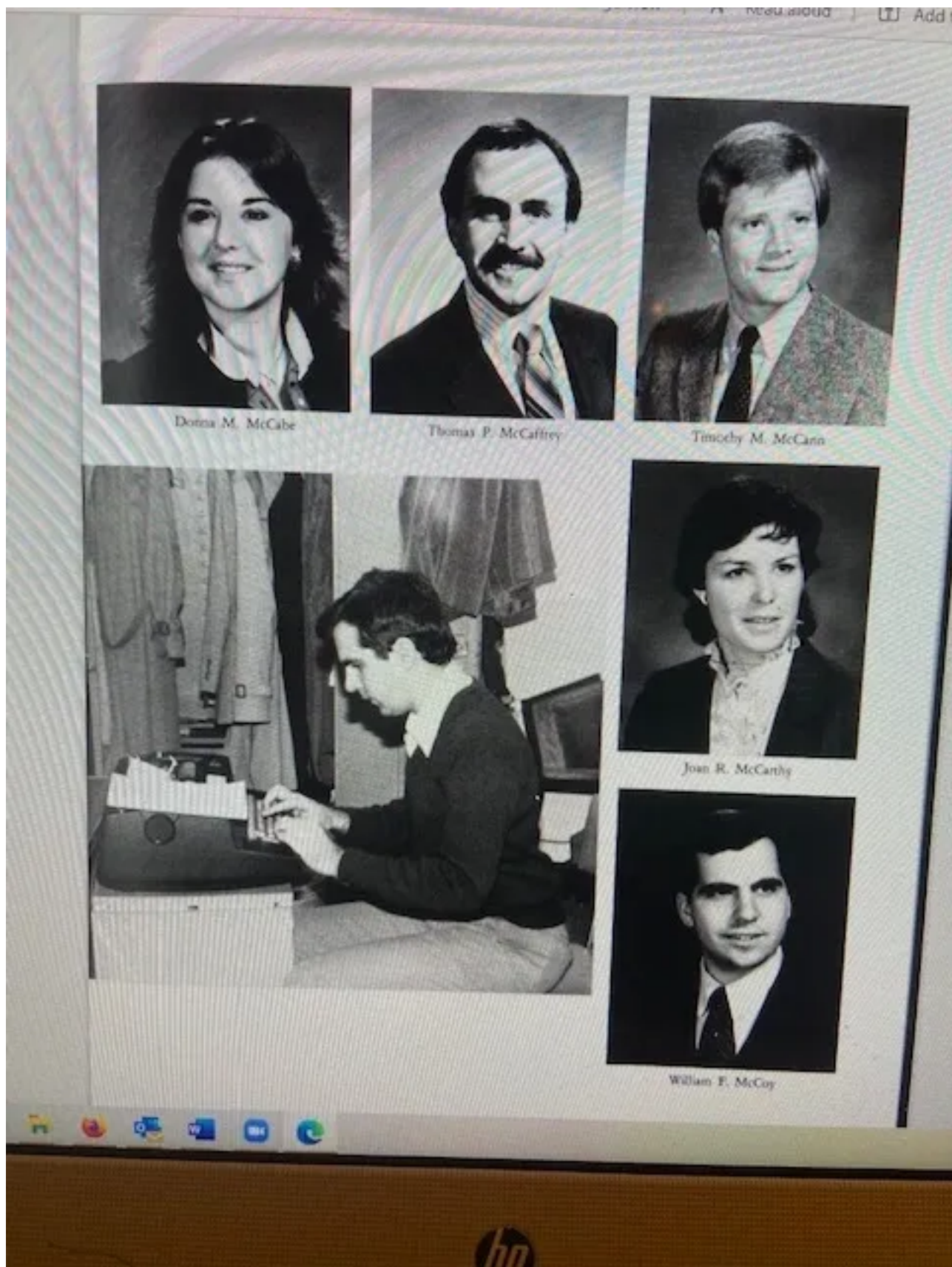
Karen only had time for a quick update and a sandwich on her way south to pick up a friend so both could absorb more Joe D. And while he's not my guru, I think he's had an amazing impact on Karen in just the time I've reconnected with her. I look forward to a full mystical report when she stops back in to collect Moshe on Tuesday.

In the meantime, I have chores to do.

So you fine five readers go out there and have a great day.

Where Has The Time Flown? Fordham Law School '84

October 29, 2021



Yesterday, I was interviewed (over the telephone) by a young writer named Sejla Rizvi for *Fordham Law Magazine*.

I was selected to be one of a dozen Fordham Law School alumni collectively featured in an article in the next edition of the magazine. This, of course, led me down memory lane. As I look back on that page from my FLS yearbook, I remember just how bright Donna, Joan, Tim and Bill were as students, and how nice they were to be around. Indeed, they may be four of the nicest people you can ever hope to meet. Shout out to all of my FLS classmates, especially Ray Keane, who, along with the mad Rich Hastings, haunted the Duane Library stacks with me up on the Fordham Rose Hill campus right through the NY bar exam. I believe the upcoming FLM article is about lawyers who went on to do something other than, or in addition to, law.

Sejla mentioned, as an example, someone who went on to open their own ice cream company. Given how much I love ice cream, I was terribly jealous of that other lawyer's accomplishment. I hope I don't follow them directly in the article. I mean, how does one compete with that? However, as with my fortunate inclusion in *The Writing Irish of New York*, I am absolutely honored that I was selected at all. Lawyers, by their nature, are an over achieving bunch. It is not easy to stand out amongst them. Sonia Sotomayor (future SCOTUS) was a classmate of mine at Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx (before I got tossed). Sonia was very smart, and always nice. I worked with Loretta Lynch (future USAG) at GF&M. We used to discuss writing in the law library. Loretta turned me on to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. I'll always remember these two women. Not sure I made the same kind of impression in their direction. One of my FLS classmates, Tim Brosnan, became a big *macher* in Major League Baseball. Another FLS classmate, Riverdalian and friend, Brian "Horace" Clark, went on to be a big time Labor Lawyer. Beth

McQuillen, sister of PWIC Co-Founder, Tommy McQ (RIP) was also a dear friend and FLS Classmate who did well professionally. Tommy himself became a lawyer a little later in life and still went on to rise through the ranks of the USAG's office.

My childhood hero, Big Jack Vaughan (RIP), and my childhood best friend, his son, always "Jackie" to me, are also FLS alums. Big Jack convinced me to become an attorney and supported that endeavor. Young Jack was the prototype for the Mark Wallen character (named after my BIL- RIP) mentioned in the backstories of The Claire Trilogy, and appears as a named character at the end of KMAG. I even mention Fordham Law School in that section.

Surprisingly enough, despite my natural contrariness and unconventionality, I've managed to evolve into being a decent lawyer. Although I have a Wall Street, big firm pedigree (another luck of the draw), I was too much of a maverick to survive in large bureaucracies. Over almost four decades, as I reduced the size of the law firms that employed me, I also reduced the number of people who could give me orders. This geometric regression in the number of people telling me how to think, allowed me to learn how to think for myself. Since 2007, I have been law partners with Robert Meloni (yes, the mobster lawyer character in TWA - Robert, an accomplished musician, can break down any piece of music for copyright analysis, and can quote every line in the Godfather Trilogy and My Cousin Vinny) and while we may never get rich, we are extremely good and successful at what we do. We've also have a great time working together.

Indeed, this weekend, Robert is attending the induction ceremony at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame for one of his clients. Best of luck to you both.

Of course, working in the entertainment field since 1987 has made the practice and the clients far more interesting. I've met some pretty amazing and talented creative people. And some real successful characters, like my friend Tony Brummel, founder of the independent music label Victory Records (his lovely wife Delphine Pontiveux, is an accomplished writer, artist, actor and scuba instructor). Tony easily could have run with me growing up in the Bronx. Tony is one of the hardest working people I have ever met and just had the knack for spotting and breaking new bands. Constantly brushing up against these people over the decades has thankfully sustained the itch of my own creativity.

The law has allowed me to bump into other interesting characters, which, in turn, has led to interesting offers and interesting stories. Enough said.

So, as I enter the golden years of my legal practice, I may not be remembered by my FLS classmates for my legal accomplishments, but at least I will now be remembered for my creative ones. And I can live with that.

It's Friday, the best day of the week. I have a legal motion to attend to but I am looking forward to the Halloween weekend.

The rest of you five readers, go out there and have a great day.

A Magic Bag of Risks - Righty-O!

October 28, 2021



This is the inspiration for the bag that Jimmy starts to carry around with him on his walks during his early days in Colorado. I still carry this bag to this day. This photo was taken pretty early on. That's the old deck, Skyclad and patio in the background before we renovated everything and we moved the workshop to the right away from the house and across the yard to the spot where the original garden shed in the story sat.

The real Pam Ervin (both she and Tique exist and are dear friends) used to give me hay to bring with me on my walks so I could drop some by for Claire every morning, along with the chopped fruits and vegetables. Pam taught me pretty much everything I know about caring for equines. She also talked me into believing I could and should adopt Claire. Not likely that I would have written The Claire Trilogy without Pam's divine intervention. Thank you Pam.

Pam was one of many Colorado life tweaks that carried me along towards the endgame of writing the novel. She convinced me to take one more major risk, to go out of my comfort zone and assume the care of a thousand pound creature I knew only through my early morning exchanges over a wire fence during my walks through the area. And out of all of the risks I had taken, that was probably the most important one. Claire is magical and has changed my life forever.

Everything about Colorado had been a risk. Spontaneously upending my life after six decades in the Bronx, driving cross-country and moving to the rural part of a mid-western state I knew nothing about, taking on a 30 year mortgage and buying a house and property that needed constant care after a lifetime of renting, and learning to handle a handgun and obtaining my conceal carry permit was another. Hell, walking a 4 mile loop alone in the dark where the wild

creatures roam was another. All of these new things - for a man in his sixties - scared the crap out of me. Not one of them came easily. The whole experience was exhilarating.

The good news is that the mortgage gives me one more reason to live productively until my nineties. So tell your friends to keep buying my books, and pray that Hollywood comes calling, because I don't want to be lawyering that whole time. I could use the professional shift in this world, if only for a short reprieve, for there will be an eternity of lawyering work for me to return to if I end up going south in the afterlife. Hell will be an infinitude of giving all of my friends an hourly discount rate as a professional courtesy in unwinnable cases because we are all guilty as charged. But you never know, I love a good challenge, so Satan may be in for a surprise. Move over Daniel Webster.

I had pretty much mastered everything else in my life before the move. My kids had been raised and educated. My career as a litigator working in the entertainment field had been established. I could have easily coasted through the last third of my life, in quiet desperation.

But the Colorado related risks have paid off for me. They provided the dividend of awakening my desire to give writing another shot. I figured, what the hell, look at all of the other new and totally unexpected things I had accomplished, let's give that novel a try and see what happens. Voila!

One of the many themes that underlie The Claire Trilogy is that you are never too old to break free of your life and do something different. So line up those risks, toss them in a bag, throw it over your shoulder and go out there and conquer something new. You ain't dead until you draw that last breath, so you might as well live right up until that final moment.

So all five of you, I want you to take an unexpected risk today. Even if it is as tiny as taking your coffee for the first time black, with no sugar.

You never know where it will lead you. Have a great day!

Compelling Whimsy

October 27, 2021



If you have read my novels or blog, you know I am very visual in my writing. That's how I put my readers into the settings and make them feel like they are part of the story. I want them to feel like they have been sitting around on the back deck or patio drinking, eating and laughing with my characters. There is always plenty of room around the farmer's table in the back yard for one more reader. And I believe it is the visual cues that allow the reader to get

there. The visual cues are talismans that have the magic to allow the reader through the looking glass or down the rabbit hole.

For the same reason, I like to place little items around my property to invoke whimsy. Something fanciful or odd, whose very existence brings a smile to a face or evokes a feeling that this place is different, magical. You've all read about the whirligigs, stone dragons, elves, sprites and gnomes you can find on my property. I've written recently about Jack the Spruce with all of the ringing wind chimes and spinning baubles that hang from his branches. There is Henri, the Lion, who watches over the driveway. I even have Pan and Bacchus to show that this is a home that enjoys celebrating life and all of its wonder.

Inside the house, I have all kinds of magical amulets sprinkled throughout that protect its occupants from harm and danger. All visual cues that most people would not even notice. The concept has been around for ages.

For example, the Jewish faith has the mezuzah. The words of God written on parchment and contained in a decorative case. You can see them on many apartment door jambs throughout New York City. Something I noticed when I first became a paperboy a million years ago. It protects all of those invited through that portal. It fascinated me then and now.

But I like signage as well. It's like tearing a page from a novel and pinning it up on a fence post. Its captures an idea with words or images or both. Sometimes without the person actually noticing it in real time. It just gets scooped up by the eyes in passing and stored away as a feeling. In my case, the signs are usually humorous or whimsical. I have signs on Claire's barn that memorializes its past and present occupants.

Out here in God's country, you often see signs demanding privacy and barring trespassing on parcels of property. I have signs that threaten wrongdoing intruders in the most delightful fashion. The above sign is my newest addition. It is the counterpart of an earlier Bigfoot Crossing sign I've posted on a bookend whirligig on the opposite side of the front lawn. I'm hoping that it and the others cause any passer by to smile or shake their head in disbelief. But I'm also hoping that it causes the most daring and intrepid of those that walk down my driveway to understand that Casa Claire is a magical place, and all notions of disbelief must be left at the perimeter.

So I say to my five readers, find your own talisman and put it right by your front door. You'll be surprised in the difference it makes.

Now go out there and have a great day!

October Ladybug Magic

October 26, 2021



Looked up from a really hectic, legal work, computer screen yesterday and watched as a tiny bug approached from the

north and landed on my outside window screen with that strange, muted, twangy sound a metal screen makes when it is impacted. It was right at one of those rare moments when I pretty much needed a legal miracle to occur. And while I cannot share with you what the miracle was, it did occur. Right then and there. A potential disaster was avoided.



So after wrapping up the suddenly fortunate legal matter with absolute giddiness, I walked outside to see what this

tiny creature was (I could only see its underbelly from inside my office). It turned out she was a ladybug (Sorry, I'm too old to call her something less patronizing). Now this was the first of her kind I have seen on my property this year.

I offered Ms. Bug my hand, which she readily accepted.

After watching her do a few laps around my digits, I walked over to one of my wall flower boxes that still contained a lot of thick shrubbery and also received a steady supply of warm autumn sun and gently set the happy bug down to allow her to find a safe place to rest, eat and hibernate should she so desire.

Then, true to my curious nature, I pondered the synchronicity and serendipity of the two events.

"Ladybugs are considered a symbol of good luck and happiness. When you see a ladybug it could be a sign of change and an announcement of good fortune and true love. This magical creature is a messenger and bearer of the best news and gives blessing to those that see it."

<https://aboutspiritual.com/what-does-it-mean-when-you-see-a-ladybug>

Now I know what you are all thinking. Pure coincidence.

And maybe you are right.

But when I came back inside the house and opened my personal email account, I found an email that had filtered through from TheWiseNovelist.com website. I do not get many of them, so I opened it immediately. It was from a writer looking to do an article about me for the next edition of Fordham Law Magazine. The exposure of The Claire Trilogy to my fellow alumni just before my next novel drops is indeed amazing luck. Wouldn't you agree?

I do not know how to explain this, but ever since I moved out to Colorado and into Casa Claire, my life has been a

concentrated and unending series of fortunate events.

There have been some sad moments, like the passing of some of my fur family members; Lucky, my esoteric black cat (familiar) of fifteen years who arrived through my Bronx window one day and never left, Phoebe, my strange looking but extremely lovable and neurotic mutt, who was happy as long as there was a fly in the room she could chase, and of course, more recently, the stoic, sweet and admirable Mr. Rogers, who taught me so much in such little time. But they each passed peacefully at home on their own terms with a nobility I only hope I can muster if and when my time comes. They are all buried on my property. And each one remains quite active in my imagination - or is it - and is forever locked in my heart.

But putting those inevitable events aside, I have been truly blessed. It's a wonderful life. And I am not going to complain.

I take yesterday's appearance of Ms. Bug as a harbinger of only continued luck for me and my loved ones.

So, the rest of you five readers, take a look around you and find your Ladybugs. They are there if you open your eyes. And have a great day.

Congrats Danielle & Eddie -- A Pleasantly Productive Day

October 25, 2021



I received the above wedding photo of the lovely young couple Danielle & Eddie from my dear SIL Mary (né Moran).

Danielle, as you can see, is absolutely stunning and, luckily, Young Eddie looks more like a Moran than a McCaffrey. Congrats to you both!



Irish Marriage Blessing

May God be with you and bless you.
May you see your children's children.

May you be poor in misfortunes
and rich in blessings.

May you know nothing but
happiness from this day forward.

Back here in Neverland (Peter's, not Michael's), I was expecting the worst for yesterday when I received an email Saturday night about a potentially emergent legal situation, but it turned out through the grace of God that I had already done the work so I just had to find and forward the material to the appropriate parties. That will not make this legal work week any easier but it at least gave me back my Sunday.

That left me to deal with my property related chores that

involve water troughs, hay bags and bales, and wheelbarrows full of Mule muffins. Then there is the actual feeding and grooming of the mules, and medication ringolevio. I had done the weekly equine food prep and road/store/shopping required chores on Saturday (including finally fixing that leaky back tire - let me highly recommend Discount Tire, they are amazing).

Since I ended up with some unexpected time on my hands I also took care of shucking the used Keurig containers, sending the empty plastic and tin foil topped containers off to be recycled and dispensing the reclaimed coffee grinds around the base of my newish trees. Spaghetti swore by this fertilizing process, although he never had to deal with Keurig containers.



As you can see from the above photo of my last shucking, I have a process.

Then I swept off the back patio and wiped down the area (always dusty in Colorado), including the Skyclad grotto.

Oddly enough, it takes a lot less to send me searching for my go to Aleve bottle these days.

Afterwards, I picked Lisa up from work and we went to an early dinner at a nice Irish Pub in Longmont, called "O'Shays," a restaurant I highly recommend - love their Caprese Sandwich and extra crispy fries (and pickle).

There a lovely waitress insisted on paying for our meal

because she recognized my wife as the nurse who took care of her grandfather a few years earlier. Thank you young lady. Nevertheless, we left her a healthy tip. And thank you Lisa for being so attentive to your patients.

Karma can be a sweetie.

We ended the day and weekend binge watching a few episodes of an Australian drama on Amazon called "A Place Called Home," which I also highly recommend.

Now I know you are wondering why I would write about such a mundane couple of days, but I wanted to emphasize how you truly see the magic in your daily activities, once you realize how easily they can be taken away. Yesterday, it was a potential work issue. A month ago, a car accident (word has it that I should have my now fully rebuilt Toyota back sometime this week). So, live in each moment and appreciate each second.

In sum, my recommendation to the rest of my five readers is to go out there and see the wonder in your daily activities.

And even though it is Monday, have a great day!

Jack The Spruce

October 24, 2021



The character Jack The Spruce popped into my mind the moment I set eyes on him when I first pulled into my driveway in 2017. There was this enormous tree positioned before my home, blocking all view of the front doorway area from the street, like it was standing guard. From the street, this tree looks just like that, a simple tall tree.

When I walked around the other side of him, as I entered the house, I could not help but think of the Celtic image of The Green Man, sometimes referred to as "Jack in the Green."

When the time came to write TWA, I knew I had to incorporate the Jack in the Green imagery as JTS into the storyline.

The below photo is the JTS grotto that faces my front door. It's a daily/nightly inspiration.



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

Now here's a little factoid. I went back and added that tiny but pivotal interaction between JTS and DP at the very end of the novel, during the very last round of publisher's edits, because I wanted JTS to be more than just a tree. And he is.



Jack also serves as our feral cat, Smoky's grotto. I can just sit there before him and meditate about wild and fanciful things. I have a little patio just off to Jack's right, which is shielded from most elements by Jack. .
And Jack stares directly at his doorknocker counterpart.



So it is a very safe and magical space indeed. And the most wonderful thing is that Jack has allowed nothing bad or evil to walk through that door since I arrived.

So I have to hop off because I actually have emergent legal weekend work to attend to today (sigh). (It sneaked past Jack through the internet. Need to update my computer's security).

But the rest of you five readers do absolutely nothing but rest. I need to know that there are people out there who are enjoying themselves.

Have a great day!

Congratulations Danielle and Eddie

October 23, 2021



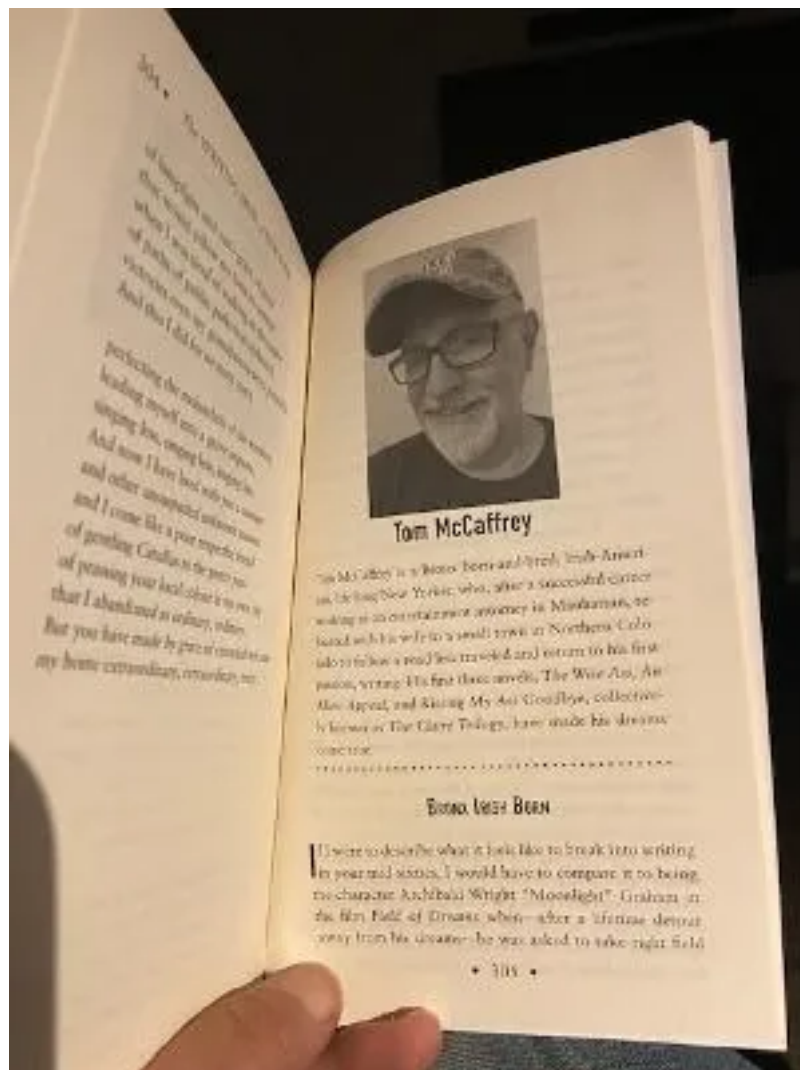
The youngest of my eldest brother (and dear wife, Mary né Moran) is marrying the love of his life this evening in New Jersey. The gorgeous and perfect Danielle Flanagan has decided to throw caution to the wind and marry into this mad Clan. We welcome her with open arms. Young Eddie better

count his blessings. The McCaffreys understand that without a strong female leading the way we are screwed.

Unfortunately, Lisa and my work schedule, both professional and mule, prevent us from attending, but we have sent our gift and will be there in spirit. My sisters v&b, Clan matriarchs, are representing the Colorado contingent.

We can only hope that the youngsters tie the knot before the Flanagans get a good look at us. So here's an Irish toast to the young couple - *Go n-éirí leat!*

Speaking of Irish celebrations, Colin Broderick's book of essays, *The Writing Irish of New York*, is still at number 1 on Amazon. I was thrilled to receive my copy yesterday evening, and after anxiously waiting for Lisa to thumb through it and read my essay while I texted Colin the good news, I was able to take a gander. I could not be more excited. As an Irish-American writer, it felt like being invited to sit at the cool kids' table. If only I could get a new face:



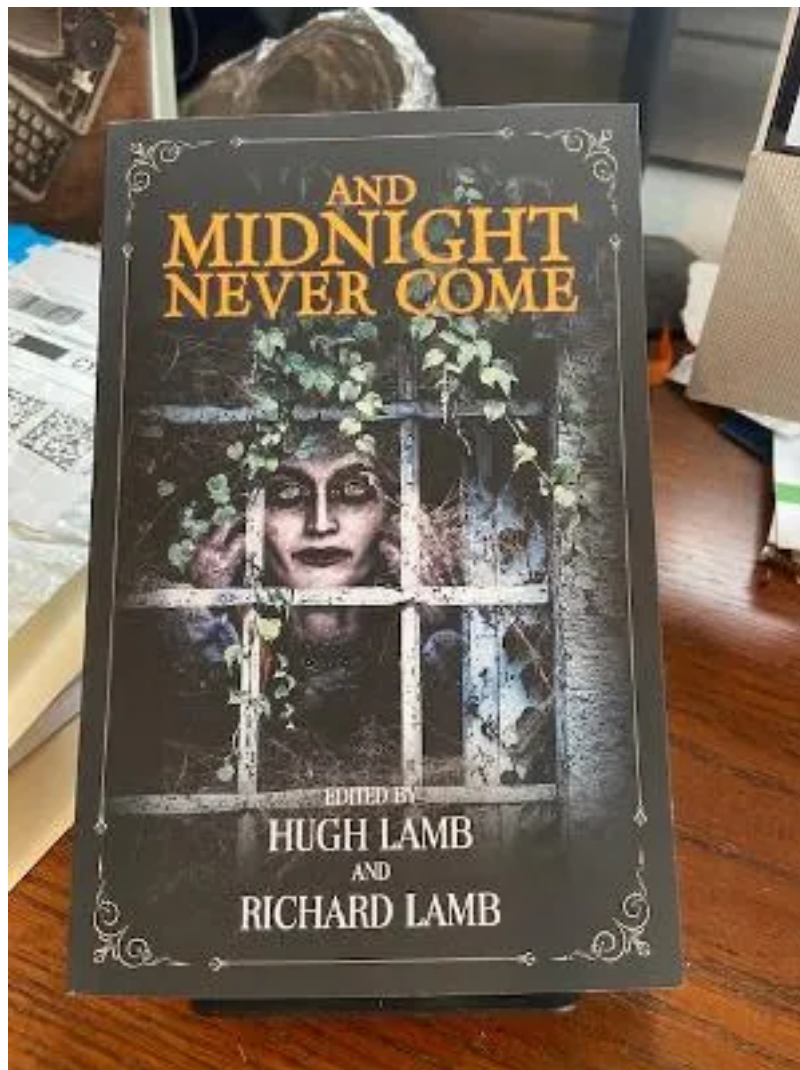
While I'll leave it to the readers to decide if my essay mined the experiential depth, pathos and even humor that many of my Celtic Bard brethren (in its gender neutral sense) are so easily able to evoke in their offerings, I am satisfied that it is honest and heart felt. I am the luckiest guy in the world. Thank you Colin.

So on top of my usual weekend chores, I am going to get that slow leak in Lisa's back tire fixed (not a euphemism), pick up Claire & Honey's cleaned and refurbished winter coats from the wonderful folks at Hygiene Feed and Supply, as well as more Timothy-Alfalfa feed from Murdochs (my mules can eat). If I can find the time, I hope to get through

the shelling of my growing collection of expended Keurig cups as well (I drink a lot of coffee). So I better get at it. So, the rest of you five fine readers, go out and do something special on your Saturday. Have a great one.

Richard & Hugh Lamb's Macabre Collection & Colin Broderick is #1

October 22, 2021



My perfect Halloween read arrived yesterday in the form of "And Midnight Never Come," an anthology of over twenty short stories that are sure to put you in that special haunted mood. The great thing about the short story form is that it is

not as demanding of your continuous time as are longer tomes. You can digest it in selective bites and can jump around in the order. Given this collection is a generational transition from the iconic British collector of spooky short stories, Hugh Lamb, to his now equally gifted U.S. based son Richard Lamb (who is also known for his terrible taste in British Football teams) any reader of spooky fiction worth their salt will want to witness the event and pick up a copy. I recommend this read.

Congratulations Richard Lamb!

Speaking of literary collections, Colin Broderick's *The Writing Irish Of New York* flew out of the sales gates as an Amazon "#1 New Release" in British & Irish Literary Criticism.

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Amazon



https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09JV...



audible

New from the author
of Harry Potter



Last purchased Oct 20, 2021.

View order

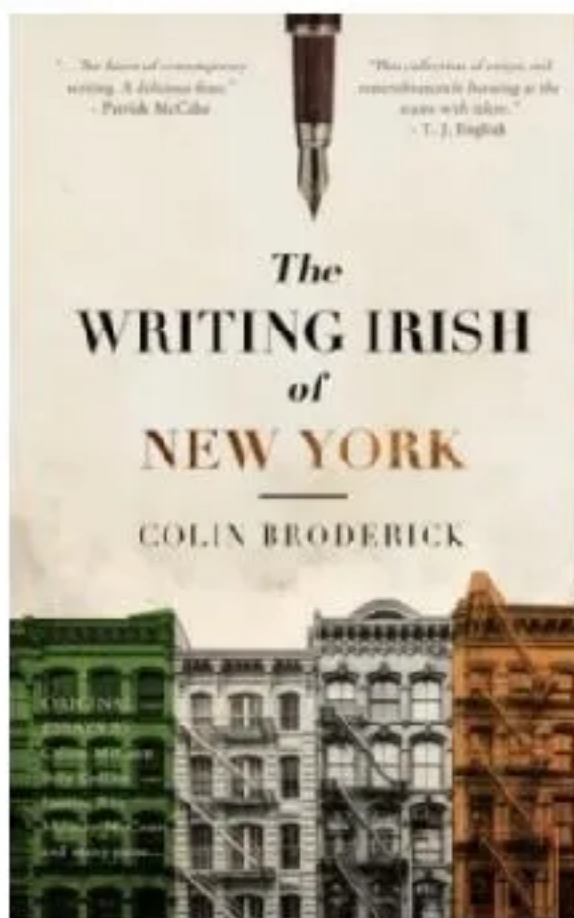
Set reminder

Colin Broderick

The Writing Irish of New York

#1 New Release

in British & Irish Literary Criticism



I have to admit that I tricked some of my friends and family into purchasing the book by explaining that the title was a misprint and should have read "The Fighting Irish of New York," and that it had instant collectors value like a double-stamped penny. I'm sure that even without the promised physical confrontations they'll enjoy the collection and forgive me once they read it.

Congratulations Colin Broderick!

Okay, so here we are at another Friday (where did the week go?) and I have a very important motion to put to bed that I must turn to if I do not want to share my weekend with the law.

The rest of you five readers, call your friends and schedule a fright night movie event. Or order the above books and set yourselves down for a good read.

No matter what, have a great day!

The Writing Irish Of New York - Colin Broderick

October 21, 2021



Those of you that have read my blogs have seen me mention Colin Broderick, for both his brilliant writing and his clever films (if you ever want to read about a fantastical life, read his memoirs - *Orangutan & That's That* - and even his novel *Church End*). I've written about our long history, stretching back into the nineties of the last century, about how our respective family's roots are from The North, and how we are both Lehman College graduates from its English Honors Program. Indeed, Colin was the first established writer that offered to give me a blurb for the cover of TWA - the now classic: "Grisham on mushrooms" Well, yesterday

Colin re-issued an updated version of his hand selected collection of essays by famous Irish & Irish-American writers who have called New York their home. All of the heavy hitters are there - Malachy McCourt, Billy Collins, Maeve Brennan, Colum McCann, Honor Malloy, Chris Campion, Kevin Fortuna, Larry Kirwan - the list goes on and on.

Anyway, once Colin decided to buy back the rights to the first edition, he wanted to update it before he re-released it.

Among other things, he created a new cover and included essays from a few more writers.

I was deeply honored when Colin asked me to submit an essay for consideration. No guarantees. I was thrilled just to be asked.

I was ecstatic when my submission, *Bronx Irish Born*, was one of the five new contributions that made the cut. Thank you Colin from the bottom of my heart.



As an old Irishman (I actually have registered dual citizenship) and a spanking new writer, I cannot explain how much appearing in this volume with the giants of my field and culture means to me. In my mind, it's like being selected for the All-Star team in your rookie year. I am certain that my pure blood grandparents on both sides are ecstatic. I hope my friends and family that grew up with me in the Bronx are equally pleased, as I would never have written a word without their ever present influence and biographic material. I am a literary repository of their stories. Special shout out to the OFC - Lenny, Joe S, BC and Stein - and to Reagan Rothe and the BRW crew.

So, if any of you readers ever want to get a definitive peek behind the curtain of the trials and tribulations of the New York based Irish writing community, and how/why they converted their natural gift of blarney to the written word, pick up a copy of *The Writing Irish Of New York*. Read through the greats, and when you're done, if you have the inclination, take a gander at my essay. It's there at the end, just before Himself. It may surprise you.

If you are searching for it on Amazon, go here: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09JVMFD15/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1634743744&sr=8-2

Otherwise you may end up with the original version with the dark cover.

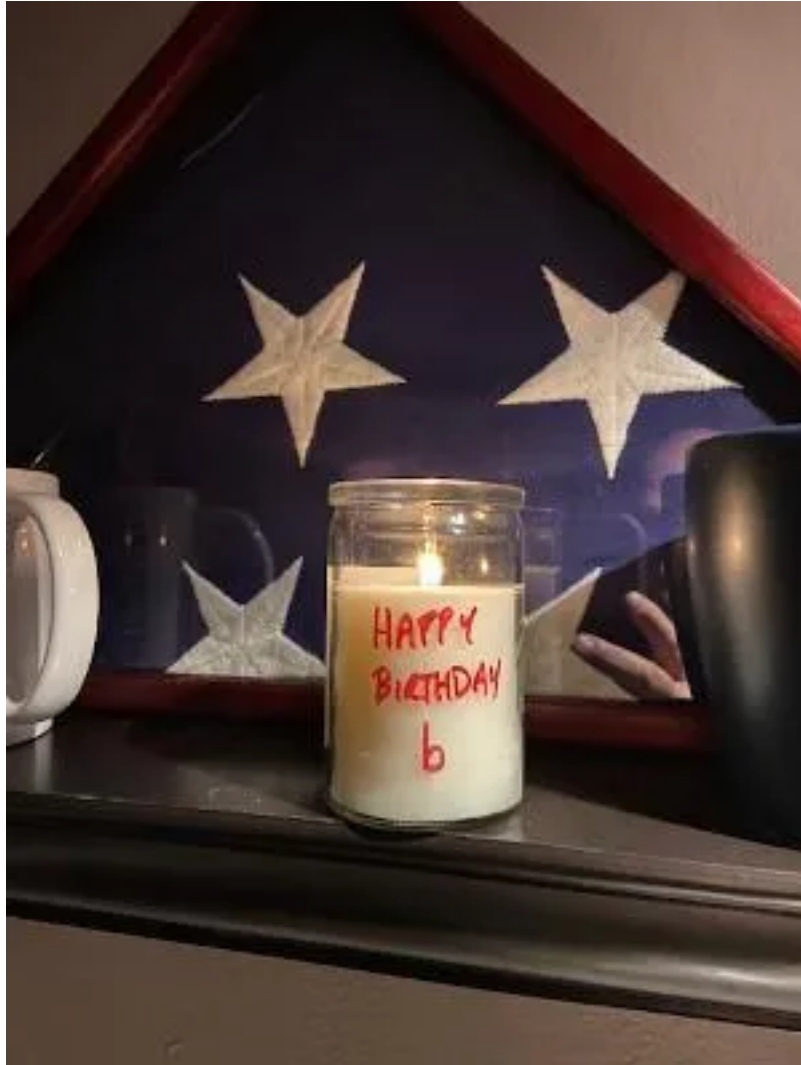
I also understand that Colin will be selling copies from his author's website: <https://www.colinbroderick.com>

So after this heady news, it's really hard to put on the lawyer's hat, but I must.

The rest of my five readers, have a great day.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY b

October 20, 2021



Barbara "b" Frank is a petite, intelligent and classy woman who married my sister, Veronica.

I add no "in-law" suffix to my description of her. She is my sister. She is beloved by the Clan.

It didn't start out that way. When b arrived on my sister's arm those many years ago, she upset the apple cart. She wasn't going to run the McCaffrey male gauntlet. She was also fiercely protective of my sister to the point that she was

not going to allow the brothers to apply any psychological booster shots to our sibling who had been away from the nest for so long.

The first question among the brothers after our introduction was "who is going to dig the grave?"

Being initially introduced to her only as "b," I thought it was short for badger.

But once the lines were clearly drawn, she showed us all just how wonderful their life together had become. They were living the dream. She loved Veronica, and Veronica loved her. They were symbiotic. They completed each other. She is the perfect consort for Veronica as Clan leader.

And b quickly adopted the rest of us, for good or bad. She is loving and devoted to the Clan, but will call it as she sees it. She has no problem telling her new brothers that the King has no clothes. And we need that. And she is generous with all facets of her life. She is always there for us.

I personally do not make any major life decisions without both her and Veronica's advice. They have the Midas touch.

Indeed, none of my children make any major decisions without running it by them. And that's okay by me.

b and Veronica have also galvanized the McCaffrey women, by birth and marriage. My wife, daughter, granddaughters, and all of the daughters by marriage adore them. The next generations of women model themselves after b&v. They all want to be just as confident and successful.

And they have been involved with our grandchildren from the ground floor. Lucian, Scarlett, Savanna and Stella are all blessed by their influence.

Indeed, I modeled the Trilogy's characters Tessa and Bonnie after my two sisters. The originals are every bit as magical. So, happy birthday b, from the McCaffrey Clan who love you. Have a great day.



And you five other readers, enjoy your day as well.

Hunter's Moon

October 19, 2021



Last night was the first of the three night cycle of the *Hunter's Moon*. It got its name because it is the time in

the fall season when indigenous people, and later the settlers, would gather their meat for the long winter ahead. The old fashioned way. By hunting. It is like day light out there.

Full moons are a time to manifest results from the projects you have been working on. For my part, I am hoping to see K MAG up and running on the BRW and Amazon (and other) websites in the weeks ahead so that The Claire Trilogy will be completely manifested. Fingers crossed.

And despite the fact that for the past fifteen years I have not been carnivorous, and truly believe that all life is sacred, and all animals sentient beings, I respect the historical narrative of those that came before me and therefore I am not calling to have the title of this lunar cycle changed to *Wild Creatures; Ain't That A Bitch Moon*. History is history. Humans are imperfect, but keep striving to be better. You have to take the bitter with the sweet and move on. Positive change is forward thinking, not retroactive. Permanent change comes through example, not mandate.

Choice is a freedom that must not be subjugated. And the skills of the hunter are invaluable for our individual and collective survival. For me, personally, by choice, those skills have been repurposed. Wolf to sheep dog.

I wonder who will be the hunters if we are finally reduced to a nation of sheep. No dogs left. The wolves inevitably will come from somewhere else. And that would be
bbbbbaaaaaaaaaaaddddddd.

For the record, no animals were literally harmed in the process of writing the Trilogy. Or this blog.

Those five of you out there reading this blog, ignore my ramblings. It must be the effects of the full moon, pure lunacy. Jeeezzzz, where did all this hair come from? Just go out there and have a great day.

Apples & Art for the Picking

October 18, 2021



First weekend where I got to everything on my punch list (except fixing the slow leak - not a euphemism), including stopping by Terry and Bart's beautiful home in the Paradise Valley Estates. As promised, there was a bounty of apples to pick. I could have filled ten sacks. But not wanting others to know how piggish I can be, I left with just one full sack. Thank you, Terry and Bart. Claire and Honey - who

enjoyed a sampling immediately upon my return - send their regards as well.

No milk trucks were reported in the area. Eileen must have flattened BC's tires (also not a euphemism).

Earlier in the day, I took my DIL Georgie up to Loveland to meet the wonderful artists in the collective, including Jill Atchinson and Billie Colson. While Georgie talked shop with a number of the artists, I had a blast having more detailed conversations with a number of the others, including all of the women at the Lincoln Gallery (shout out to the lovely woman making magical clay figures using a spaghetti maker, the one drawing Burmese Mountain Dogs, and the authentically smiling and funny local woman behind the counter, who had a fascinating recollection of the local Beet sugar industry) and the Independence Gallery artists (including the Carolina rooted, abattoir wand maker, Terie Christmas (real name - she has two Aunts named Merry), the charming Georgia-peach Brenda Leedy (who told me a funny story about a particularly challenging joke), a tall, statuesque young woman who was drawing a cat (her squirrel drawing looked just like the Central Park squirrel who mugged me - sent shivers down my spine - I swear its eyes were following me), and the more petite maker of magnificent Murano looking glass art. Forgive me all, I am terrible with names. But I enjoyed the conversations, the laughs and the hugs. Jill and Billie, always a pleasure. Billie, thanks for the cake. Remember, if any of your members buy paperback versions of TWA (or any of my books), just text me and I'll come by to inscribe them.

Always be selling! A rising tide floats all boats.

This week promises lots of legal machinations and more mask mandates. You must find your happiness between the raindrops.

Oh, and belated Birthday shout out to my wonderful law partner, dear friend, and trilogy character, Robert (never Bobby) Meloni. I hope you had a wonderful weekend. Anyway, the work-week awaits. TTFN! Have a great day!

LOVELAND ART GALLERIES

October 17, 2021



Yesterday's punch list worked out just fine for my chores, although not for my back, so I may have to start doubling up on my Relief Factor on the weekends. It turns out that my scheduled trip to Discount Tire to fix that slow leak was actually scheduled for next Saturday, so I was able to move the chores forward and get them done a little earlier. Let's hope the leak is slow enough to make it that long. Lisa attended Scarlett's morning horse riding lesson with Georgie, and the three "S" granddaughters, but she was feeling a bit under the weather with a cold the girls

generously shared with her during the week, so she deservedly put her feet up when got back.

So, I took the opportunity of a suddenly free afternoon to move my visit to the Loveland Art Studio Tour from Sunday to yesterday.

Downtown Loveland (Old Loveland) is a quaint, artsy feeling place, with a small but interesting museum and a nice row of restaurants, which were all busy yesterday afternoon as the locals all got out a for a face mask free sunny afternoon, before the next Orwellian mandates kick in next week. Don't get me started.

Anyway, I found the first part of the Art Studio Tour installation at the Lincoln Gallery (on Lincoln, of course), where I met the wonderful gallery owner, Jill Atcheson, and chatted with a number of the artists (lucky me, they just happened to all be charming women - maybe I'm dead and this is heaven), watched a few actually working at their art as part of this exhibit, incredibly impressive, and viewed a variety of this collective of artists' works. I am in awe of those that are musically or artistically gifted. I am equally in awe of the mentoring and support these more established artists give to the younger artists. You could just feel the positive energy flowing.

www.LincolnGallery.com

But since I had been referred to the Art Studio Tour by a local named Billie Colson (on the Nextdoor App), I was surprised when I didn't see any of her work in the Lincoln Gallery. When I asked Jill about it, she laughed and referred me to a gallery around the corner, which is part of the collective studio tour and is owned by Billie J. Colson. Just as with the Lincoln Gallery, Billie's Independence Gallery (named after the God Bless America Holiday) was filled with artists (again all female - with that kind of luck I

should have played Lotto). Some were doing exhibitions demonstrating their craft. Others were discussing techniques or exhibitions or other artists (I would listen in as I passed them). There were a variety of styles - using a wide range of materials and mediums -- some sculptures - even cool furniture pieces. There were even an exhibit of some really cool looking magical looking wands. But as I reviewed the walls I did not see any of Billie's art, until I got all the way to the back of the studio. There were a series of wonderful animal prints which included bison, dogs, cats, ravens and mules and donkeys. One of the latter looked just like Honey. Must go back with Lisa to check it out.

www.IndependenceGallery.com

Now it is a selfless artist who willingly places her own work behind those of her competitors and proteges. That fact was confirmed a moment later when I bumped into Billie talking shop with another artist. She is a pistol. She generously took her time to show me not only what she had exhibited on the walls but pulled up her extensive collection on her computer. To punctuate the independence flavor of her gallery, she showed me a cool American Flag she had painted. All the while she generously explained her painting process. She also explained how the more established artists mentor the newer ones.

I am definitely referring my talented DIL, Georgie, to both galleries and owners, so she can get her very artistic foot inside both doorways.

In the end, I was delighted with the tour and with the artists and gallery owners I met. It infused me with the collective creative energy. I will be back. If you are ever in the area, check out these and other galleries. And start collecting both these established and young artists - think about how Gertrude Stein cleaned up back in the day!

Today, along with some Claire grooming, Honey medicating and some medicare paperwork (never thought I would live this long and I am really disappointed in the medicare system, thank God I don't go to doctors), I will find that small window of time where I will stop by Terry's place and pick some apples, with one eye peeled for the movement of any milk trucks.

The rest of you five readers, forget what the naysayers tell you to do and go out and enjoy your day.

Jusqu'à demain!

Clowns Anyone? Michael Jubak Goes A Haunting

October 16, 2021



Why are Clowns so creepy? From the fictitious Pennywise in Stephen King's *It*, to the very real John Wayne Gacy (and let us not forget *Killer Klowns From Outer Space*), they have come to represent the hidden evil that surrounds us. No surprise then that Clowns would pervade the Haunt at Rocky Ledge in Harrison NY, where my cousin Michael Jubak (handsome young man on the right), recently got to enjoy a good haunting experience among some of his older sister's (Megan Jubak's) friends, who perform as the ghouls at that regionally famous Haunted House. Mike and Megan are the children of my cousin Christina Jubak (né McEntee), youngest sister of my Cousin Apples, who was a Clan regular at the McCaffrey Compound throughout my youth. Anyway, from all reports, a good time was had by all. Did I mention that Halloween is my favorite holiday! Note the two finger salute, made famous by the English archers during their endless wars with the French. Well done Michael. Speaking of Apples, during the latest gathering of the Paradise Estates Book Club, I was honored by the remote/virtual attendance of one of its members, Terry, who was nice enough to offer me the opportunity to pick some fresh apples on her property for Claire and Honey. She is even leaving me a ladder to use. I will be stopping by Sunday afternoon to take her up on the offer. C&H are thrilled.

Thank you Terry. Eileen C, make sure BC does not get their first to tamper with the ladder.

Speaking of BC. Want to give a shout out to the soon to be literarily infamous character (already actually infamous among the OFC) and his long suffering and very sweet and lovely wife Nan, for their recent wedding anniversary. Well done you two! Nan, what were you thinking?! I cannot recall

what number this is for the happy couple and that is because I drank so much the night before their nuptials that I suffered the worst hangover in my life the morning of the event. The sound of the church candles burning sent bolts of lightning through my brain. I am certain I destroyed half my brain cells that weekend. There might have been Potcheen (Poitin) involved. And it was all BC's fault! As I will remind you, I used to be an altar boy (back during the conversion of Latin to English Mass), who has been led astray by BC (Joe, Lenny & Stein). How the mighty have fallen! I believe there is a blog with photo that chronicles how I felt that morning. August Rodin could have used that photo as a model for one of the damned on his Gates of Hell sculpture.

Speaking of Art, I hope to sneak a little time this weekend to appear at the Loveland Art Studio to view a local artist's, Billie Colson's, exhibition of paintings.

But before I can do any of this, there are wheelbarrows of dung to be cleared, troughs to be cleaned and filled and hay to be bagged. I also have some veggies and apples to prep for the week. Finally, I have to get a slow leak fixed in the rear left tire in my wife's car before the bad weather sets in. No rest for the wicked.

The rest of you five readers, go out and enjoy the weekend.

Cool Night In Skyclad

October 15, 2021



Skyclad is our hot tub. It was an older (ancient - once used by Julius Caesar) model that was originally kept in the little room off the dining room by Casa Claire's last owners. That now completely remodeled room serves as Lisa's personal office where she keeps her important stuff and also allows entry by our grand daughters who come by and practice their writing, drawing and coloring skills. Luke and I emptied Skyclad when we first arrived and moved it outside under the back deck. That was a hump. When we remodeled the outside of the house and rebuilt the decking we opened a

sealed off alcove down below - dead space - probably a sacrificial room - which was the perfect place for Skyclad.

During the transition, before its re-instillation, Skyclad sat further out towards the back yard and played a role in saving me when I fell through the original back decking and my sweatshirt was caught on two large nails that had keyed my chest and abdomen during my decent. I hung there like A Man Called Horse (starring Richard Harris). You can find that story back in the earlier blogs. We had to have Skyclad repaired before we inserted it in its new spot - the control panel and pump were shot. That required removal of one side of the original side paneling, which didn't survive the process, so I replaced it with finished plywood and painted it with its name on it. Voila!

We don't use Skyclad much in the summer months, unless we've been working on some arduous, backbreaking project, and need its therapeutic heat on our backs. I like the Skyclad to stay hot, so it loses some of its appeal during the hot summer. The real reason for the summer lull is that daylight hangs around until its way past our bedtimes, given we are early risers, and Skyclad is not only the hot tub's name, it's a requirement to entry. I'm no prude and the back neighbors would need binoculars, but I don't want Claire and Honey to be any more shocked by our almost human antics than they already are. Blue and Jeter don't seem to pay us any attention.

Anyway, last night was cool enough and dark enough to enjoy a long soak before bedtime. And while the point of entry always evokes the final moments of a live Lobster, within moments we are acclimated and it just feels wonderful. And trust me, after a couple of cycles of maximum water jets you are primed for sleep. Euphemisms anyone?

A quick aside, that relief on the stone wall to the right is Bacchus (Roman)/ Dionysus (Greek) the god of wine and ecstasy. I selected that particular stone relief because he bears a striking (haunting?) resemblance to Lenny, which just seemed perfect as the permanent host for the area where one can enjoy eating, drinking and socializing. Here's a better shot of the area.



And here is the Lenny-Bacchus comparison. The similarity is frightening.



Shifting once more, we stopped by the home of Claire's prior caretakers, Amy, Mike, Delaney and Charles Honeker, who are moving from Berthoud Estates to a 48 acre plot of land in Missouri. They have surrounding woods, a huge pond and a running stream. I am so jealous. They promised me that if we ever wanted to move, they would carve out 10 acres for us. The parents are the nicest young people, and loving parents to Delaney and Charles. D&C are angelic.

They are not only the sweetest and brightest kids, but they could both pass as Centaurians on looks alone. I modeled the physical characteristics of two of the central characters

in KMAG on them. Check the cover. Anyway, after tearful and multiple goodbyes and hugs, we said goodbye. We wish this young family nothing but happiness and success. We predict nothing less.

Anyway, it is Friday and the law awaits. Lots of chores to do this weekend, beyond those Claire related. Looks like Skyclad will see some action.

To each of my five readers, slack off from your regular employment and get an early jump on the weekend. No one has ever said on their deathbed that they wish they had worked one more day!

Opportunity & Luck

October 14, 2021



Happen to spot this horned barn owl on my walk. It flew right across my path on the road about my arm's length in front of me, and I almost fell over because I didn't hear its wings, it was just suddenly there, in all its glory. I never see them during the daylight, but I can hear them hooting throughout the early morning darkness, and sometimes spot a large, moonlit silhouette on a tree branch or barn rooftop around the property when I am out feeding the mules. This guy

must have had a late night. His appearance before me was totally unexpected. I got a sense in that moment of what an unlucky rabbit must feel like. Despite having all four rabbit feet for protection.

So I pulled out my phone and tried to capture a shot. I followed him down the road. I got lucky. Timing and luck. And isn't that what life is all about. Being lucky enough to grab an opportunity when it presents itself. If you hesitate, or you are not prepared, the opportunity vanishes. But sometimes, even when it looks like a lost cause, you get that second chance. So don't give up.

Now the shot isn't perfect by any means, its an iPhone camera, but it captures the moment. I missed that amazing shot when it flew right past me, but I didn't give up, and followed it through the sky until I saw that second opportunity and pulled the trigger. In my mind this photo is good enough to capture another magical moment.

My writing is like that. I got a second chance and took my shot. It's not perfect. But it captures a moment. Hopefully, that is good enough.

And perfect gets in the way of good enough.

So you other writers out there who never finish that novel because you are struggling as you rewrite that same first chapter over and over again, searching for perfection, my advice is that you capture what you are trying to say in the best way you can, don't get up from the screen until you get it down before you, and then move on with the story.

Otherwise, you'll never have anything to publish. Get the words down on the computer screen and take your story from A to B to C and when you get to Z, you'll have told your story. Then you can go back through it knowing the beginning, middle and end and edit it accordingly. You can move things around. You can clearly see the gaps in your

narrative and fill them. You can chop out what you don't need, which is sometimes the hardest thing to do, because it doesn't move the story forward. You can fine tune a character. Fiddle until your heart is content. But you will be fiddling in confidence because you know you that no matter what else happens, you have your story down before you, and nothing can take that away from you.

But before you ever start to write, you should always be thinking about the story. For me, I won't sit down to write until I feel that the story has so packed my head that it is literally leaking out my ears and if I don't get it down I'll lose it forever. That doesn't mean I know the whole story, just that I know enough of the story or characters that I need to get that all down. Once I have that, the written momentum, the characters take over and tell the rest of the story themselves.

I don't think you need to get to that point for shorter works like essays or blogs. I think you can write those spontaneously. In fact, writing shorter works is a great way to teach yourself how to write the longer pieces.

That's why I love writing this blog. I get up every morning not knowing what I'll write about. Sometimes my mind is a complete blank. So I'll go thumbing through my camera, looking for an image that sparks an idea or memory and then I'm off to the races.

That owl photo started this narrative for me and the rest was stream of consciousness. It's not perfect, but its good enough.

So, to you, my five readers, go out and have a brilliant day. Keep your eyes open, you never know when opportunity will present itself.

Paradise Estates Book Club

October 13, 2021



Port Status	
Destination	Arrival
San Francisco	10:00 AM
Los Angeles	11:00 AM
San Diego	12:00 PM
Phoenix	1:00 PM
Las Vegas	2:00 PM
Seattle	3:00 PM
Portland	4:00 PM
San Jose	5:00 PM
San Francisco	6:00 PM

Last night I had the honor and privilege to be a guest of the PEBC. I had a ball. I arrived at the magnificent home of the October Host, Sharon, at about 7pm and walked into a room full of intelligent, professional and attractive women. I even had one lovely lady attending via Skype, an absolute first for me. Thought I had died and gone to heaven. Of course, I was so caught up in overcoming my natural shyness - an absolute wallflower growing up -- by thereafter talking non-stop for three hours - that I forgot to get a photo of the group. The members were so attentive and asked the greatest questions. At the end of my time there, which flew by, I inscribed a few copies of TWA and then bid my adieu. Hugs all around.

Given my natural inability to remember names, I apologize to the group - it takes me three contact occasions before I actually remember a name (but I never forget a face) - I do recall Debi (who was dressed in a very cool witch costume), because we have had more than 3 contacts to set up my attendance at the event, and I recall the other names I inscribed in the books, Sharon (a painter - fine arts, not house), Mary (who hails from Greenwich Connecticut - might have lived in Brooklyn and had some great questions about spirituality and Martha Moxley), and Cheryl (a CPA and Runner). That leaves Gloria, the lovely silver haired woman directly to my right (absolutely captivating) - God bless her she seemed to be the one in charge of documenting the event, I'm hoping she doesn't note how many times I cursed (she would run out of ink) - Susan, the shorter Celt (Australian-Scot - great accent) brunette (who knows her equines) to my direct left, who also drives a Mini-Cooper and actually walked me into Sharon's house, and Joyce, the lovely, also diminutive, other brunette to my left who was quick to laugh and an absolute sweetheart. Last,

but not least, there was Terry, the wonderful woman who attended via Skype, who was kind enough to offer me the opportunity to stop by and pick some apples for my mules.

Thanks Debi for confirming the names.

The above photo was supplied by Debi (that is her lethal and stylish looking white thumbnail right there over my name), who had taken TWA with her on some recent trips.

So Claire is now giving the Traveling Gnome a run for his money.

I'm hoping they will invite me back for discussions about AAA and KMAG. I may have scared them off. Stay tuned. Here's another traveling shot.

UNITED



B52

Flt, Sep 15, 8:00 am
Traverse City, MI
4724
Schedule Departs: 8:01 am
Boarding now
Group 1
Next Destination
Moline, IL
1:15 hr
On Time

STAR ALLIANCE

THE WISE ASS



ADVICE TO PASSENGERS

About hazardous materials

Federal law forbids the carriage of hazardous materials aboard aircraft in your luggage or on your person.

Do not pack in your luggage or carry on board:



If you look carefully at the reflection, you can make out the apparition of a masked up Debi. She might have been en route to rob a bank. Claire was tickled pink when I showed her these photos.

The members of the PEBC have an open invitation to stop by Casa Claire and meet with the star of The Claire Trilogy at any time.

Yesterday was a banner day for the Clan, as my oldest, Luke, signed a publishing contract for one of his novels, *Lebanon Red*, which will be published on August 11, 2022. I could not be more proud. The good news for readers is that Luke writes better than I do, has led a far more interesting life than I have and is publishing his first book at an early enough age to have a long and successful career. With me, I'm one milk truck away from publishing my last work. And that's okay. Anything published after The Claire Trilogy is icing on the cake.

So its hump day. Lot of legal wrangling to do before I sleep.

Everyone else out there, have a great day.

Love is Love

October 12, 2021



I'm sorry about the terrible quality of the above photo. I tried to enlarge the one below. It was snapped yesterday from a distance using my cell phone camera. What it shows is Claire sleeping with her head on Mister Rogers' grave. You can see that Honey has reclined at a respectful distance. I thought I witnessed true and endless love the way my mother pined away for my father after his death. That is nothing compared to what I have witnessed from Claire since Friday, March 13, 2020, when I came outside and found MR passed on the side of the pond. And I will never be able to get the sound that came out of her that day, out of my mind. That really was true love. And this moment was a reminder of that. I'm just not ready to write more about it at this moment.

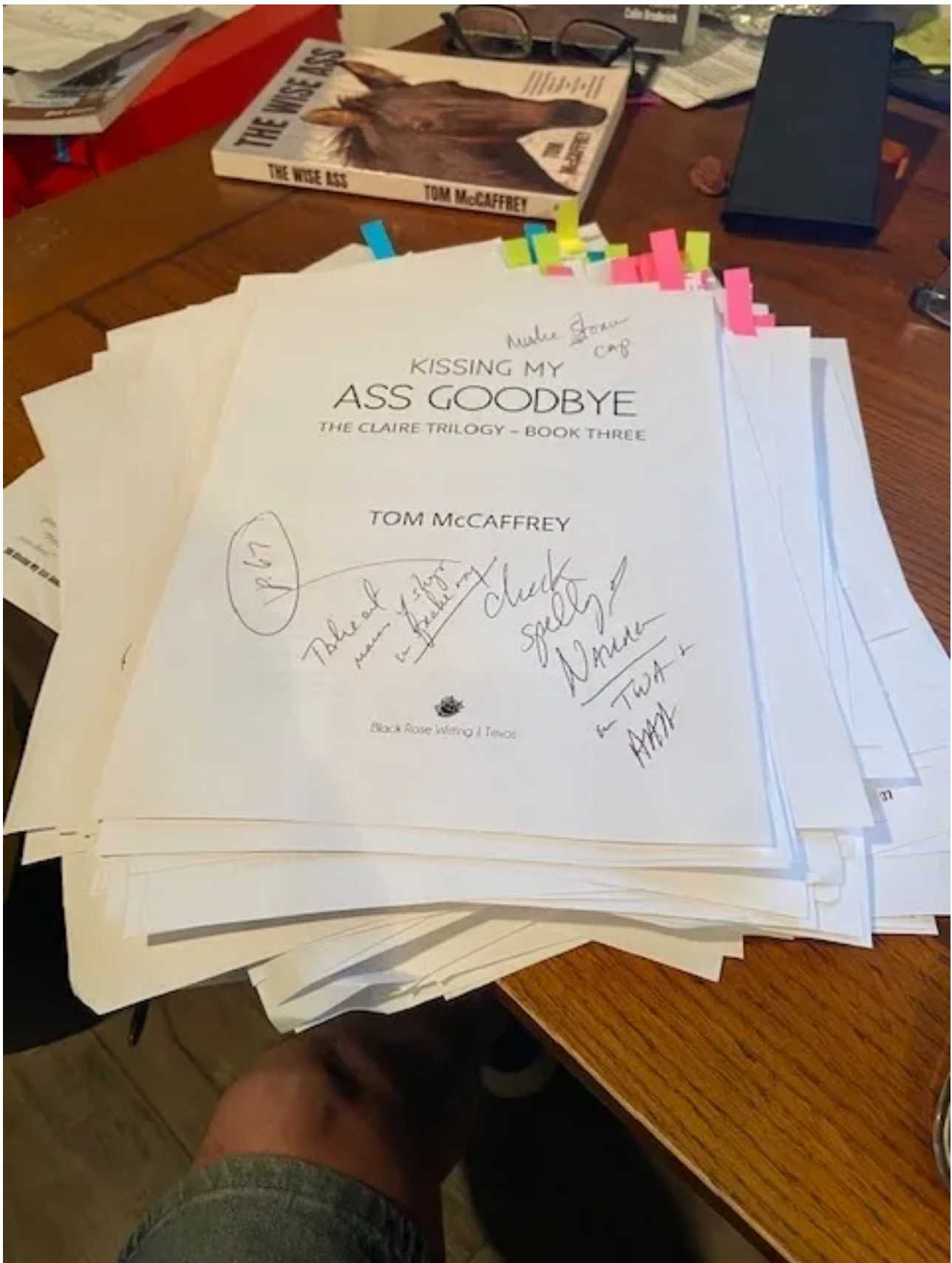


And I am a better man for having witnessed such love.

Always remember, humans did not invent the concept. Changing gears, I'm really looking forward to attending a local book club's discussion of TWA tonight. It will give me something fun to discuss in tomorrow's blog. Stay tuned. So hug someone you love today. And go out there and have a great one!

KMAG - Done and Dusted

October 11, 2021



Sat down with pen in hand to go through the second half of the manuscript yesterday at 6:30 am my time, and if you

carve out two hours from the overall number that went to a dinner break, a supervised visit to Claire and Honey from her prior caretakers, the wonderful young children, Delaney & Charles and their friends - a local trio of brothers - and finally my separate breaks to go out and appease Claire, who was banging on the side gate to demand her carrots, like a prisoner with a tin cup on the jail bars, and finally a quick and comical chat with EC to ensure I understood one of her 8 suggested edits - twelve (out of the 14) hours later I finished adding the last of the edits - mine, EC's and JF's - onto the schedule and sent it off to Reagan and David. (Of course you also have to add the seven solid hours of editing work on Saturday to the mix.) Happy to report that KMAG looks great and with any luck my (and all others') efforts will have avoided future snarky comments from the grammar, spelling and thought police in the critical reviews.

Editing is a lot harder than one would think. The reason you need other people reading your work is because they will not only catch the misspellings and the missing words that your mind keeps reading over (I am terribly inconsistent with my spelling choices), but they challenge those placeholder words you used just to move the story along. They also force you to come up with the best word you can think of now that you are rereading the manuscript with an objective eye and the complete story in front of you. Both Jimmy and Eileen each caused me to make a minor substantive change - one complete sentence each - in the narrative as well. One of my other readers, my SIL Cathleen B (né Wallen Witch), caused me to make a minor but crucial structural change in both AAA and KMAG. Thank you all, as well as the other dozen people in my circle of readers!

I'm confident that -- assuming all 34 pages of the schedule of edits makes it to the manuscript pages -- that KMAG is

good to go. I'm hoping BRW sends it back to me one last time so I can double check, even if it delays KMAG's on-line arrival for pre-sale.

Otherwise - Fini!

Thank you all five readers who have accompanied me on this literary journey.

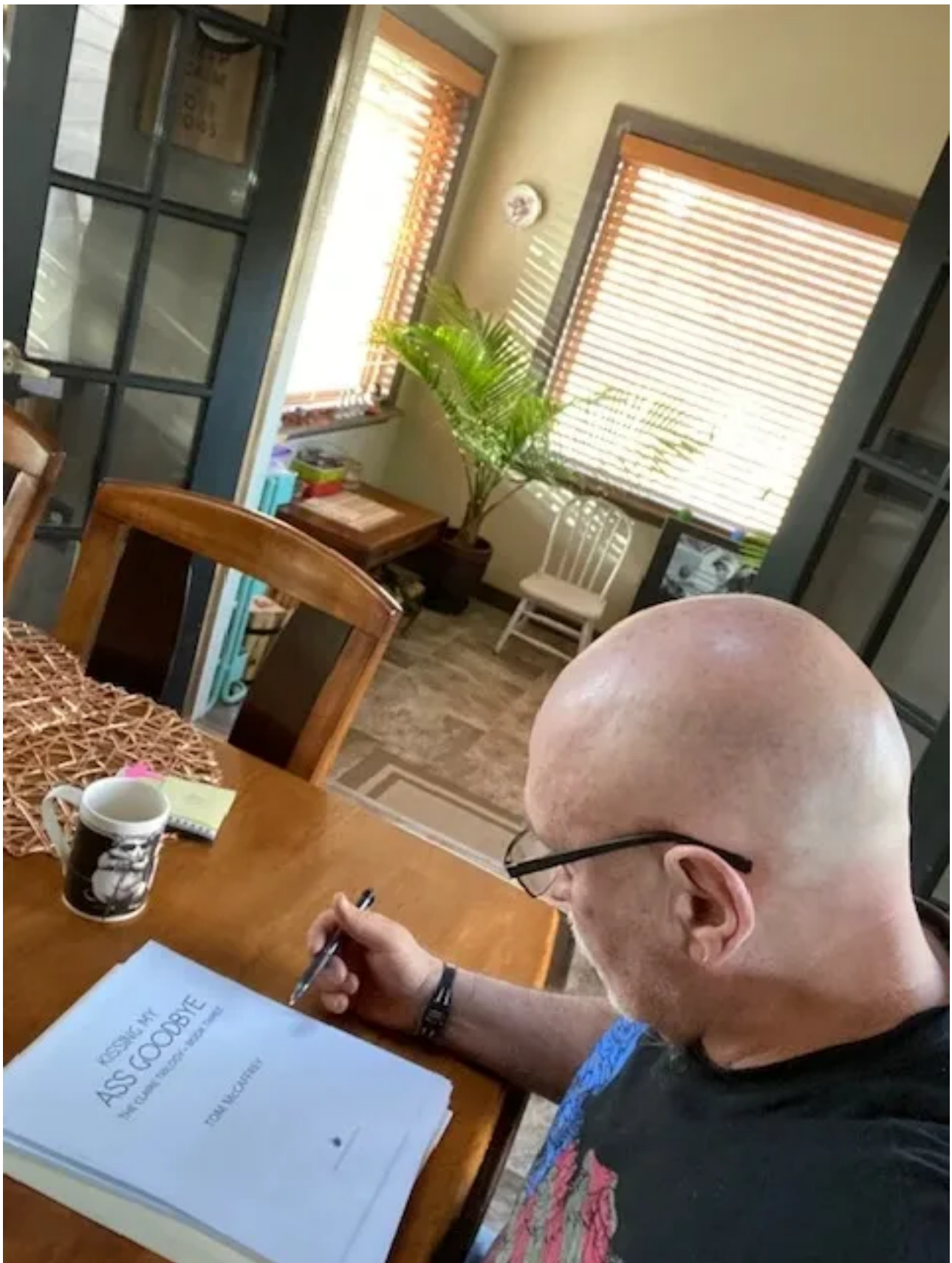
Now I have to convert back into my lawyer self - a new work week awaits.

But first I must go out and feed Smokey, our feral cat who haunts the grotto beneath Jack the Spruce, have one more cup of coffee, and then complete the morning animal walk.

You all have a great day!

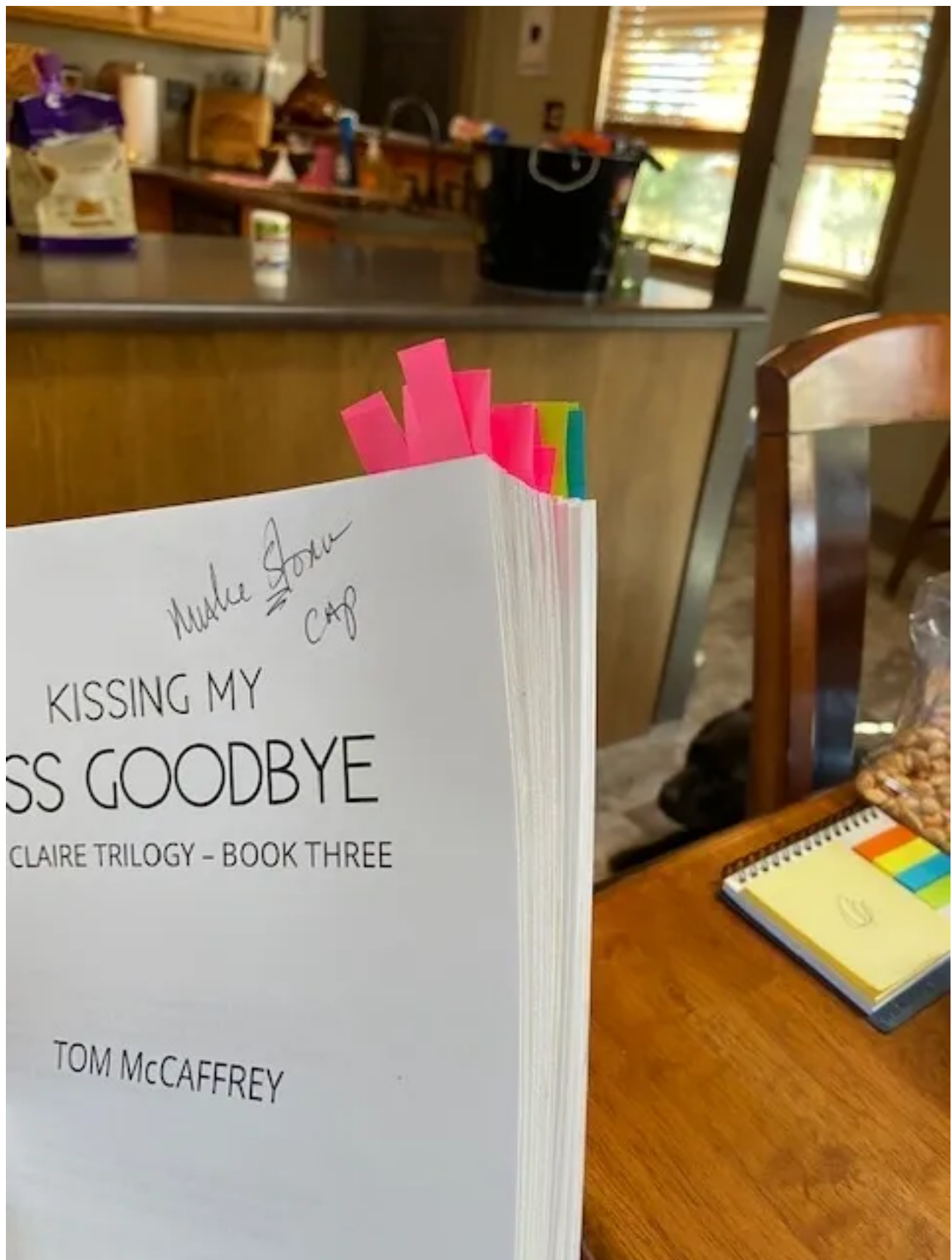
KMAG - FINAL PUSH - DAY 1

October 10, 2021



Yesterday I started the final edits on KMAG. I've learned that you really need to read it in the printed publisher

manuscript hard copy if you are going to spot all of the errors. I find that If I read it in Word format just on the screen, my brain just reads over the missing words and letters. The process moved slower than I expected, because I found myself making final tweaks in the margins, which I will incorporate in a final schedule, along with capturing the other errors and suggested edits sent to me by JF and EC yesterday. The good news is that, half way in, I am loving how this last novel unfolds. It organically evolves from the continuing story lines of TWA & AAA. It introduces and develops Book Three's ultimately most powerful characters, bound to lead the other characters in this franchise into the future. There is also the addition of another wonderful, feisty human character that I just love. All of the core main characters that appear in TWA & AAA are further evolving on every level and I'm just getting to where all of the really dangerous and crazy stuff kicks in. Every one of the characters is tested and each has their moment in the sun. This story line completes the existing ARC and is the perfect denouement to The Claire Trilogy. If you loved TWA, I am confident you will also love AAA and KMAG. Of course, I ended up making far more tweaks than I anticipated, and I'm only half-way done.



David King, the BRW editor who will have to incorporate all of these changes, will undoubtedly be cursing my existence.

I will admit that I have not made his life easy for any one of the novels. I cannot help that I read each page with the mindset of "how do I make this story better?" I want the reader to leave their real world aside and invest in and become part of the story. I want the reader to love my characters as much as I do. I want the reader to want to come to Claire's Berthoud and hang out with these characters. I want them to feel the characters' happiness, and sorrow. I want these characters to be real in the reader's mind and heart.

And given that I am determined to get this project completed and right on this final pass this weekend, I want to make sure I catch or tweak everything that needs a revision. As much work as it sounds like, and is, I would be lying if I didn't tell you how much I am enjoying the process. But it is mentally exhausting, and you have to stop once you realize that you are beginning to scan the page as opposed to reading each word carefully. It's easy to do, the story just carries you along. I pulled the plug yesterday at Chapter 22.

I will be back at it today as soon as I complete this morning's animal walk.

So, for those five readers who have read and enjoyed TWA, take the chance on AAA and KMAG. You will not be disappointed. If you haven't read TWA, give it a read now. It will whet the appetite for AAA in December, and KMAG four months later in March 2022.

And if you really enjoy my writing and have come to my blogs just recently, go back to my first blog in January of this year and start anew. I promise you that you will really begin to understand my madness and the origins of The Claire Trilogy and its characters.

But all of you please have a great day!

Tabula Rasa

October 9, 2021



Every morning I get up and feed the dogs and then, with dogs in tow, go out and feed the mules. Sometimes, I'll stop and shovel some mule dung out of the barn if they have spent the night hours marauding the hay or tearing into the alfalfa pellets, and left their mess, like a couple of teens when their parents go away for the weekend. When I come back inside, I prep the touring goodies bag and leave it on the stairway leading to the first floor. If I feel the urge, I'll light an outdoor candle and some incense. Then I return inside, make a cup of coffee and sit down in front of the computer screen. Most mornings, I pick an idea out of the ether and start blogging.

This morning my brain is distracted with focusing on the job at hand for me today, which is to read through KMAG one final time, pick up any mistakes or edits I want to make, and then finalize it and send it off to BRW. *Vaya con Dios!*

Yesterday evening, I received the respective lists/schedules of suggested edits from Jimmy Fronsdaahl and Eileen Cotto. They are two central members of my inner circle of readers who I know I can pester to re-read my work 1000 times and they still haven't blocked my texts/emails. Moreover, they always step up exactly when I need them to. They have literally turned this last edit around in two days. All of my other readers are equally selfless and invaluable, but because of their own work and personal situations, I know how often I dare go to their wells.

I've known Eileen Cotto (ne Collins) since we were teens back in the Bronx (her older brother Denis "Murray" Collins was a member of the Young Fuckers Crew, I took over his room at Aunt Violet's Flophouse, and he remains, actively in Spirit, a member of the OFC - you'll meet his character in the prequel). I met Jimmy out here in Colorado. Both JF and EC are naturally brilliant people. They also don't kiss my ass. They question everything I write. If they sign off on my story, I'm confident I have a winner.

You'll meet "Whitey," the character I based on JF in AAA (there is also a passing mention of his last name in TWA - look carefully, and the full blown EC based character arrives as a central character in KMAG. She really is bigger than life. Anyone who suffers along with me during the creative process usually finds a place in the narrative. For example, the OFC -- BC, Stein and Joe - appear as very bad guys in KMAG. Lenny has been around for the whole ride. You write what you know.

Okay, I have things to do to prep for today, so I will cut this short.

It's Saturday. We are well into the Fall season. Put on a sweatshirt and go out and jump into a large pile of leaves. And have a great day!

Look For The Messages

October 8, 2021



Yesterday morning, I really did not want to walk my route. It was a bit cooler and I didn't want to go up to my bedroom and dig out a full length pair of jeans (I had my shorts on). I was also busy with legal work and writing stuff and I really just wanted to go to plan B and drive the route and quickly get back before my computer. The animals on my route know my car and come to their respective fences as soon

as they spot it coming down the road. I think they prefer when I drive as they get their goodies earlier.

I went so far as to throw my car key and wallet into my pockets, my usual signal of surrender. However, at the very last second, as I exited the kitchen, something caused me to turn right instead of left towards the garage, and walk out the front door.

Just as I made a second right out of my driveway, west onto Beverly, I looked down and spotted something on the roadway right in front of my property. Now you never see trash just tossed onto our road. Sometimes on a windy day, you may see something that has blown in your direction from someone else's garbage or recycling. It has been my practice to pick up whatever it is and put it in my garbage/recycling when I finish my walk. I know my neighbors do the same.

Well yesterday, when I looked down and spotted what was lying on the ground, I did a double take. For the second time since I have been out here in Colorado, I saw a Marlboro Red package.

Marlboro Red was the only cigarette brand my father smoked for as long as I can remember. He was a two pack a day smoker, and there was always a pack of MR either tucked into his top shirt pocket, rolled into a short sleeve, or lying within reach on the table before him. It is the one thing in the world that I only associate with my dad. It was what killed him at an age when he was a year younger than I am now. It is the brand I experimented with in early grade school with Joe Serrano and later in high school with Lenny. Luckily, I kicked that habit before it killed me.

While his dad, Spaghetti, had always used a Zippo or Ronson lighter to keep his Prince Albert charged in his pipe, my father always opted for a fold over pack of matches to

ignite the first of a long string of chain-smoked cigarettes.

One packet of matches usually sufficed for the day. While there were still matches in place, the match cover could be folded over backwards to work as a wind screen to light your cigarette. Those empty match covers also served as a place to jot down a note or phone number, and, in a pinch, worked great to get something unstuck from between your teeth.

But you only got a few tries at it, because once they became soggy they were useless, and if you weren't careful, the wet bit of cardboard could replace whatever it was from your last meal you were trying to dislodge. They say the first sign of intelligence is a creature's ability to fashion and use tools.

Now the first time I saw MR out here in God's country, was last Spring, when I spotted a flattened, worn, empty package as I was walking along Condom Curve on County Road 23. Even though that particular stretch of road is a spot for automotive transients to toss their garbage out of their speeding cars, that find was still a surprise to me. It was during the time I was working on the first draft of KMAG, so I took it as a sign of my father's approval that I was doing the right thing.

However, yesterday morning, when I bent over to scoop up the box of MR, I was surprised to find that it was a complete package with the cellophane wrapping still in place. It appears to have suffered a little wear and tear. But once I realized the distance it must have traveled, that is to be expected.

Now, as bad a habit as smoking is, at eight dollars a pack, it is not something a die hard throws away until he/she has emptied the package, even if they are quitting . . . again.

So, given that this find came right on the heels of my receiving the final copy (for editing purposes) of KMAG, I took the serendipitous encounter with a full pack of MR as

my father's message to me from heaven that he wasn't quitting what he loved (I can see him sneaking out the back gate when he thinks no one is watching to grab a quick smoke, then that shot of Binaca - the blast that lasts). So that I shouldn't quit either. Get it done. Finish what you love to do. Thanks dad. Message received.

I'm keeping this package of MR to serve as a recurring reminder. Never quit.

So for the rest of you five readers, don't smoke. It's a nasty and oftentimes deadly habit. And have a great Friday! The weekend awaits.



KMAG

October 7, 2021

KISSING MY
ASS GOODBYE
THE CLAIRE TRILOGY – BOOK THREE

TOM McCAFFREY



Black Rose Writing | Texas

The stars are lining up. Yesterday afternoon, just in time for the apex of the new moon, my hopefully last pre-publication

manuscript version of KMAG arrived in my email box. I immediately forwarded the same to Eileen Cotto and Jimmy Fronsdaahl for their final review (they had generously set aside their time knowing this was coming -- it really is a lot to ask of someone and I greatly appreciate it), then printed out a copy for Lisa to read. I will then read over the copy Lisa has when she is finished and make whatever last edits I feel are needed, based upon E, J & L's mark-ups.

Because I am knee deep in a legal motion with a looming deadline, I will not be able to attend to that before Saturday.

By then I'll have everyone else's edits. They will all go onto that final schedule and will be sent back to BRW by the end of day Saturday. With any luck KMAG will be up for pre-sale on BRW and Amazon by next week. I am so excited.

Thank you Reagan Rothe (and David King and the rest of the BRW publishing team).

Was out at 3 am (must feed dogs and mules first) lighting my new moon candle and incense -- the Catholic in me would consider it a prayer on a votive candle with a Thurible just to keep Mom happy (and Heaven's back door unlocked) -- wishing for the individual and collective success of all three novels, when I looked into the sky and saw a magnificent meteorite fall from the heavens over the western foothills. It's filament tail stretched from heaven to earth. So I am feeling really pumped about this final piece of The Claire Trilogy, and the collection itself.

Speaking of meteorites (and signs from Heaven), we had a wonderful Blue Meteorite falling in the local area Sunday night: <https://www.space.com/bright-fireball-meteor-colorado-video>

Checked with Everett and Michele to make sure it wasn't just them returning from vacation. I can neither confirm nor deny their response.

I will share that local celestial activity has kicked up a notch ever since our country's Space Force decided to settle in this glorious and magical state.

Speaking of heaven sent wonders, it was confirmed yesterday that my dear friend, brilliant author and auteur, Colin Broderick, is putting the final touches on his soon to be released book of essays, his latest version of *The Writing Irish of New York*. That news alone would thrill me to pieces, as Colin is one of the most talented and hardest working Irish creatives I know. However, the icing on the cake is that Colin has included my essay on the subject matter in this version, where it will sit for eternity along side of essays by Celtic literary titans like Malachy McCourt, Colum McCann, Luanne Rice, Billy Collins and Himself. For an Irish-American writer from New York, its like hitting lotto. I am equal parts honored and unworthy.

Since this collective process was a first for me, I didn't know how much work went into it. However, I will share that Colin has a clear vision of what he wants from his contributing authors, but that going through the many editing rounds of my essay with him was an absolute pleasure. Given this experience, I cannot help but believe that he is a wonderful film director, which also explains his success in that realm as well (*A Bend In The River* is now available on subscription cable - I highly recommend it). Colin knows instinctively how to draw out the best from you in such a positive way. Thank you Colin.

The hardest part of it was that Colin required a head shot and a brief bio to finalize my contribution. Claire wrote the bio. Given my striking resemblance to Quasimodo -- actually visited Hugo's *Place des Vosges* apartment in Paris where some Japanese tourists started snapping my photo - and Shrek (and the fact that you have never seen the three

of us together in one room should tell you something), I had to scramble to come up with a passable photo. In the end, I provided CB with two possibilities, equally bad. As punishment, he refused to tell me which one he went with. I guess I'll just have to wait. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5zzRcKlxKI>

Speaking of ugly European characters, and the initials CB, my dear friend and brilliant author, Christy Cooper Burnett (who is not the ugly European character - she's a cutie from Cali), is hard at work on her latest thriller. Given her talent, work ethic and the proposed story line, I am expecting a block buster. For those who don't know CCB's work, may I strongly recommend her literary trilogy, *No Way Home*, *Finding Home* and *Escaping Home*.

Anyway, the new work day awaits and my legal motion isn't going to write itself (truth is that the elves write it while I sleep). So, I must leave you five readers and get on with it. You all have a great day!

Space Oddities

October 6, 2021



Early Monday morning, I was sitting on my back deck, drinking my coffee and stargazing. I've done this enough since I arrived out in Colorado where I have learned to distinguish between stars, satellites, meteorites and the occasional jet. Well Monday morning my eyes were drawn to the above grouping of stars because they looked to me like the capital letter "L". I believe it is Orion's belt (an asterism in the constellation Orion). I didn't have my iPhone with me - it was inside charging -- but I was also thinking about something the famous UFOlogist Dr. Steven Greer suggests when you would like to bring about some sort of ET contact. You meditate and open yourself up for the experience. So I gave it a try. I basically meditated on the fact that since The Claire Trilogy has such a strong ET story line, wouldn't it just be perfect if someone out there acknowledged the effort. I pretty much put it out there like a five year old negotiating with Santa. I might have even vocalized "C'mon, be a sport!"

That's when I spotted the first flash. Right up in the spot I have now placed that yellow circle. At first, I thought it was

a meteorite. It wasn't like a light going on and then off. It was like the flash of an old school camera bulb. Lines of light radiating outward from a center point. Like a twinkling star, but only for a moment. I stared at the spot to see if maybe it was a star I just hadn't picked up and maybe my eyes were now adjusting to it. But no, it was dark again. I kept staring at the same general area to see if whatever it was was moving in a linear direction like a satellite. Then I saw the flash again, right in the same spot. So now I trained my eyes on that spot and basically put out the thought that if this was a sign, let me see it again. Voila, it popped again. This time a little brighter. Now part of me wanted to run inside and grab my iPhone. But part of me was afraid to put the mental phone line down - so to speak - in case I lost the connection. So I sat there, transfixed, basically asking for more of the same. And I kept getting it. Another request, another flash. It wasn't flashing at a regular sequel. It was responsive. I felt like I had found the genie in the bottle.

And that's when I heard, "Are you asleep out there?"

I almost leapt out of my chaise lounge.

I looked over and saw Lisa's face in the opening of the sliding glass doors. I waved her over frantically, calling "C'mere, I want to show you something."

As Lisa was waiting for her coffee to brew, she obliged, so I stood up and explained what I had been seeing. I pointed out the exact spot where the flashing had occurred, and said "Now watch, this flash keeps happening in the same spot whenever I ask it to." Of course I instantly realized how crazy I sounded, but then Lisa has been around long enough to understand my eccentricities. So she humored me and stared up at the spot I was pointing to.

Pop! The flash arrived as bidden. Lisa looked over at me and shook her head in acknowledgement. "Cool," she said,

nonchalantly. "My coffee is ready." And then she turned and headed back into the house like I had just shown her a simple card trick.

And just like that, I lost the connection. I looked back up at the spot, begging for a flash. Nada.

So that very exciting event taught me three things in those early morning hours. Something is out there. It is sentient.

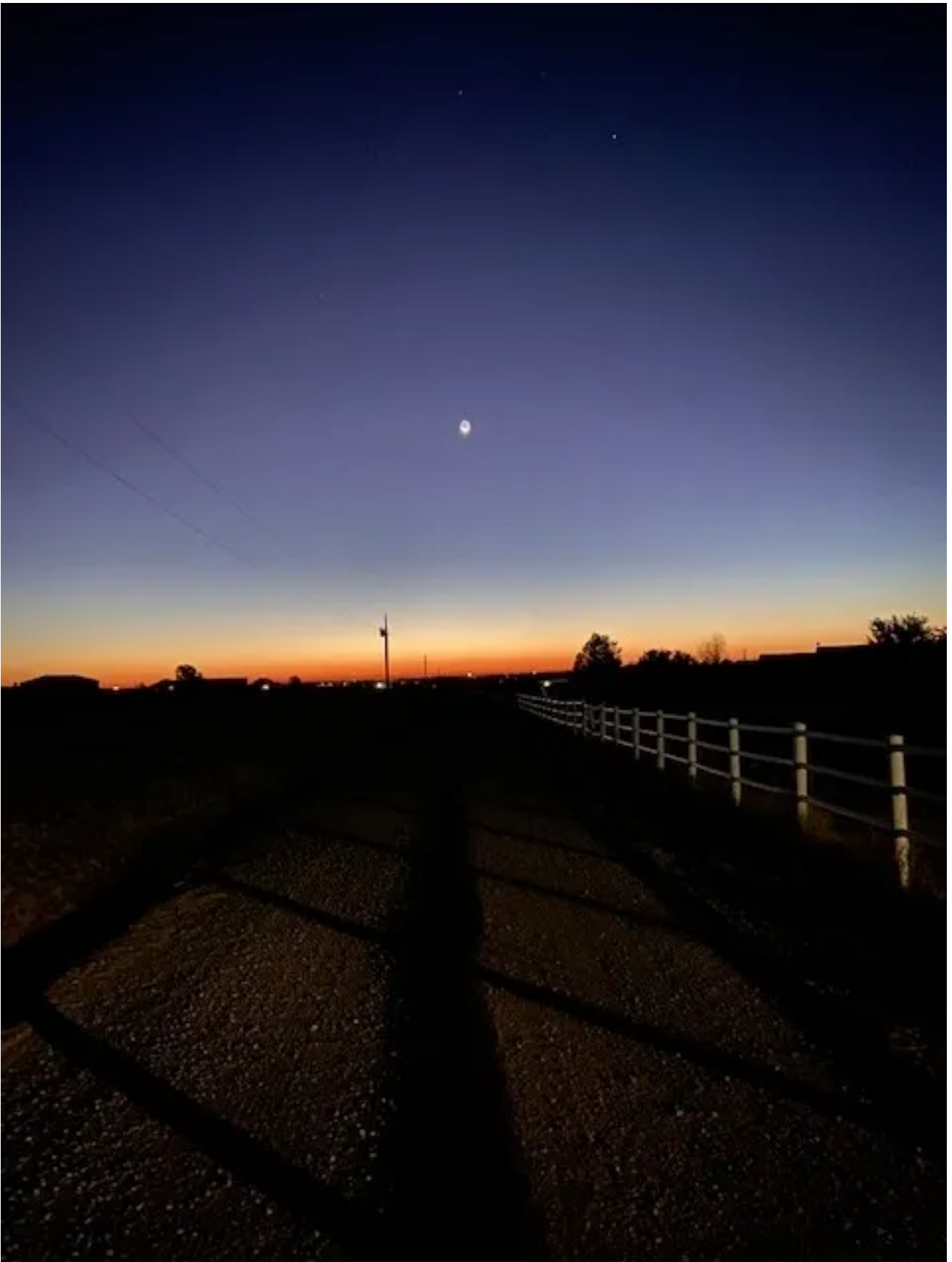
And in this particular instance, it was probably male, who like the human version quickly learned that it is near impossible to impress a female of any species, so he called it a night and went home.

So my early morning hours are about used up. I'm going to grab one more coffee and sit out on the deck. Maybe I'll get lucky.

The rest of you five readers, keep looking up. And have a great day!

Moon Over CR 6

October 5, 2021



The above photo was taken yesterday morning at the furthest end of County Road 6. I was at the mid point of my

morning walk. If I had a really decent camera, you would have seen that the moon was just the last sliver of its wane - God's fingernail -- hanging onto the night sky. The light from Arabian Tique's barn cast the shadow of the fence as the perspective center line down the trace gravel roadway that vanished into the darkness directly beneath the moon. The Blue Hour sky was beautiful. Not even the dogs along this route were awake yet, but I could hear the coyotes in the foothills behind me, singing away the last of the night, invoking a memory of the once younger OFC members at closing time at Coaches Two in the Bronx. GB Shaw was right, youth is wasted on the young.

What was strange was that the moon hadn't passed over to the western horizon, to its proper place above the foothills.

Instead, it hung there in the east, taunting the new day. It was if this sliver of moon knew that it needed to retain its dangerously close proximity to the sun to defiantly reflect the last of its light before the dawn consumed it. A moth to the candle flame.

Tonight is the first day of the three day cycle of the new moon. A great time for new projects and new beginnings. Jeter gets another haircut this morning, which is great because I'm really getting tired of washing the caked poop off his hairy ass this past week, which seems like an apt metaphor for life as a litigator. Speaking of which, I'm starting another legal project this morning - a new motion - which is perfect because it has to do with a legal decision that really pissed me off. Which goes to show you -- continuing the metaphor - that inspiration can even be found *dans la merde*.

However, on a more fragrant note, I'm also hoping I get the last edits of KMAG back from BRW today so I can put the last of The Claire Trilogy to bed during the earliest hours of

this new moon cycle. I really want to launch this third book on Amazon, so I can seriously focus on starting the prequel.

This feeling of increasing impatience is a good thing. It tells me I'm ready to start writing again.

So, fingers crossed that all moves forward as it should.

But my day awaits, so I have to wrap this up.

The rest of you five readers get out there and start something new. Something you have been putting off. And have a great day!

The Little Things In Life

October 4, 2021

3:05



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Yesterday was a nice day. Weather was sunny and not too hot. The farrier came and provided Claire and Honey with their mani-pedis and reported that Honey's hooves were looking particularly great (her hooves had become pretty sad looking with the surprise onset of Equine Cushing's disease a year ago but they have made an amazing recovery). Claire's hooves are rock solid and always look good, but she appreciates the extra attention. Blue likes to hang around during the trimming process to chew the cuttings - evidently she loves the keratin. Waste not want not.

Took the opportunity of the mule harnessing to give Honey a good brushing. She really hates it but needs must. Claire loves to be brushed and it is the only thing I know that will distract her from her endless pursuit of carrots.

Picked up a steam cleaner at Home Depot and then Lisa did a wonderful job on the third floor (last area with wall-to-wall carpeting). For the record, that is a euphemism free sentence.

Speaking of carpeting, I also picked up a replacement beard trimmer. My last one just died on me and my goatee grows at an amazing rate. I was beginning to look like an orangutan. No low T problems for this guy. Also euphemism free, except maybe that last sentence.

V&B stopped in for a surprise visit at Luke's & Georgie's home down the road so Lisa and I swung by for a family lunch. Lots of fun catching up on family business with the matriarch and her consort. Love them dearly. They will be waving the rainbow Colorado McCaffrey flag at the upcoming nuptials of Young Eddie and Danielle back east

later this month. Great seeing the granddaughters and son & DIL. Good time was had by all.

Spent the late afternoon and evening binge watching season 4 of The Crown. Found the Fagan episode particularly interesting.

Woke up this morning to find TWA back in the Number 1 spot. A great way to start a week.

Well its back to life as a lawyer, so I must first turn to my morning area tour to check in on the local animals and share some snacks.

The rest of you wonderful five readers, have a great day.

Mule Manure Meditation

October 3, 2021



Claire and Honey love their Timothy Grass Hay.



I refill two large bags like the ones Claire & Honey are gnoshing on in the photos twice a week, plus they have free access to the open bales I keep in the racks inside the barn.

Honey, the scamp, likes to topple some of the bales from the stacks inside and tear at them while Claire keeps watch at the barn door. They also like to eat the wild grass around the property, plus get their chopped apples, carrots and Alfalfa pellets twice a day for their actual meals. They will also strip away the leaves and branches of my trees if I don't watch them carefully. Plus they have two troughs of replenished clean fresh water (one outside and one inside the barn) to keep them hydrated.

Of course, this results in their production of massive amounts of mule dung. Every Saturday morning I scour the entire length and width of my property collecting at least three wheel barrows full with a giant pooper scooper. Before long, you feel it in your forearms. In fact, I think my arms have gotten longer just from pushing those barrows.



These barrows are walked to the back of the property and dumped along what I refer to as Hadrian's Wall. There the dung breaks down into compost over the winter months.

During the spring and summer the composted dung is used around the the rest of the property or shared with neighbors. Add to this repeated chore the repair work around the property (there is always something needing fixing), lawn mowing (out front where the mules don't graze) and then the week's prep of fruits and veggies and Saturday's chores often bleed over into Sunday. Of course, add to that the bi-monthly basement cleaning and those Sunday's are spoken for. And then there is Honey's medicinal ring-a-livio and Claire's brushing (Honey won't let me near her with a brush), and the day is gone.

As a result, once I hit my recliner come late weekend afternoon, I'm there for the duration. Thank God for Aleve and Relief Factor!

The good news is that during all of this mindless work, I think about stories in my head. I play a lot of "what if" games. Sometimes I work through some major event in a novel. Since a lot of The Claire Trilogy takes place on this property I visualize scenes like a movie and have characters come in and out of the scene and do their thing. Then, during those early morning hours when I am writing, I just play the scene in my head and type. Waste not, want not. Today, I have the mules farrier -- Jason Bastemeyer - over for their mani-pedis. I have learned that keeping their hooves in as close to perfect condition as possible is probably one of the most important things I can do for them.

Jason is great. I highly recommend him. I do not envy his job. You need hands of steel to hold those legs up and clip and file those hooves.

Anyway, the blue hour is upon me, so I have to get moving.
The rest of you, have a great day.

Family Resemblance

October 2, 2021



This year my youngest son Mark (Go Blue) volunteered to play an ax-wielding creature at the opening night of a local Haunted House set up in his and Sara's (Go Blue) Rockland County neighborhood. I could not be more proud! Luckily, all he had to add to his ensemble was the ax. He was born that cute (I guess we should have sprung for braces).

Haunted Houses are fun! The experience allows local youngsters to test their metal by ratcheting up the fear level in a controlled environment. It's almost comical because teenagers do act the way you see it in the horror films.

Back in the day I used to take a group of my daughter's basketball teammates through a very popular Haunted House in Westchester County New York, and without fail each year the same young ladies in the group would be separated and picked off by the colorful and committed actors and end up collapsing in a screaming pile in the corner of some dead end they had been herded to, despite the fact they knew full well that these were actors and this was basically all an interactive theater experience. The suspension of disbelief was immediate and total. I always had to send my daughter (who always ran ahead just to see what was waiting around the corner) back into the HH to collect them and lead them sobbing out the door way.

However, they were no sooner all outside and safe when they were already manically planning the next year's trip back to the HH. Most of this group would never make it past episode one of any zombie television show. Life imitates art.

Back at our own house in the Bronx, not only did we do our best to make it as scary as we could, but most of the family got involved. We set up and broke down the elaborate set on Halloween day with the expertise of a traveling carnival.

As I mentioned, we had relatively expensive animatronic

creatures. Then we had oversized other props and inflatable moving creatures as well. We only put it out on Halloween day because we had lost a few items over the years when we left them out overnight. After all, it was the Bronx.

My eldest, Luke, used to like to dress up as a goblin and prance around the top of the Bronx house like Quasimodo (no Acrophobia in his genes). When Luke left for Uni, Mark assumed the monster mantle. It always caused a traffic jam on Mosholu Avenue, as passing motorists would stop their cars and film as my sons performed their aerial acrobatics. I want to save some of my Bronx Halloween stories for a blog closer to the magical date. But having received this photo last night, I just had to share it. Thanks Sara. Ooohhh I love this month. This being the weekend, I'm hoping to start screening some of the favorite horror films as well. I personally believe the Paranormal Activity series of films are highly underrated. The first one cost \$15,000 to produce and grossed \$193 million at the box office. I recommend them (watch them in ascending order) to anyone who is looking for a solid fright. Of course I will save The Exorcist until that last Saturday - 10/30.

Anyway, speaking of fun, I have to go out and perform my weekend chores this morning, which involves wheelbarrows, hoses, hay bales, giant pooper scoopers and water troughs.

Who needs a gym membership? Grrreeeennnn Acres is the place for me.

The rest of you go out and find a haunted house in your neighborhood and at some point over this next month, give yourself an adrenaline boost. Use your kids as props to get you through the doorway. You'll be glad you did. Have a great day.

HAPPY OCTOBER

October 1, 2021



Love this month. To me, it is the quintessential fall month experience. Sweatshirt weather. Leaves drop and blow in the wind. And it ends with Halloween!

Back in the Bronx we went all out for Halloween. My favorite holiday! As part of that experience (more fully discussed in a later blog), I started collecting animatronic figures and had them sorted all around the Bronx property. Jason, above, was my first and most prized possession. When you get near him you hear that Jason sound and he starts swinging that machete. Adults were far more frightened by him than were the kids. When we moved to Colorado, we left that entire collection behind, hoping that the remaining family members in the 5 generations McCaffrey Homestead would continue the tradition. You see, it had become a bit of a landmark. People from all over would come in van loads to the house on Halloween. Mark, Sara, Evan, JM & Joyce did just that. When Mark and Sara moved north to their new forever house in Warwick (Sara's home town) this past January - gorgeous home on a huge property - they brought some of the Halloween stuff with them. I'm thrilled Jason made the trip. Looking forward to a full report.

Speaking of reports and scary events, heard yesterday from the body shop and insurance adjuster that after tearing down my Toyota in the shop the repair bill for the damages from the accident went from 4+ grand to 10+ grand, and that my insurance adjuster had the police report and was all over the subrogation (meaning their insurance will be paying for it, not mine). And here's the plug - love Geico! Also hear that the repair will be taking another 16 business days, so we are a single car family until late October. If it gets to be too much of a hassle, I'll cash in on the rental car that comes with the deal. I'm just thrilled that the Toyota in The Claire Trilogy lives on!

Another good thing about October is that I'm attending a local Book Club's monthly gathering on October 12 as the guest novelist. Looking forward to actually meeting some of my readers face-to-face. I intend to provide the full dog and mule show.

Well, it's Friday and I have a legal brief to attend to. Must put Mr. Hyde back in his Dr.Jekyll box for now.

But hey, the weekend awaits! You all have a great day.