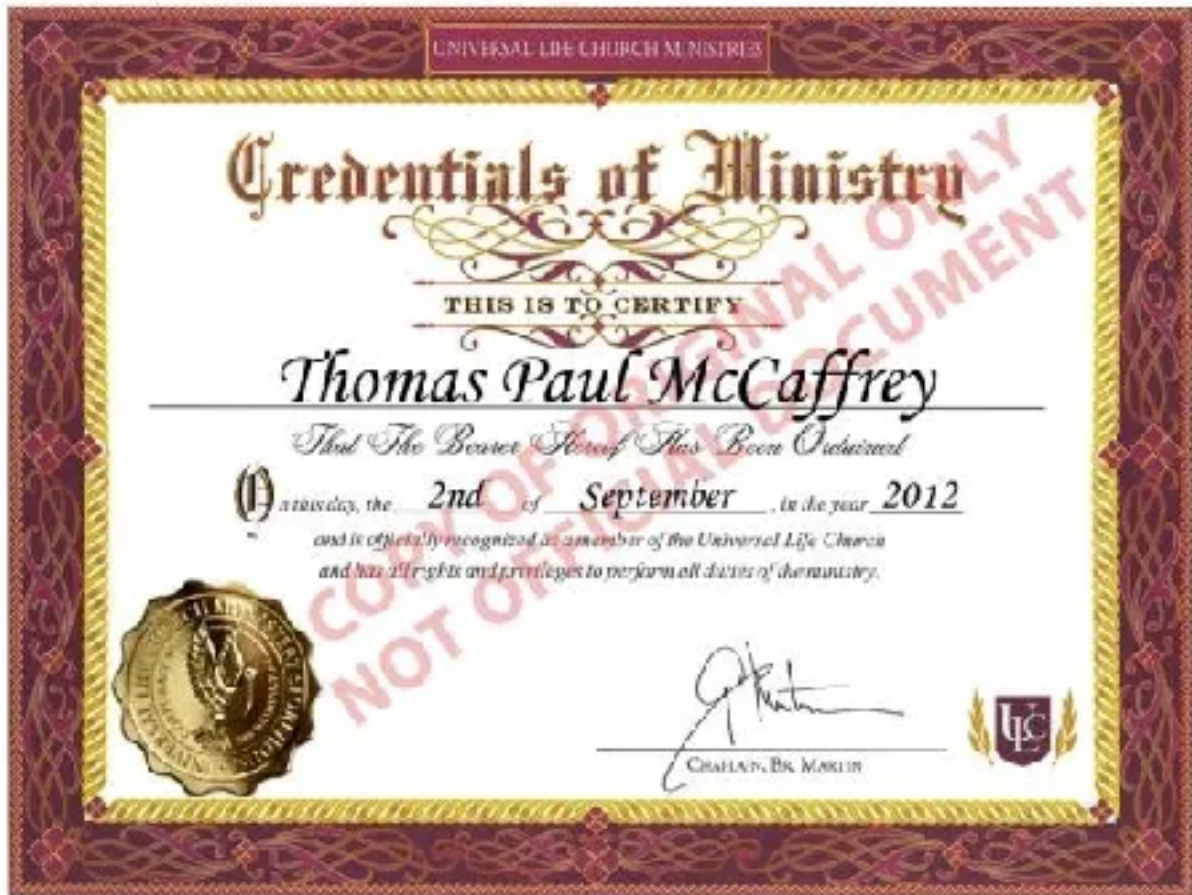


AN UNWITTING APOSTATE

September 30, 2021



Back in 2012, my nephew, Brian, and his fiance, Matt (great guys who spent many Saturday evenings around the Bronx McCaffrey family dinner table) came to me and asked if I would officiate their wedding. I was thrilled. The only problem was that I wasn't an officiant.

Where there is a will, there is a way. I became a Minister with the Universal Life Church. I'm even hand registered in a humongous leather bound book in NYC City Hall, as a acknowledged and official "Minister" (it was either that title or "Reverend" and I knew if I ever trotted that title out, I'd

never hear the end of it). I have all the accoutrements of my religious station. Robe, sash, all the certificates. I am, for all intents and purposes, the real deal. I then successfully performed my nephews' wedding, and later was honored to officiate at Veronica and b's New York wedding as well. I was scheduled to officiate at my son Mark & his lovely wife, Sara's wedding (my first hetero couple), but COVID put an end to that. Luckily my dear friend, The Honorable George Silver, stepped into the breach at the last second and performed a memorable service. Justice Silver is a long time member of our Clan. We go back forever. I love him dearly.

Anyway, later that same year (2012), I was sitting around another family table at my brother John's (and Tara's) annual family Christmas Party, when I got into a discussion about Brian's wedding and my officiating it with our family Merlin, Ferd Beck. Ferd then delightfully informed me that by becoming a Minister with another Church, I had unwittingly committed the Catholic sin of Apostasy. Ferd informed me that that sin got you struck off the Catholic rolls. Instant Ex-Communication. It could have been worse. It used to have a death penalty.

Oh well, one more reason for the Inferno.

However, I do not regret it. Believe it or not, I not only have made people extremely happy by performing marriages, but I also have had the opportunity over the years to minister to others seeking pastoral guidance, as recently as this past week. And you know what, I wouldn't trade any of that for the world.

Of course, I know my mother will leave the back door to heaven unlocked, just in case.

So all of you five fine people, have a great day!

Slings & Arrows

September 29, 2021



The headline phrase is taken from Hamlet, Act III, Scene I (The "To be, or not to be" soliloquy). I've been a big fan of the Bard since I went back to actually study English Literature at Lehman College. Since then, I've watched

numerous performances of his plays on Masterpiece Theater, more modern adaptations like Baz Luhrmann's Romeo + Juliet, and I have seen a couple of his plays performed live in an outdoor theater in Boulder. Great experiences all.

Last year, I came across a brilliant Britcom called Upstart Crow, which tracks William Shakespeare's personal life as he is becoming the Bard. You don't actually see his plays performed but you do learn the suggested backstory to the creation of many of them. As a writer, I so appreciate how he purportedly comes up with his most famous literary constructs. Hilarious. I highly recommend this series.

Recently, I came across a binge worthy gem from Canada called "Slings & Arrows." You can find it on Amazon Prime.

It is about a fictional New Burbage Shakespearean troop that stages the Bard's plays every year. Each season is based around their staging of one of his major plays.

Season one involved Hamlet. Season two, Macbeth. Season three, King Lear.

The show's catalyst is the ill-fated reunion of the troop's one time greatest actor, its director and its female star, as well as a cast of colorful supporting characters. But along with the comedy -- including intrigue that rivals the plots of the plays -- you get an actual feel for the plays themselves. You also get a sense of the magic that goes into the staging of these plays and the familial camaraderie amongst the actors who perform in them. I cannot recommend this show enough.

The good news is that both series makes the introduction to Shakespeare far less daunting and far more accessible.

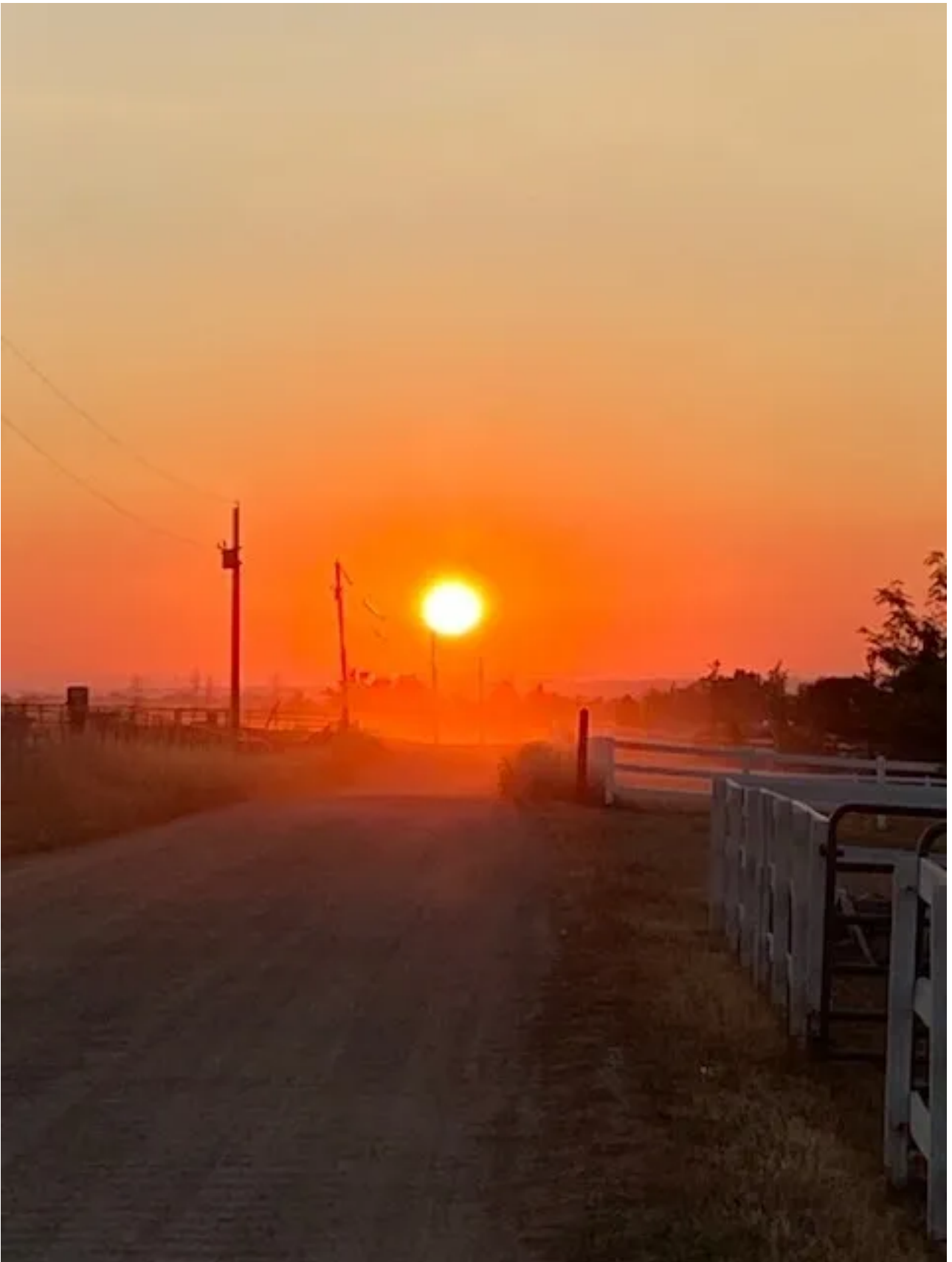
You actually learn to appreciate the man behind the myth and cannot help but wonder at his genius.

Anyway, this bald writer has discovery and motion deadlines to contend with so I have to put on my lawyers cap a little earlier today, so I'm cutting this short.

The rest of you five readers go out and do something special today, and if you find a moment for yourselves later in the evening, find and begin to watch either of the above series. You won't be disappointed. Have a great day!

Apocalyptic Sunrise

September 28, 2021



As I mentioned before, if you keep your head in the moment, the universe rewards you with photos like the one

above, which is a shot of County Road 6 on my return trip home from my walk the other morning. It is a mystical stretch of a once upon a time gravel, and now packed clay, road. Over the years I have placed large quartz stones along the post tops on either side of the road along the way (if you expand the photo, you can just make out the one on top of the center right post) which provide even better energy. This is the road where Jimmy spots the leaping elk in TWA and has a run in with a band of hungry coyotes in AAA. There is a factual basis for both those events. I have befriended a series of guard dogs on the properties along this particular route with scoobie bribes, if only to keep them from relentlessly barking at me during the wee early morning hours. The first dog who spots me sets off a brief chain reaction so that they all appear along their fence lines for scoobie communion. It is visually meditative and creatively inspiring. But for most people who may pass along it (I've seen very few - no pedestrians) its just another country dirt road. Its all about how you view the world. In that particular moment the other morning, I pictured an army of zombies staggering out of the dust fog in the distance on the road way and spent the rest of my walk imagining what I would do if faced with that apparition. That's how a story begins for me. Then I folded that snippet away in the recesses of the field (read Lynn McTaggart's *The Field*) to be retrieved sometime in the future should I (or some other creative tapper) decide to ever write a *Zombie Apocalypse* story. That is why my writing is very visual. For example, I would mention that in his haste to escape the Zombies, my character almost tripped over the cross hatched wind furrows you can barely make out at the lower front of the photograph. The Devil is in the details.

So the rest of you keep your eyes open today, and let your imagination run wild. Its a free ticket to mental movie land.
And have a great one!

Oktoberfest

September 27, 2021



Timing is everything!

Thrilled to see that my old dear friend, musician and Aunt Violet's Flop House Roommate, Joe Serrano, who recently returned to the States with his darling wife from Italia, hasn't lost his ability to sniff out a party (with music) in its earliest stages. Included is this example from yesterday, where he was able to locate an Oktoberfest in September. Or maybe he is a time traveler? In either case, well done Joey!

Also noticed that Joe has copied my OFC trademarked look, bad ass sunnies (Australian term), bald head and goatee, which I stole from the Burl Ives version of Frosty The Snowman, although I suspect Joe may have taken a page out of BC's book and been dabbing a little Just For Men on that mustache. Youth springs eternal, for \$8.72.

https://www.amazon.com/Just-Men-Brush-Color-Black/dp/B002ED3IP0/ref=asc_df_B002ED3IP0/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=309733728867&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=12648009427450402635&hvppone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcm dl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9028887&hvtargid=pla-569445576134&pssc=1

Real men go grey!

Speaking of bad ass facial hair and trademarks, I have noticed a new line of women's clothing (from a very bad ass company called Lion Not Sheep) with the eye catching logo, No Beard, No Booty!

<https://www.lionsnotsheep.com/products/no-beard-no-booty-racer-back-tank>

With that well placed (high T males may be a dying breed, but we are not toxic), public threat like that, I have to say I'm glad I'm back on the facial hair team. Can't be a wizard without it!

Speaking of timing, I'm equally glad I wake up well before The Witching Hour (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witching_hour) - always be early to the party - because if I

slept like a human I would have missed TWA's short lived moment at the top spot yesterday. It is back to Avis land (for those too young to remember, its the #2 spot), so we continue to try harder! (Although it did hit 1700 global ratings on Amazon yesterday -- far more good than bad, that's 1700 hundred readers who cared enough to report back in the first 7 months).

Speaking of Aunt Violet's Flop House and BC's hair coloring, my other notorious room mate from back in those days, Lenny, was in true form this past weekend on the OFC group text circuit, which focused primarily on breaking the equally notorious BC's balls concerning successfully attending his son Brad's nuptials (again, there's that alliteration). Yesterday afternoon, BC reported he was just catching up on the last of the group text, after sharing that his very wise son had shut off the incoming text sound on BC's phone (or did the battery in his hearing aid just run down).

Brad is clearly a disciple of Sun Tzu: Know your enemy! Speaking about musical bearded men who live(d) in the past, I watched a great documentary on Netflix: *If I Leave Here Tomorrow: A Film About Lynyrd Skynyrd*. Highly recommend it. *Free Bird* remains a top ten classic!

Well, today looks like it is shaping up to be the beginning of a busy legal workweek. To quote the mini-skirted Madam Cosquer (Freshman year French in Cardinal Spellman HS).

En France: À demain! Have a great day.

Oh, and if you study the tree line in the above photo carefully, you can spot Bigfoot.

Love Sunrises - Congrats J-M & Joyce - BC Welcomes A DIL

September 26, 2021



One of the wonderful things about my morning walks is that it forces me to stay in the moment so when I spot something

interesting I can usually snap a photo. I call this one "A Light At The End Of The Road."

I almost didn't see this. I caught it out of the corner of my left eye as I was turning right onto condom curve (read my earlier blogs) on 23 south. This is a life metaphor for everyone. I took it as a sign from the Universe that my writing is coming to fruition. Once KMAG is up on BRW and Amazon, The Claire Trilogy will be complete and that three part story will carry my career as a writer forward. I have plans for a prequel and a sequel, which I am hoping to begin soon, but on the off chance that a milk truck or more lethal flying VW Beetle comes for me, I will at least have that accomplishment. Voila!

Speaking of accomplishments, I learned yesterday that my youngest brother John's son, John Michael, affectionately short-handed to J-M, became engaged to the love of his life, Joyce. After a five year relationship, I could hear "Single Ladies (Put A Ring On It)" playing in my mind as I read the text. Congrats to you both. Joyce, welcome to the family.

As with every relationship, there will be bumps along the way, but hang in there, in the end its worth it. And as I mentioned above, there is a light at the end of every road.

Be happy in the knowledge that J-M has a lot of crazy cousins who, in true McCaffrey Clan fashion, will relentlessly break J-M's balls at every turn, but each would take a bullet for him. That familial loyalty now extends to you.

Speaking of matrimony, BC's son, Brad, hopped over the broom yesterday with his as-of-yet (to protect the innocent) unidentified fiance. Congrats Brad and the mystery woman!

The OFC spent the morning on a group text harassing BC in hopes of getting him in trouble with the powers that be (future in-laws and the ever patient Nan) on a day when he should be focused solely on his fatherly duties. Lenny was

in true form and I almost lost a finger chopping carrots as I continued to read the hilarious running commentary instead of focusing on my weekly veggie prep. There was even talk of an appropriately timed cell phone call to BC, objecting to the marriage, and then Nan made him leave the phone behind. Congrats to BC and Nan on not only raising a wonderful son, but on their landing a wonderful DIL (without BC scaring her off). Well done everyone.

Speaking of lethal flying VW Beetles and good news on Friday, I was thrilled to learn that my favorite automobile, my Toyota Rav 4 (yep, that one) will not be scrapped as totaled for insurance purposes. It has been towed to the repair shop, which will begin the restorative process on Monday. I really love that car. Again, light at the end of the road.

After chores yesterday, I grabbed the opportunity to have a short visit across the way with my dear extraterrestrial friends, Everett and Michelle. They are like the Doozers of Fraggile Rock, always working, planting, harvesting, building, baking, canning, rendering, freezing. I hope they squeeze in a few hundred years of play into their very busy lives. I was provided an impromptu and very interesting lecture on the workings of the yet to be launched, James Webb Space Telescope. I could not help but wonder how their minds wrap around this information. My mind folded shortly after the explanation of how a gold coating on the mirrors are better for capturing the signals. Nanu, Nanu! I love you guys!

They did send me home with some apples for Claire and Honey, freshly picked from their prolifically abundant Tree of Knowledge. Claire got the message and met me at the gate when I arrived back home. Can Claire get any smarter? I am an intellectual amoeba compared to the magical circle I run with.

Speaking of hard working characters, I did get a moment to chat with my dear bff Helen L, yep her, and we got to catch up. Helen will be very busy with her Essential Oils at product trade shows and real estate dealings this upcoming month in Florida. Check out her products: <https://www.facebook.com/SimplySacredOils/>

They are my go to for anything mystical or mundane.

Helen of course has an A+ rating with the BBB: <https://www.bbb.org/us/ny/bronxville/profile/aromatherapy/simply-sacred-oils-inc-0121-87148773>

I wish her nothing but success.

A final shout out to my dear friend Dianne Rosenfeld, who is also one of the inside circle of readers, who is recuperating in her absolutely incredibly magnificent home in Loveland.

Get better soon!

For all the rest of my five readers, it's Sunday, take the day off. And have a great one.

Power of Intention

September 25, 2021



Anyone who really knows me, knows that I have been fascinated with the mystical, occult and esoteric since I was a child. So, over my 65 years, I have met many gifted people and witnessed many amazing things. The Bard was right: 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.' Hamlet (1.5.167-8). I truly believe there is magic in this world, and through a better understanding of quantum physics, it is possible to master that magic. But I certainly am not there yet, and not sure I'll ever get there. But I accept that it is possible.

Don't get me wrong, I am not gullible. My well trained legal brain allows me to spot the fraud. I have met many charlatans who have convinced themselves and others that they have a gift. I have met people who basically like to play dress up, gather in groups and perform rituals. And that is fine, as long as they cause no one else any harm and it provides them with a social construct and camaraderie that they may not find in everyday society. And everybody needs somebody.

And as someone who understands how to fake it until he makes it, sometimes that play acting/rituals path leads to evolution and enlightenment. For example, I believe some of the esoteric skill sets - like ESP - are innate in all of us and with sufficient focus and training can be developed to various extents. To use the athletic, school yard analogy, you can hand each in a group of kids a basketball, and some, with enough practice over time, will teach themselves through focused study and endless repetition how to dribble and do a decent layup, shoot the game winning foul shot or maybe hit a three, while others will just grab the ball and dunk it without any apparent thought, effort or focus or leap so high in the air that there is no way you get a shot past them. The latter are the specially gifted and natural athletes. Both kinds of players win games.

But if something doesn't come naturally you must put the work in, or you are just kidding yourself.

Take the Law of Attraction, for example. I believe that you bring into your life that which you concentrate and focus upon. Every accomplishment in life begins with that first thought. But sitting alone in grandma's basement thinking about something alone doesn't bring it to fruition. You must take action, and that is where the magic begins. You research, read, learn and practice. You focus your

intentions on a goal or outcome. I believe that when you do that, the Universe creates opportunities, clears paths and opens doors. You learn how to spot the openings and capitalize on them.

Take The Wise Ass. I had already written the novel, and almost abandoned it along with my other writing, but something pushed me to look for and join a writers group.

As a professional with limited free time, I tend to shy away from non-essential scheduled meetings. When I'm writing, I would rather spend free time actually writing and not talking to other people about writing. And then you add the time to get to and back from those meetings (it is rural) and it all adds up to additional time taken away from your understanding spouse, or other things that need your attention, and it becomes a bit selfish. But I went, and that led to an opportunity.

As it turned out, without an active writing project that required the input of others to complete, I found that I was more engaged with the other writers still developing their projects, and enjoyed providing my input, and receiving their camaraderie in return. Each of the others in the group were talented writers. There was a shared sense of struggle, creativity and accomplishment. It brought me back to my time at the New School, when I was just starting to learn the craft and was surrounded by others who were all talented and trying to make it. And there is magic in that.

But things got busy at work and life and it became harder to justify the time each week. I was about to give it up when into the group walked a new member named Ricky Ginsburg. This contemporary transplant from Jersey was an east coast personality who could write well and churn out new prose like a machine. A real character. A natural.

The group was perfect for Ricky, as he was always working on multiple books, so there was instant and weekly responses to his narratives. I enjoyed reading and commenting on his work. And he read some of my novel. Ultimately, I dropped out of the writers group. But I stayed in contact with Ricky. I continued to read his work and provide my thoughts, suggestions, and comments. He didn't need that input. He was already fully formed as a writer and had his story and voice. But it remained my lifeline to the writing world.

It was Ricky who one day suggested in an email that I submit my novel to Black Rose Writing. I didn't do it right away. In fact, it was months later before I looked up that publisher and submitted the novel. But I had the intention, and done the work, written the novel, and continued to pursue my dream of writing by engaging with the writers group. The Universe then provided the opportunity, the opening, and I walked through it. The rest, as they say

It's Saturday. No excuses. Have a great day.

Happy 66th (not 67th) Birthday Eddie

September 24, 2021



Today is my eldest brother Eddie's birthday. He turns 66 (not 67). That's him to the far right of the above local precinct class photo. I will avoid identifying the others in order to leave their past in the past. Eddie is the model for Jimmy Moran's eldest brother in The Claire Trilogy. It was an easy transition, because 99.9% of what I say about the character is true. For the record, Eddie is no longer the

rapscallion I describe in this blog (or in the novel). Indeed, he is known to one and all as a "gentle soul." A St. Paul to his once Saul. It was a different time, a different world, a different Eddie. And these are the musings of a mad man, so you cannot take me seriously (or successfully use this in court). That's my Dad's handwriting along the bottom of the cell photo. I can say no more than this is the reason male McCaffreys can never get a Russian Visa. The photo is family keepsake. A story saved for a different time (immediately after Young Eddie's wedding in October). The other fellows in that photo are members of the PWWC, the Pre Weekend Warmup Club, whose founding members appear below:



PWWC was an unauthorized and officially unacknowledged (publically disavowed) offshoot of the reputable Maroon Key Society that the above core group of characters started in Fordham University in 1975 (it may come as no surprise that neither Eddie nor I went on to graduate from FU - although I did graduate from its law school - where there is an interesting story about another man who knew Eddie that I met on the very first day, but I digress).

THE HERALD STAR

A member of The Gannett Group - Serving Greater
YONKERS, N.Y., FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 1977

4th Year - No. 120

Terrorist lead free without k

*Holy cow! To him
theft of cow
is an udder
disgrace*

This would be a bull story, except
its about two cows.

The cows, rooftop ornaments at
the closed Doll-Doity on Riverdale
Avenue, were considered one of the
few examples of Pop Art in Yonkers
by Jeffrey Weiner, an art student
and photographer.

Weiner would photograph them
and when the store closed offered to
purchase the cows.

But early today they were taken.
Weiner, said he saw a school bus in
the parking lot about 7 a.m.



WASHINGTON (AP) — A band of
12 Black Muslim gunmen surren-
dered early today and ended a two-
day reign of terror in the nation's
capital. As part of the agreement,
which freed their 134 hostages with-
out ransom fees, the terrorist leader
was released without trial.

Before Khalid Burhan Abdu
Khalid and his followers surren-
dered, the terrorist leader threat-
ened to cut off the heads of his hos-
tages if his demands for revenge
against Black Muslim leaders were
not met.

The speed with which Abdu
Khalid was brought to court for ar-
restment and subsequently set free
enabled the terrorists to reach his
home in northwest Washington at
about the same time many of his
captives reached home.

"See you later," he said to news-

Police seek sus in rape, sodom

By PETER BOEN
Staff Writer

A 43-year-old woman was raped
and sodomized late Wednesday night
in a four-hour ordeal that started
when she was dragged to a car on
Tuckahoe Road in Yonkers, police
report.

Two men lured her into the yellow
Volvo van at 111 St. Tuckahoe
Road by promising a job, police
said. The men forced her into the
van and she was raped and sodomized
in the parking lot. She was taken
to a hospital where she was treated
for injuries. The men were taken
to the Yonkers Police Station.

While I eventually gravitated towards a love for Equines, Eddie showed an early fascination with Bovines. And yes, there is a long story there (and some photos).

A factoid: Like my father and his violin, my brother has an unadvertised, artistic bent. He could (and can) draw beautifully.

Eddie and I had an interesting relationship growing up. I love him dearly and without qualification. Indeed, I speak with him regularly and we have a lot of laughs.

However, I can honestly say that for all of the fights I engaged in during my childhood, youth, and not so youth, and there were a few (although, for the record, I never started one of them), the worse beatings I ever suffered were at Eddie's hands. We loved each other profoundly, as Irish brothers do, and ran in the same close circles, but we were like Siamese Fighting Fish (*Betta Splendens*), if you left us alone and together in the same room for more than 30 seconds, we found some reason to fight. I actually started training in martial arts (with Lenny) when I was fifteen and then boxed Golden Gloves just so I would stand a chance against Eddie. It didn't help, it was like fighting Michael Meyers and Jason in one body. He was unkillable, and trust me, I tried.

It was a McCaffrey thing. My next younger brother, Bones, the Ginger, was also a notorious brawler growing up - who am I kidding, he still is (and yet, despite having ham hock fists, Bones has the most beautiful penmanship of all of his siblings). He was a little taller than Eddie, with red hair and no soul. Luckily I never had to fight him. But I saw him in action many times. My youngest and sweetest brother, John (never Jack, a nickname John considered a Jesuit contrivance) was the quietest and nicest of us all (If John has one black mark on his soul, its his unsupportable hatred

for Halloween), but I still remember being tossed around the backporch like a sock puppet by him and Eddie when I tried to separate them, locked in a death match. I wouldn't have bothered, but as my father lay dead inside the house, I thought that the fight could wait until after his funeral - usual Irish protocol. They disagreed. I felt like my cousin Apples. I took another bad beating that day. I believe they actually bounced me off the porch ceiling. I was the runt of the litter. Eddie and I once got into a fight as kids within the time it took watching the NYC New Year's Eve ball drop. That fight was broken up by my grandmother, Posie, who struck us on the bottom of our bare feet with a baseball bat. It truly does shock the system. I wonder where she learned that trick. Eddie once gave me the black eye I needed as a visual to deny, explain and/or excuse another of my youthful indiscretions. It was St. Patty's day. I needed the black eye to sell a fiction. Eddie, also drunk - we all were (again, it was St. Patty's Day), volunteered to provide it for me. We went down to our basement. My best friend at the time, Jackie Vaughan, now a big time NY lawyer (makes his appearance in KMAG - his Dad, Big Jack - one of my paternal surrogates - named the Vaughan family purebred Malamute after me - it's on the dog's official paperwork - and people wonder why I'm crazy), stood behind me with clear instructions to catch me should I fall.

I stood there, nervous and vulnerable, facing Eddie, who studied me like Michelangelo before a pristine slab of Carrera marble. So much potential. I lifted my chin and turned my right eye forward to give him a clean shot at it - I didn't want him to accidentally rebreak my already, many times, broken nose. I had both eyes closed.

Eddie said to me, "You sure you want me to do this?" I nodded. He asked twice more, "Are you absolutely sure?" I again nodded. Twice. Then it went quiet.

I started to lose my nerve (maybe I was sobering) and as my eyes began to open in an attempt to call it off, I saw his meaty fist hurtling towards its target. I felt my head snap back like a pez dispenser. Then blackness. Then I spotted the tiny circle of cartoon birds twittering around my head. I didn't have time to concentrate on the pain to my orbital socket, as it was superseded by the pain to the back of my head which had struck the ground with my full bodyweight while the totally shocked Jackie jumped out of the way of my impacted and lifeless body. I do not blame Jackie for his reflexive self preservation. Trust me, if I could have gotten out of the way of Eddie's fist, Jackie would have taken the hit.

I recovered consciousness surprisingly quickly (we are a resilient bunch - the only time I have ever been knocked out). As I lifted myself to sitting position, my right hand gently checking the damage to my already swollen shut right eye, I heard Eddie's voice above me. "Are you all right?" he asked, an authentic, though fleeting, concern to his voice. I nodded. My head hurt seven ways to Sunday.

"Do you want me to do the other one?" He asked with the gleeful anticipation of a child asking to open another package at Christmas.

Side note, the black eye excuse didn't work. Insult to my injury.

However, while Eddie had the unbridled familial right to beat me to within an inch of my life, for any or no reason, no one else could touch me without risking retribution at his hands. Eddie and I once fought each other just to see who was going to fight an older neighborhood legend who had

started up with me. Eddie did some damage to a bunch of bouncers on the night of my bachelor party, not realizing (or caring) that I had already been spirited out of the Yonkers strip club by other crew members (Indeed, if it were not for BC, Lenny and Serrano, I would never have been there to begin with - I had suggested a Church outing - which may explain why one of the strippers came out dressed as a nun). Knowing I had that back up is probably why I grew up so glib. Even on the construction sites where we often worked together on the same crew, no one fucked with me.

This fraternal relationship certainly has provided me with many stories that I will no doubt incorporate into the prequel to TCT - including stories corresponding to the visuals referenced above. So, I would like to thank my dear brother Eddie on the auspicious occassion of his 66th (not 67th) Birthday for keeping me alive long enough to share this heartfelt wish with him. And for all of the stories that got us here. I wish him many more (years and stories).

I'm sure he'll be sharing this special occassion with his lovely (and patient) wife Mary (ne Moran), and his son [in the annals of McCaffrey lore, there was Big Eddie ("Sphagetti"), Eddie (my Dad), Little Eddie (my brother) and now his son] Young Eddie (and fiance Danielle) and daughter Kathleen, her husband, Arthur, and their children Hugo and Chloe. Best wishes to the extended family.

I love you brother.

The rest of my readers, have a great day! And be nice to your siblings.

Dad's Violin

September 23, 2021



Yesterday my sister sent me the above photo of a violin that she had spent good money refurbishing. It turned out that when my mother passed, my sister took the old violin that was kept under Mom's bed back with her to Colorado. The violin belonged to my father. Evidently he played it when he was younger.

Now I had never witnessed my father playing the violin. I had never even heard him mention it, except one time when I was little and I found it under my parents' bed. I pulled out the case and opened it to find it old and battered, with its

strings dried and loose and the bow shredded. I'm pretty sure the bridge was broken. My father came into the room and saw me examining it like an archeological artifact.

When I asked him about it, he looked at it forlornly, gently gathered it all back into the case, and said "it was mine, leave it alone." Then he slid the case back under his bed. As I grew older I came to understand his look that day. It was the pained look of a dream lost. It was a look I had anytime I came across a short story or screenplay in the back of one of my drawers or file cabinets. Out of sight, out of mind.

Now if you knew my father, you would never suspect that he was musically inclined, never mind someone who would play the violin. He had thick stubby fingers and scarred and calloused hands that had seen their fair share of fights and hard labor. He kind of resembled Ed Asner during his stint as Lou on Mary Tyler Moore. He barked like him too. I shared in some of his other talents. He was a navy boxing champ. I boxed in the Golden Gloves and a bit in college (no one is born this pretty).

None of my siblings took music lessons. There was only one kid in my neighborhood that did, Martin Stransky, who played piano and grew up to be a successful doctor and lecturer. The rest of us were too busy outside getting into mischief or playing sports. We never really "practiced" anything, although we did go through the motions with sports, but the truth is that back then you either had it or you didn't. For example, Marty McLaughlin had it. He would have shamed The Natural.

Some of the other kids in the neighborhood gravitated towards guitar as they got older. Some were really good.

Some just looked cool carrying it around with them. Stein, Joe, Billy D and John H all played guitar well. They also

looked cool doing it. I'd be lying if I didn't admit I was jealous of their talent. They all played at my wedding. Unfortunately they closed their show that day with with a hearty rendition of "No Balls At All," with my name inserted in the closing line. Pricks!

My law partner, Robert Meloni, is a gifted musician. So are his siblings. His mother was a concert level pianist. His daughter Raff is a professional singer songwriter. I am in awe of their talent.

My children all took guitar lessons when they were little, because I wanted them to have that thing that I never had.

But that gave way to conflicting martial arts or other sports training, which we treated a lot more seriously as my kids grew up. I just never understood or appreciated the gift that music provided.

Luckily, my daughter, Jackie, understood it. So when her son, Lucian, was old enough, he began taking piano lessons. He also took dance. He's quite good at both.

Anyway, my sister refurbished my Dad's violin because one day she hoped she could pass it on to someone else in the Clan. Yesterday, she shipped it off to Lucian in Atlanta. I look forward to hearing him play, knowing that the moment his fingers touch those strings, they will be guided by the spirit of my father. I know Dad will be smiling over the fact that his hidden legacy will be carried forward into the future of his family.

Tenacity (Although I Prefer Stubbornness)

September 22, 2021



I saw the coolest full Harvest Moon yesterday morning when I went out for my walk. I just had to snap this photo. Its a

shot right in front of my home, facing west on Beverly. You can see the Three Witches on the horizon, just beyond the foothills. I knew I was in for a magical day.

Later in the morning I looked out my office window and spotted this Hawk. It loves to come by everyday and scope the fields from the tip of one of my backyard trees. I have shot some photos through the screen on my office window but they don't look that nice, so I figured I would go out the back door and take a couple of unobstructed shots. I was rewarded by the below action photo.



The Hawk is very patient. It sits on its perch scanning and waiting until it sees what it wants and goes after it. If you

want the right shot, you have to wait with the Hawk and be ready to shoot at just the right moment. Here's a tip. When the Hawk (or any bird of prey) is readying itself to take off, it usually dips its head and shoulders downwards and its tail upwards just before it springs into the air. Get that finger to the camera button and start shooting.

Patience is a virtue, and one I'm not readily privvy to. I hate waiting for godot.

But I can overcome my lack of the virtuous patience with my ready vice of stubbornness. The polite word for stubbornness is tenacity. My stubbornness was tested yesterday as I traded numerous calls and voice messages with the liable party's insurance adjuster only to be told by said adjuster, late in the day, that my better course towards ensuring full and timely recovery would be to go through my own insurance company and let them claim over against the liable party's policy. The only problem was that my own company has an extremely long wait time on trying to get through by phone due to claims over Hurricane Ida. Luckily, I had filed notice of the potential claim on-line with my insurance company the night of the accident, in case there were any shenanigans.

So, I made the call and, after being warned up front of a possible wait time of 30 minutes, spent an additional 45 beyond that waiting for a live voice to come on the line.

Now, this is not one of those things that you can put to the side and do something else while you wait. Like watching the Hawk, waiting for that shot, you need to be ready to snap that photo (or in this case - grab that phone line) as soon as you hear a real voice. Otherwise you risk them disconnecting you and moving on to the next person in the cue, at which point, you reach for the Hemlock. So, you don't have to be patient, if you are stubborn. And despite a

message every 30 seconds taunting me that I would be much better off trying the on-line approach, I stubbornly held out for a live agent. I'm sure I resembled one of the RCA dogs just staring at my phone, waiting for that sound of my master's voice.

I am thrilled to report that I was ready to snatch that phone line as soon as Hugo's voice came across the speakers. Hugo was excellent, and after taking all of the information concerning the liable party I had tracked down on my own, including the claim and policy numbers and the contact information of their insurance adjuster, he assured me he would take it from here. He took the contact information for the tow company and set up the car rental and gave me my company's insurance adjuster's name. Voila.

Well trying to break into the writing business requires the same stubborn skillset (love that alliteration). The publishing world has set up these artificial hoops you feel you must jump through in order to break into it. Someone tells you need to get your MFA before you deserve the right to throw your hat in the ring. Others say that you then need to land that agent to maneuver you between the rock and the hard place. Those paths make a lot of other people money. And it can wear you down. I say that you just have to be stubborn. You stubbornly sit down at that computer screen and write.

You stubbornly refuse to accept as final the millions of "nos" you will hear. You stubbornly cannot accept being told what and how to write -- tell your story!. You have to stubbornly hold onto the belief that no one else knows your writer's voice better than you and that sooner or later, often the latter, you will ultimately find someone who hears your voice and says, "I like it just the way it sounds." And sometimes, like me, you have to stubbornly survive long enough to hear

that message. So, no matter what your challenge is in life, be stubborn and never give up.

In closing, let me give a shout out to one of my readers, Carla from Texas, who liked the Gates of Heaven photo from my earlier blog.

To the rest of you, have a great day, and *operor retineo non forensis liberi attero vos* ("do not let the not legal children erode you") or, more colloquially, *Illegitimi non carborundum* (Don't let the bastards wear you down!)

KMAG

September 21, 2021



Got the final edits to KMAG done and dusted during last night's apex Harvest Moon. Good mojo. I will just need to

review the clean copy one final time before signing off. I am thrilled to share that I am extremely pleased with how this book, and The Claire Trilogy overall, has turned out. I am really excited over the fact that soon KMAG will be joining TWA and AAA on line. I feel like the great football legend, Ed McCaffrey, waiting for yet another talented child to rock the NFL. We McCaffreys all find our niche.

Speaking of McCaffrey children, my sneaky SOB of a child Mark (Go NYPD) impersonated Lenny with a first comment to my Cold Pizza posting. Given that I never even knew my children read my blogs, it was totally reasonable to mistake my son for the rascally Mark Lenahan, and respond accordingly. I, of course, would never shoot my son (9 mm bullets are extremely hard to find these days), although, to draw upon an often used McCaffrey-parent lyrical refrain, I should have drowned him as a child. Mark, make yourself useful and please give my love to your darling wife Sara (also NYPD), her darling sister Dana (same), her husband Kevin and daughter Brooklyn James, and finally to your father-in-law, the real Jimmy Moran (NYPD Ret.) and his lovely wife Liz. Next time call out the color of the day.

Yesterday was a good day for other reasons as well.

Learned from Reagan Roth that BRW has begun targeted ads for TWA in Australia. I'm hoping enough of my criminal ancestors made the trip down under to boost those sales figures: <https://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/not-just-ned/family-history/irish/convicts>

Also learned that I have been asked to provide an interview for Uncaged Books: <http://uncagedbooks.com>

It will appear in the November/December Edition.

Milestone: first interview as an author. Looking forward to it.

Yesterday morning I took the above photo while on the return lap of my morning walk. It looks like God is hiding behind a curtain of clouds. Maybe that is what the gates of heaven looks like. I hope I don't always find myself on the outside looking in. While I'm in no rush to get there, I did tell my dear mother to leave the back gate unlocked. Well I have to book. Lots to do before putting on my legal hat this morning. You five readers have a great day!

Harvest Moon - KMAG

September 20, 2021



Seems fitting that I am putting the final touches on KMAG during the three day cycle of the Harvest Moon. I am

reaping what I've sown. I am going through a slow read picking up tiny errors in things like capitalization, sometimes breaking long sentences into shorter ones, selecting a better word to get a point across, or realizing I have left a word out completely (which happens when you type and talk at the same time - your ears hear the word even if your fingers do not type it in). I have to say that this is a scary experience, because I never remember everything I have written. So when I go back to re-read something after I (or the elves) have written it, it sometimes appears completely new to me.

I think it has to do with the way my mind processes things. I have lots of RAM to juggle things while my brain is working but a small hard drive to store it all once I shut it down for the day. That is why I tap into the cloud to recover those things. Its like an off site hard drive and sometimes I get to pilfer the thoughts of the nearby creative dead while I'm at it. The good news is that as I am reading along in KMAG, doing my edits, its almost like reading something for the first time. Half way through and I'm thrilled with how the story and characters are playing out.

Once I am done (hopefully by tonight), I'll create the schedule, add all of my changes, compare those changes with the edits Eileen has sent me and add any ones I have missed (I'm sure there will be, thank you Eileen) and then submit it to BRW. Then, I'll get a clean revised PDF back, give it one final read, compare it to the edits that Jimmy Fronsdaahl will by then have the given me, and to the extent there is anything Eileen and I have not already caught, I will make those final changes and send it back to BRW with a *vaya con dios!*

The great news is that, if history is any judge, BRW usually gets the book up on their website and then on Amazon shortly afterwards for pre-sale. Then I take a deep breath,

and then start seriously thinking about the prequel. The good news is that I had an epiphany during Saturday's morning walk, with how I tie the prequel and sequel together. Luckily I immediately texted the ideas to Eileen for safekeeping, just in case I lose it if the power goes out.

Anyway, a new week awaits, with day-jobs, etc. Must get some more editing in before and after. The rest of you have a great day.

A Hookey Day

September 19, 2021

SportsWise Series

The Story Behind The Glory

**Winning Quotes from Sports Greats
on the Game of Life**

Lombardi, Ali, Wooden, Berra . . . and more

Bill Cairo

Had a wonderful start to my day yesterday, meeting with Betsy and Bill Cairo in their beautiful home in the Bonnell

West development in Loveland. Amazing couple, so much fun to talk to. Great senses of humor. So accomplished. Bill is a retired Veterinarian, Betsy is a college professor, and they also run a cryogenics related business, a small real estate empire, and a small publishing concern and a charity. Bill has a Dr. Oz kind of look (I would kill for his hairline) and Betsy evokes Catherine O'Hara in looks and funny personality. I sit here exhausted just thinking about how much work they must put in on any given day. I do not know how they found the time to have two kids and enjoy three grand kids. Betsy has even given a TEDx talk. I mean, how cool is that! I also met their lovely daughter-in-law, Maddie (of Viking descent by way of Michigan), and their two dogs. Of the latter, Cerebus, yes like the collective name of the three dogs in TWA, and the gatekeeper of the underworld, was a sweetheart who lay his large body across my feet under the table. Friends from an earlier life no doubt. As I was leaving to go out yesterday morning, I told Lisa I would be back no later than 9:30 am, and she responded, "who are you kidding, I won't see you before 12." I scoffed. That's right, scoffed!

Anyway, we had a great time discussing everything under the sun, and before I left, I inscribed their copy of TWA, and Bill gave me an inscribed copy of his book "The Story Behind The Glory, Winning Quotes from Sports Greats on the Game of Life." (Betsy has also published textbooks in her specialty). Bill's can be found here: <https://www.amazon.com/Story-Behind-Glory-Winning-Quotes/dp/0977760537>. I loved all of the selected quotes and their backstories by these famous icons from the world of sports - who does not love Yogi Berra - but my absolute favorite was one by the Tennis great, Arthur Ashe: "Without the wind in my face, I could not have flown so high." That one

resonates. Of course, Bill has a lot to answer for because I blew off some chores because I could not put his book down. A quick enjoyable read that also serves as a valuable literary resource to locate some great quotes for all occasions. There are some classic honorable mentions as well by characters like Rodney Dangerfield. Bill inscribed it: "To Tom, A man who loves a good story. Bill" Thank you Bill. I really do.

They also sent me off with some of their home grown tomatoes. Made for delicious caprese sandwiches. They also do home canning. I feel so inadequate in comparison.

A true skiver.

I walked back through my door at 11:59. I hate when Lisa's right.

We then spent the rest of the afternoon researching and signing up for supplemental medicare insurance. I told you, I'm old.

Then Lisa and I visited with our son, Luke, his wife Georgie, and our three enchanting and allitortory grand daughters, Scarlett, Savanna and Stella. We shared a delicious meal of eggplant parmagian and apple pie a la mode. Thanks kids.

Thank you Georgie for the warm hospitality and delicious meal. Savanna is going to be a Hellraiser.



That's their Mastiff, Cairo, no relation to Bill and Betsy, having a staredown with Savanna (in her 10th costume change). Savanna won.

So today will be spent catching up on the chores I let slide yesterday. Plus, I intend to get through the KMAG edits. Speaking of which, I want to thank the industrious Eileen for her reread and suggested edits of KMAG. I am turning to them now.

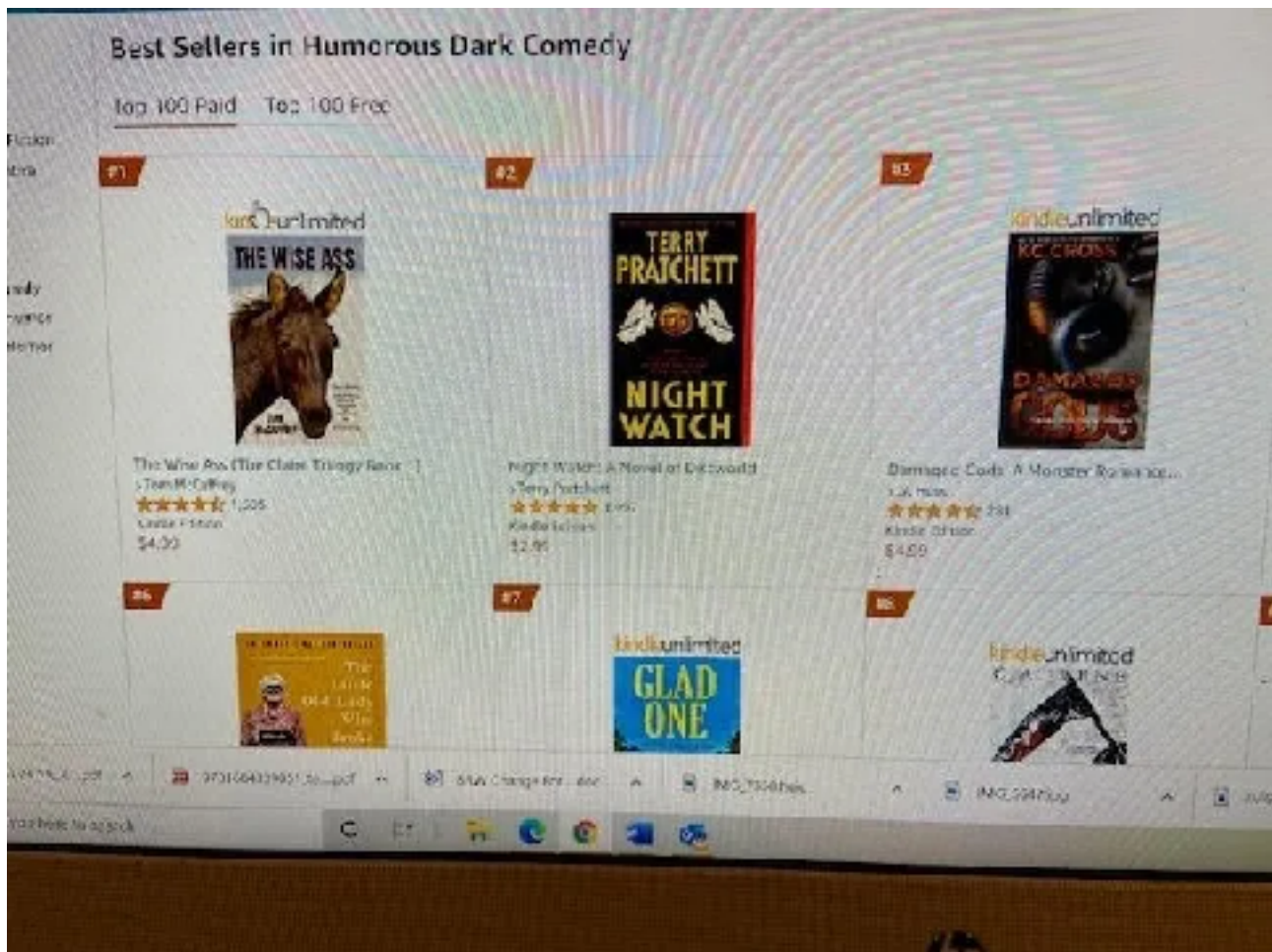
Got a quick peek at the synopsis of Christy Cooper Burnett's novel in process. Looks like a winner.

For the rest of the five readers, Sunday is a day of rest.

Take advantage of it. Have a great day.

Holding Onto The Top Spot

September 18, 2021



Saturday mornings are always nicer when you wake up to find you are still holding firm on day 3 at your latest run at number 1. As I've said in the past, these Amazon rankings are mercurial, and change hourly, so you never know what you'll get when you update that web page. Three days holding at number 1 is as unusual as it is thrilling. This may be the Universe's panacea for banging up my car. I'll take it!

Speaking of my banged up car, I managed to track down the relevant insurance information and got all of the necessary

paperwork filed yesterday. So hopefully I can start seeing to initiating the repairs of my Toyota sometime next week. I stopped by the Berthoud location for the Larimer Sheriff's Office and also Fire Station 1 for the Berthoud Fire Department to drop off inscribed copies of TWA, something for our first responders to read during downtimes, and was thrilled to see the Fireman I spoke with (who was on a different shift than the attendants at the accident) suddenly recognize me with the line, "Oh, you're the pizza guy!" So you never know what part of a story will rise above the others as the primary identifier. I'll take it!

Joe and Donna finally did leave the Mediterranean boot early yesterday morning. I'm hoping their flight home was uneventful.

Looking forward to keeping my standing Nextdoor App promise to any and all local residents who buy my novel to stop by their house and inscribe it. Have one scheduled for this morning in Loveland (great name). Always thrilled to put a face to a name. Then its back home for my chores. Then I'm focusing on doing my read through of the KMAG publisher's manuscript. It's strange, but seeing it in the galley book printed form makes it easier to spot those typos and see places where you may want to make a tweak to improve a line or thought. I must take my time so I get it right. Eileen Cotto (in NY) and Jimmy Fronsdaahl (in Idaho) are also giving it a final read so I should be covered. I'm really looking forward to putting this to bed so it can go live for pre-sale and I can start focusing on the prequel. Speaking of writing, had a great discussion with Christy Cooper Burnett about her next writing project. It sounds amazing. Looking forward to reading it.

Speaking of female writers, must check in with Margaret Reyes Dempsey to see how her new writing project is

progressing. I'm sure as we head into October, her husband, Richard Lamb, who did the amazing covers for AAA and KMAG, will be focusing on everything horror related. (Did I mention that Halloween is also my favorite holiday). Richard is the son of the famous British Horror editor and enthusiast, Hugh Lamb. What a creative family. Speaking of families, I heard from my daughter yesterday, who was in Vermont (with her significant other, Zack) to both run a 20 mile leg of a much longer team race. Waiting to hear the results. It's funny how my children just nonchalantly expect me to survive everything the universe throws at me with that little touch of humor. My youngest Mark (NYPD - Go Blue!) interjected just one line among the many concerned text messages from his lovely and very sweet wife Sara (also NYPD)[Her dad - Ex NYPD - is the real Jimmy Moran]. It read "Poor car having to make contact with that noggin." I should have drowned him as a child. My British/Australian model D-I-L, Georgie (we are breeding for height and beauty in this next generation - so far, so good), called yesterday to ensure I was okay, having learned of the accident from my sister (basis for Bonnie in TCT). Nothing more soothing than the sounds of a concerned voice in a British/Australian accent.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Lisa's response when I finally returned home Thursday evening after the accident: "Good, now you have something new to blog about." No rest for the wicked.

There is definitely no mollycoddling in this family! Which reminds me of Sphagetti's constant retort when my generation regularly walked through the door of the McCaffrey house with gashes, scrapes, breaks and bumps.

As you read this, think thick Northern Irish Brogue and an equally thick cloud of Prince Albert smoke coming from his

pipe as he examined us. "Ah, your fine, it's no where near your heart."

Anyway, time to make my rounds and then off to chores.

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

Cold Pizza

September 17, 2021













Funny how each small decision in life may seem inconsequential at the time. Yesterday evening, Lisa and I decided we would have that great thin crust veggie pizza from Side Tracked. Placed the order on the phone with our favorite Bartender, Laurie, and then drove east on 56 into Berthoud to pick it up. Now that trip always requires a crossing of the major north/south artery 287. Luckily, that intersection has a very good traffic light system in place that allows everyone from all directions to get where they are going without mishap. Certainly worked yesterday evening on my way into town.

Yesterday's trip had the added bonus of a few laughs at the bar with my Polish friend "Nick the Lid" (who wears Russian Biker colors) who introduced me to another Ex-Pat New Yorker, "Nick from Long Island." After establishing that the second Nick was not really a New Yorker, until he provided his Brooklyn bona fides (in which case he established that he came from the second best Borough behind Da Bronx), we had a few more laughs at the expense of the mayor of the once great city. At that point, the lovely Laurie arrived with my hot pizza, and I shared my adieus all around and went out to my Toyota Rav 4.

This time, as I exited the town, I could see from my approach to 287 that I had the light but as I got within striking distance it changed to yellow.

Now this is an artery that anticipates a long yellow light because of the approaching speed of cars on 56. I could have easily gunned the engine and gotten across 287 before the red light hit. And there you have it. Is it the gas pedal or the brake?

I chose the brake. Why tempt fate?

As I sat first in line in the right lane that takes you straight across 287, waiting for a decently long light to change, I started thinking of how great it was that BRW had sent me the publisher's manuscript for KMAG, just before I ended my legal workday. I was looking forward to giving it a final close read, picking up any last minute errors or changes, and then sending it back, hopefully over the weekend, so it could go up on Amazon with its sister novels for pre-sale. The last of The Claire Trilogy to leave the nest. As I sat there patiently, I looked down at the center screen on the dashboard in order to turn on some music.

The sound of shrieking brakes and a loud bang, drew my attention to my immediate left, through my driver's window.

It really does take a moment for unusual things to register with your brain. This totally unexpected visual included a black VW Beetle hurtling sideways at a decent speed towards the front of my car.

I'm sure that I didn't get the entire "Fuck me" out of my mouth before the VW slammed into my poor Toyota. But once the VW collided, everything shifted into slow motion. I know from the abrasion at the top of my head that, despite wonderfully working seatbelts, I lifted from my seat just enough to make contact with the roof of my car as my head jerked to the left towards the rapidly approaching driver's side of my vehicle. The front of my vehicle continued along with the striking VW missile for about 75 degrees to my right as the entire car entered the emergency lane. The VW bounced off and remained where my car once sat. When I finally came to a stop, for some reason, the first thing my eyes searched for was my pizza. Surprisingly enough, it appeared where I had left it, on the front passenger seat. I cannot say if it was there the entire time or just landed back in the same place. Will miracles never cease!

For a moment everyone remained in their respective vehicles (three were involved in the crash before it got to me).

Then I saw a young blond woman rise unsteadily from the driver's door of the VW. She looked to be in her twenties, and had the look of someone who may be going into shock. There was a trickle of blood running down her nose. She reminded me of my own daughter, Jackie, and my paternal instincts kicked in. I exited my car and ran over to her, gave her a quick look to see if there were any major injuries and then walked her out of the center of the metal carnage to the side of the road. I told her that, except for a few scratches, she looked okay, and that she was going to be all right.

I left her there and called 911, who had already been apprised of the accident and was sending "lots of help." Then I called Lisa and told her the pizza was going to be cold.

By then the woman who had been sitting in her Blue SUV (Second to last photo) exited her vehicle and assured me she was okay. Very charming and funny woman with which I later shared a few laughs. I approached the pick-up truck, whose door was open. The young lady sitting at the wheel nodded affirmatively when I asked if she was okay. Her family arrived moments later. It was actually amazing when you see the impact damage to both the pick-up and the VW that no one suffered serious injury. God was working overtime yesterday.

The first responders - EMS, Fire & Sheriff's Officers -- were there in moments. They were all very professional and extremely helpful. After checking on everybody, and taking all of the reports, including licenses, registrations and insurance cards, they called tow trucks and began cleaning up the glass, metal and engine oil that had littered the area around the accident. And that is when all the first responders changed back from superhero to human form. There was a lot of joking about my sharing my pizza -- the only valuable I removed from my car -- with everyone, but I apologized to one and all that if I returned home after all of this without my pizza, I may in fact suffer critical injury. I, in turn, used this moment to break most of their balls in my most New York fashion, and also hawk my novels to this captive audience, explaining that if they did want a real laugh to put all of this behind them, they should pick up my books. Always be selling.

The VW blond, who I later learned is named Claudia Toledo, had called her boyfriend, Jeff, a fine (though rightfully

extremely worried) young man who arrived at his girlfriend's side and immediately set to make sure she was okay and that all of the proper people in her life were contacted. Well done Jeff. By the way, if Claudia was my daughter, I would feel very confident in her happiness with a guy like Jeff in her life.

Indeed, it was Jeff and Claudia who gave me a lift in Jeff's car from the accident scene back to my home. I wish those two youngins a wonderful life.

To complete this with Shakespearian flourish, I'll cite to the Bard's play of that name, "All's Well That Ends Well."

So today will be spent tracking down my Toyota and dealing with insurance companies. And that's a pain in the ass. But you have to be alive to suffer a pain in your ass. And I am thankful for that.

So the rest of you fine five readers, smile and have a great day. After all, it is Friday.

Oh, and even cold pizza is delicious.

And I would be remiss if I didn't ensure that a milk truck was not involved. I'm watching BC. Better luck next time.

Back on Top - Happy Birthday John - Congrats Tales

September 16, 2021



#1 Best S
Dark Co



Success on the Amazon Lists is so ephemeral, and like a Big Foot sighting, no one believes you without a photo. Last night was a good night, because I woke up to find TWA back in the top 10 of multiple lists: #1 on Humorous Dark Comedy, #3 on Psychic Suspence, #4 on Legal Thrillers (Kindle Select) and #6 on Legal Thrillers (Kindle Books).

Now these lists are updated hourly, but for this one witching hour, I'm revelling. Thank you readers. Thank you BRW.

Speaking of BRW (I am forever in its debt - thank you Reagan Rothe), I should have the publisher's manuscript for KMAG within a week, so with any luck, I'll be able to put it to bed shortly afterwards and it should be up for pre-sale before the end of the month. Fingers crossed.

Once KMAG is up and running I can turn my attention to my next project, The Riverdale Chronicles. I'm really looking forward to writing the prequel to The Claire Trilogy. If all goes well, I'm hoping I can publish it by the end of 2022.

Shifting gears, I made the misjudgment of referring to BC as "insane" in my responsive comment (to BC's comment) to yesterday's blog. I'm afraid this may have spurred him onto a manic flurry of on-line milk truck searches. I meant to use the word "eccentric," which is a far kinder word that is used to lovingly describe the characters in my family tree, and given that BC (along with his brother, Doug, RIP) is indelibly part of the Clan, through informal but very permanent adoption by my now dead parents, I edited that comment to reflect these identifiers of this half century familial relationship. Nonetheless, anyone who knows my family, and the Irish in general, understands that this familial relationship does not prevent us from trying to kill each other (" . . . the lions refuse to come out .") So Eileen, stay on your post.

Lisa and I had a really good soak in the hot tub last night (not a euphemism) so I slept like a baby.

Exchanged a few hilarious texts yesterday with the feminine side of my split personality, my fellow BRW writer, Christy Cooper Burnett (I am not kidding, if I were a woman I would be CCB. In fact, I'm actually worried, has anyone ever seen us both in the same room?). Eileen, who is burning through Christy's trilogy, will attest (hopefully in the comment section below) that Christy is an amazing writer. And when it comes to reading, Eileen does not come to play. So check out CCB's Christine Stewart Trilogy.

Joe posted more photos yesterday of his Roman Holiday. I know I speak for the others in the OFC when I say - you rat bastard, I am terribly jealous.

Finally, yesterday was my youngest sibling's birthday. I believe he is 61. Happy Birthday John (never Jack). He and his wife Tara, and daughter Taylor, just returned from attending Taylor's post-grad graduation ceremony from a

very old and prestigious British Uni. Congrats to Tales and the family.

So, in closing, thank you all five of my readers for the continued support of The Claire Trilogy. Really, my continued existence as a writer is down totally to the support you have given me. I am forever in your debt. Have a great day. Mine is off to a fabulous start!

With Friends Like These. . . .

September 15, 2021



First, let me correct yesterday's posting. J&D have not actually left Italy, they have just flown to Rome, and are now

experiencing life in that big city. Rumor has it that the pilot who was to take the plane back to the States decided he wanted to visit his cousin Vinnie on the Roman steps.

Lenny regaled us with tales from his time there. He really has a way with words.

The good news is that this allowed the OFC to enter a lively debate about the rumored cheek pinching that goes on there - the Roman steps (even though our Italian expert, Lenny, assures us this is apocryphal, and, for the record, the members of the OFC absolutely condemn it) - which transitioned into an equally lively debate over the barbaric, misogynistic objectification of women's bottoms by the lowly males of the species, as viewed through the microcosm of a rumored specific event. In the end, after another group condemnation, we gave ourselves a lively round of applause over our own objective evolution. Males must do better! We then removed our tongues from our own cheeks. Old dogs, but not dead.

If you ever wondered what Leatherface must have looked like in the beginning of his transition into a cult bogeyman, the above photo of BC should give you a start. Now admit it, with a friend like this would you not worry that he might hot wire a milk truck? Eileen, are you following? The good news is that he had not yet mastered the hand saw or his left hand. Still, I must remain vigilant, at least until KMAG hits the market.

I really cannot wait to finalize the KMAG publisher's manuscript. The sooner it is done and dusted, and up for pre-sale, the sooner I can free my mind for the next literary adventure.

Well, my chores and the law awaits me. Until tomorrow, to the rest of my five readers, you have a great day.

J&D's Last Night In Tuscany [But Not Italy]

September 14, 2021



It seems that, even when you are living vicariously through others, wonderful trips end too soon. Yesterday was Joe &

Donna's last day in Tuscany. I will miss the daily reports of delicious food and photos of beautiful architecture and landscapes, along with the countering explanatory narration from our own Italian expert, Lenny. I'm just happy that the trip went off without a problem (as I predicted, Joe) and that they will soon be safe and sound back in their upstate New York home. I also assume that BC will have vacated the Serrano premises and returned to his own upstate home, and that he has not left any empty boxes of Life cereal behind.

Heard from my now retired Court Clerk close clan member, Mike Moulton, yep, that one, that one of the Riverdale Community groups has reinstalled a 9-11 memorial on 253rd and Fieldston Road to commemorate the 20th anniversary. Mike told me that Rocky, Mike and Orio appear on the memorial. Glad to see that Riverdale is repping the heroes. Never forget.

Tuesday's legal world looms large before me, so I have to cut this short. Have a great photo of BC for tomorrow's post. Stay tuned.

Have a great day.

Thanks Carla from Texas & A Recent BC Spotting

September 13, 2021



Each morning I wake up wondering what I will blog about.

Often, it's about Claire's daily shenanigans. Sometimes it's about a photo I (or some friend) snapped. Sometimes it's about what's happening with my books. Sometimes it's something that one or more of my absolutely crazy friends - and I am telling you, I was the altar boy among them - from my childhood have texted, or a memory they have dredged up. I love the challenge of coming up with something new

each morning. It's like a crash course on how to avoid writer's block.

This morning, my blog was triggered from an email I received from one of the readers of TWA who also reads my blogs.

Carla from Texas was kind enough to send me an email through the contact button on this website. She was commenting on yesterday's "Heroes" blog, in particular about my mention of the FDNY Hero Orio Palmer (btw - one of the coolest first names I have ever encountered).

Evidently, the weekly news show 60 Minutes also mentioned Orio. I am happy that Orio and the others received well deserved attention on the 20th anniversary of 9-11. I will track down the episode and watch it. Thank you, Carla, for bringing it to my attention (and for following my blog). Thank you Orio, Rocky and Bill for your sacrifice.

We will never forget you.

As with my reviews, I read every email I receive (I won't digress beyond mentioning a recent 3 star review that confidently predicted that I am doomed to be a one-and-done. I hope they are equally disappointed in the next two books.) Some of the more active blog readers post comments, which I read and respond to. But if you are one of my five readers, and have any questions or comments you would like to share privately, click the contact button and fire away. I do read and respond.

Speaking of regular commentors, my dear childhood friend BC (you will meet his character in KMAG, remember those two initials), had all of the old crew laughing hysterically with the above posted photo from yesterday's OFC group text.

You see, BC is a wanderer. I had an Irish Setter, Lady, who resembled BC and had similar wandering proclivities. BC will travel all over the country and post photos showing that

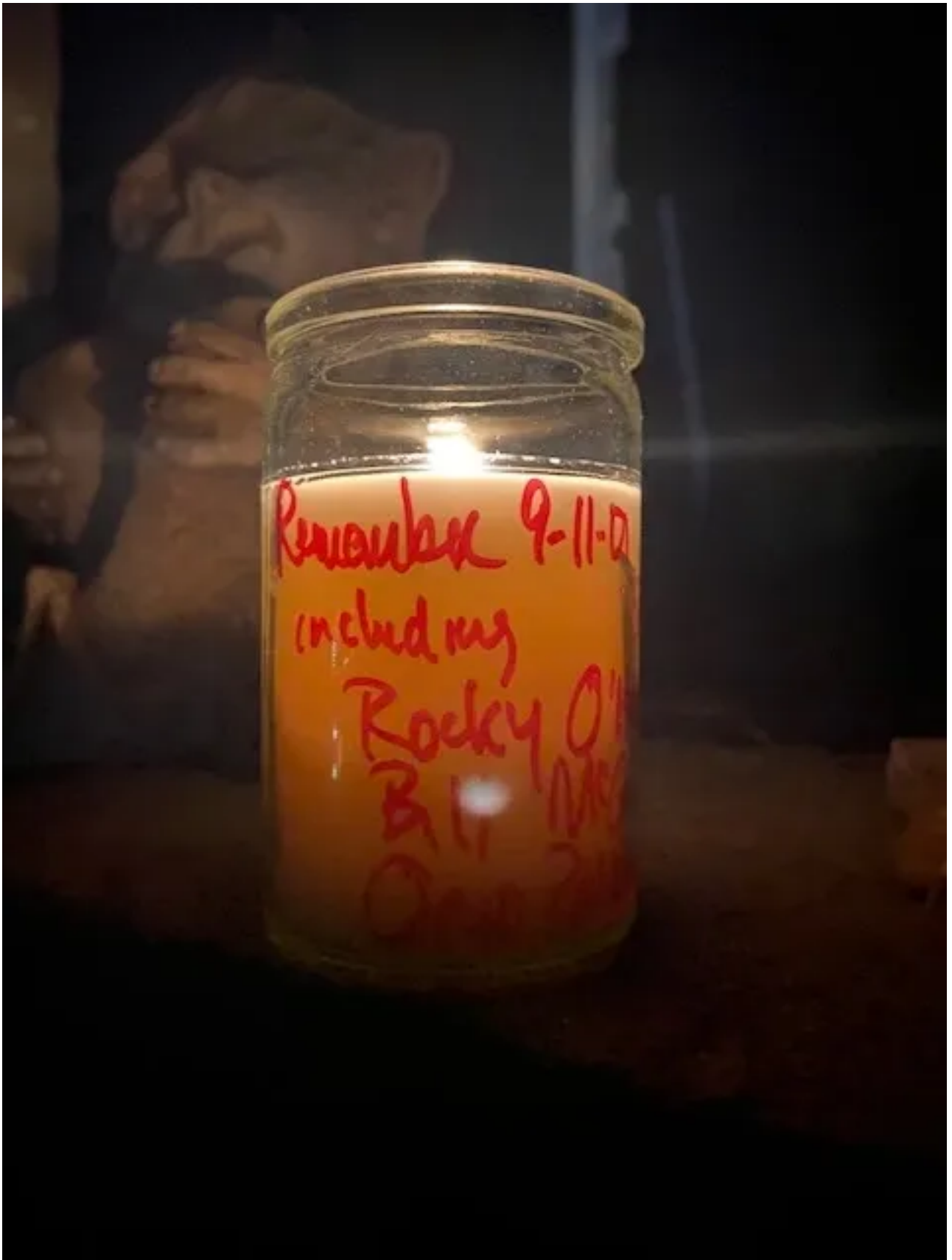
he has passed through your neighborhood. Just to let you know that you can be found (and to put the fear of God in us that he might be in a milk truck right around the corner).

Yesterday's photo shows BC -- he must be a vampire because he has not changed since childhood -- outside Joe Serrano's place of employment. Joe, as my blog readers will remember, is traveling with his lovely wife Donna, through Italy. The text that accompanied this photo was hilarious, and ended with a reference to a cat fight between two waitresses upon learning of a common latin lover, but I cannot in good conscience share the details beyond that. I also received a text from another one of my childhood friends, Eileen, also a regular commentor to the blog, to let me know she is still alive and reading prodigiously. Eileen, stop reading and pay attention, BC is on the move! I have been blessed through the assortment of heroes and crazy folk I have had the privilege to meet along my life's merry path. I hope I get the opportunity to honor each and every one of them in some fashion through a mention in my fiction.

To the rest of you, have a great day, and drop me a line so I know you are out there.

Heroes

September 12, 2021



Yesterday was a sad day. I lit the candle when I woke up at 2 am, and later tried to find a station out here that just

showed just the uninterrupted reading of the names, but every station kept cutting away for commentary. Then there were politicized speeches from politicians new and old, so I finally shut it off and went downstairs to prep the fruits and vegetables for the week. I thought about my friend, Tom "Rocky" O'Hagan, my neighbor, Bill McGinn, and my highschool classmate, Orio Palmer.

Rocky was a one of the Riverdale kids, a few years younger than me. He was one of the younger kids that bumped up into my group of friends during the neighborhood evolution and was fast to laugh, athletic and pretty much down for anything. He was also one hell of a card player. One of the few in the neighborhood who could take on Joe Serrano.

Tommy heroically entered the North Tower with the men from Engine 6. He left behind a beautiful wife and twin boys. I have his mass card pinned up in my office.

A quick adult Tommy O story. I was coming home one day after work and had just missed my bus on 231st Street. I was so pissed I did not notice the firetruck pull up next to where I was standing in the bus stop watching the No. 7 heading home without me on it. Then I heard this voice. "Hi little boy, would you like a ride on the firetruck." I looked up and saw Rocky hanging out the passenger window of the front of this Truck. I felt like I was five years old again and all I could muster was "Really?" "Hop in," he said. That was the coolest ride home I ever had. He even let me hit the horn. He went up the Riverdale Avenue hill, along the Henry Hudson Toll Road and finally down 254th Street and then down Mosholu to my family's house. That might have been the last time I saw him. God bless you and your family Rocky.

Bill MGinn lived a couple of floors above me at 5440 Netherland Avenue. I think he was from Staten Island. He

had a beautiful wife and a couple of kids. I used to see him in the building, at our neighborhood pool and over at PS 81 dropping off or picking up the kids. He was always with the kids. His wife was a doctor. Nicest guy in the world. My son, Luke, thought he was the greatest, as Luke would watch Bill run up and down the six stories of stairways with weighted vest as he did all he could to stay in shape. Whenever he heard Bill out there he went out and sat on the steps and watched him work out. I believe that is what drew Luke into his job as a firefighter. It also drove Luke into creating his own personal work outs. I'm not sure which Tower took Bill. God bless you and your family Bill.

Orio Palmer was in my class at Cardinal Spellman for the three years I attended. He was a Woodlawn kid and hung with that crew. He seemed to be more quiet than the other kids from that side of the Bronx, but then again, that's the law of relativity at play. Even the quiet Bronx kids are noisy. At the time of his passing, as one of the heroes of 9-11, Orio lived on Long Island with his wife and three children.

One thing I remember about Orio was that he never played the territorial game. He was friendly to everyone, not just his boys from the neighborhood. Orio died leading his men in the South Tower. God bless you and your family Orio. You know, its easy to create heroes in fiction. These men, and all of their brethren, showed the kind of heroics on 9-11-01 that writers can only dream about. We are forever in their debt. We must never forget them or their families.

9-11-01

September 11, 2021



September 11, 2001 started out like any other day. I had dropped our two younger kids at their respective schools in

Westchester, and returned home. My eldest, Luke, was off at College in North Carolina. It was one of those wonderful, brisk September mornings, blue sky and cloudless. So, Lisa suggested we squeeze a run in before I left for work.

The run through the trails in Van Cortlandt Park was great. Lisa led it effortlessly, I chased behind dutifully. The weather was so perfect that we spent a little extra time by the Horse Stables stretching afterwards. I was in no rush to get into work that day.

Lisa dropped me off at the 242nd Street subway station in the Bronx at about 8:40 a.m. Luckily lawyer's hours in New York started around ten a.m. I immediately became lost in a Nelson DeMille book, either *The Charm School* or *The General's daughter*, so I really didn't pay attention to anything else.

The subway ride was slow but uneventful until we left the elevated 125th Street Harlem Station. Then it seemed that we slowed to a crawl, and began stopping every couple of feet for a few moments at various points between stations.

Having ridden the NYC subways for over forty years at that point, this was not that unusual. Sometimes a jumper on the tracks will cause this kind of delay. But now the clock was crossing the ten a.m. spot. After another delay waiting at the 96th Street station, the now full subway of commuters were getting restless. A young latina who had just entered at the 96th Street stop mentioned in a stage whisper that she heard a plane had hit the World Trade Center.

That got the chorus of whispers rippling through the subway cars. I couldn't conceive something nefarious, and my mind immediately went back to the story of the B-25 that struck the Empire State Building in the 40s. It had gotten lost in the fog. But today was a perfectly clear day.

Over the next ten blocks, our subway inched its way southward. Just as we arrived in the 86th Street Station, the intercom came on and a stressful sounding male voice said something to the effect of "Ladies and Gentlemen, due to Police Activity, we are shutting down the New York City subway system. Please exit the subway cars and station in a quick and orderly fashion."

If there was ever a tell that something serious was happening, it was that message. To my knowledge, the subway system had never been entirely shut down. It had managed in whole or part to continue operating through blizzards and hurricanes.

When I finally reached street level, at 86th and Broadway, NYC was in panic mode. People were fighting over taxi cabs and groups of pedestrians were huddled around other people with hand held radios, with most of the listeners gasping and weeping. Some of the listeners would shout out snippets of what they were hearing to the other passers by. Then I heard it as a voice above the chorus. Both WTC towers had been struck by commercial airliners. This was a terrorist attack.

A cab pulled up at the nearest corner and discharged two weeping, Black women, holding onto each other for support.

I was distracted by the man who almost shoved them out of the way to slip into the back seat of the cab, slamming the door on the first loser, and when I refocused on the weeping women, I noticed they were covered in a fine grey-white dust, as if they had been subjected to a flour shower.

I heard one of the radio pundits say something about the government shutting down the bridges leaving Manhattan, except the 225th Street bridge leading into the Bronx. I tried to use my early version of a cell phone, slightly better than an orange juice can and string, but the line was dead.

Someone mentioned that the major cell tower hub was on the WTC. There were no working land lines in the area, so I couldn't call my wife or siblings. I am not sure how long I stood around trying to piece together what had happened.

But then I realized I had to get home.

I wasn't about to get into a fight with a crazy person over a cab, so I turned Northward and began walking.

It is a bit of a blur twenty years later, but what I do remember was that there were a lot of people who had joined my ghost march northward. No one was talking.

Many were covered with that same grey-white dust.

Everyone just looked at their feet as if willing them to keep moving. As I reached Harlem I saw all of its residents out on the street. Some were offering drinks to the walkers.

Some of the grannies shouted "God bless you and God bless America" to the dust covered walkers. Others were listening to news reports from the last of the boom boxes on the crowded stoops.

I just kept my head down and kept walking. It was a slow march. I distracted myself with thoughts of my children, siblings and wife. I didn't want to fathom the unthinkable that was happening.

Then I heard a sonic boom, which caused everyone around me to simultaneously flinch and gaze upward, as two fighter jets flew down the western edge of Manhattan towards the WTC. The whole thing was surreal.

It was already afternoon when I left the Inwood area of Manhattan and finally reached the 225th Street Bridge. The anxiety I felt as I funneled into the bottleneck of other members of the ghost march filing onto the Southern entry to that bridge was palpable. I had to resist my urge to push the slower people before me. It was as if we all realized at

that moment that we were not safe until we finally exited Manhattan.

There were hundreds of people gathering around the 225th Street corner of the Kingsbridge housing projects waiting for a spot on the North bound buses that were still running in the Bronx. I just kept walking, making a left at 231st street and a right at Riverdale Avenue, then walking the next twenty-three blocks to my apartment complex.

It was just after 2 pm when I walked through the door of my apartment. My wife left her spot in front of the tv and threw her arms around my neck. She is one tough lady, so she stifled the sob in her throat, looked me in the eyes and said, "C'mon, you can tell me all about it on the ride. Let's go get the kids."

I have to leave this story right here, because I have lots to do before I can find a network who will commemorate the fallen heroes of that day.

The rest of you. Hug your family. Thank a member of the services and first responders. And remember!

The Wise Ass Dons BADASS BRANDZ

September 10, 2021



Evoking one of the primary storylines of The Claire Trilogy, yesterday afternoon, Claire's special delivery from the East

Coast finally arrived. It is from the first line of hats available from BADASS BRANDZ clothing. It reps the line "you gotta bee ona you hat" which comes from a classic scene from the Sopranos:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=%22You+gotta+bee+ona+you+hat%22&docid=608011397513702064&mid=84BDB956586A91058C8F84BDB956586A91058C8F&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

While it is not visible in the above shot of Claire, the under brim is autographed by Federico Castelluccio, the painter/actor/director who played the iconic character Furio Giunta on the Sopranos. Carl Reyes, filmmaker, enterprenuer, and one of the owners of the brand (and the brother of that wonderful and talented writer, Margaret Reyes Dempsey of *Mind Games* fame, check it out), also sent along a set of stylized prints of the main Soprano characters, including a signed print of/by the BADASS ENFORCER himself. I don't care what Claire says, I am not putting them up in her barn.

In fact, I am stating here publically that the signed print is going up on my office wall.

This is a high quality and very cool hat. Claire highly recommends the company: <https://www.badassbrandz.com> Claire is now pestering me to see if any of the other clothing comes in her size. I haven't seen any 10X guayaberas that would do the trick, so I will keep watching as they roll out more cappellos.

I haven't the heart to tell her that I've just ordered shirts for Lisa and I. Of course I'll just have to keep wearing my tinfoil hat until they are delivered.

The rest of you five readers, have a wonderful Friday, catch the series of 9-11 documentaries starting today on the History Channel and I'm sure other stations, and never, ever forget.

NEVER FORGET

September 9, 2021



For any one of us that was in New York, Pennsylvania or DC on 9-11-01, I cannot believe that what happened that day will ever fade from our memories. But it is part of the human condition to allow horrific episodes in our collective mind to do just that.

I grew up in a patriotic household. My father Eddie served in the Navy. His brother, Bernie, the Army. My mom's brother, Tommy, the Airforce. Every December 7th during my childhood, we commemorated the horrific attack on Pearl Harbor. Every year, we relearned at our Catholic

school the details of the attack on that Hawaiiin U.S. Naval base by the Japanese that killed 2,403 Americans and wounded 1,178 others. It is what led to the United States entry into WWII.

But I was born in November 1956, almost fifteen years after that event. I wasn't sitting there, stunned with my grandparents and still young parents when the news of that bombing came across the radio. I never viscerally felt its true impact. I never fully experienced any emotions beyond a national pride as a learned response to the success of our country's warriors in the war that followed. I couldn't. I was not around for it. You might as well have been discussing the Civil War.

When my own children were growing up, Pearl Harbor became a newsworthy footnote that was discussed, if at all, briefly around our dinner table on the date in question. You see, because the event had not been indelibly seared into my own consciousness through living the experience, I could not properly share it with the next generation. And that's on me.

Twenty years has passed since that second major attack on US soil. I'll share more details of how that day unfolded for me and those close to me on the actual anniversary.

Today however, I want to focus on my personal fear that 9-11 is fading from the collective memory, especially among those youth born after the event.

My wife, Lisa, is not a native New Yorker. But she had been an adopted citizen of the greatest city in the world for almost three decades the day the towers fell. She had known my childhood friend Tommy "Rocky" O'Hagan while we were dating. She knew our upstairs neighbor Bill McGinn from our common building in Riverdale Park, PS 81, and the RNH Pool. Both men were part of the hundreds of FDNY

(and NYPD) who ran into the towers the morning they fell.

She waited for hours not knowing what had become of me after she dropped me at the #1 subway that took me into Manhattan that morning, while she watched the television in horror as the planes struck the towers. She experienced the event. It is indelibly seared into her soul.

Two of our children grew up to serve with the NYPD and DFD. They too, experienced 9-11 first hand. They knew Rocky and Bill.

Yesterday, on her day off, Lisa went out and bought a large tarp from Ace Hardware and some spray paint. She hung the end result on our front fence. I could not be more proud of her.

So this Saturday morning, take a moment out of your collective busy lives and somehow commemorate the almost 3000 who died on 9-11-01 and the others over the years that followed from the 9-11 cancer. Watch the documentaries. Force yourself to reawaken the horror. Talk to your family and friends about where you were when the towers fell. I'm afraid that if we don't make the effort now, it may be reduced to that footnote discussion around the dinner table or office water cooler for the generations to come. And that will be on us.

Claire's Cappello

September 8, 2021



Claire is waiting anxiously for her new hat. Of course, it is not just any old hat, she has hundreds. (And yet, if I turn my

back for one second, she'll nick my favorite writing hat right off my head - see above- and do not tell me it looks better on her). We recently learned from that brilliant author, Margaret Reyes Dempsey (*Mind Games*), that her equally talented brother, Carl Reyes, has expanded his creative entrepreneurial efforts and empire beyond his film and television work into a very cool clothing line: BADASS BRANDZ: <https://www.badassbrandz.com>. Check it out. We will save all further comment and description until Claire gets to don her new hat, which Carl assures us is on its way, but will tease that the face of the brand is Federico Castelluccio, a renowned painter whose works hang in galleries and museums throughout the world and is also famous for his portrayal as Furio Giunta, on *The Sopranos*.

Claire, I have been told, is a Sicilian Mule (isn't that right, Amy, Mike, Delaney and Charles), so her affinity to anything Soprano's related comes as no surprise to this lawyer/writer.

And she spends all of her time up along the front gate, watching tirelessly, like a Nantucket whaling widow, for the USPS/UPS/FedEx trucks to come down the driveway, bringing her the coveted hat. I'll have to intercept those delivery trucks at the far end of the driveway, or risk having their drivers hear Claire's sultry voice call out, "Hey asshole, over here!" (Don't blame Claire, I am a bad influence). Stay tuned.

Thrilled to learn that KMAG is going into production, so it won't be too long before it should appear online for presales.

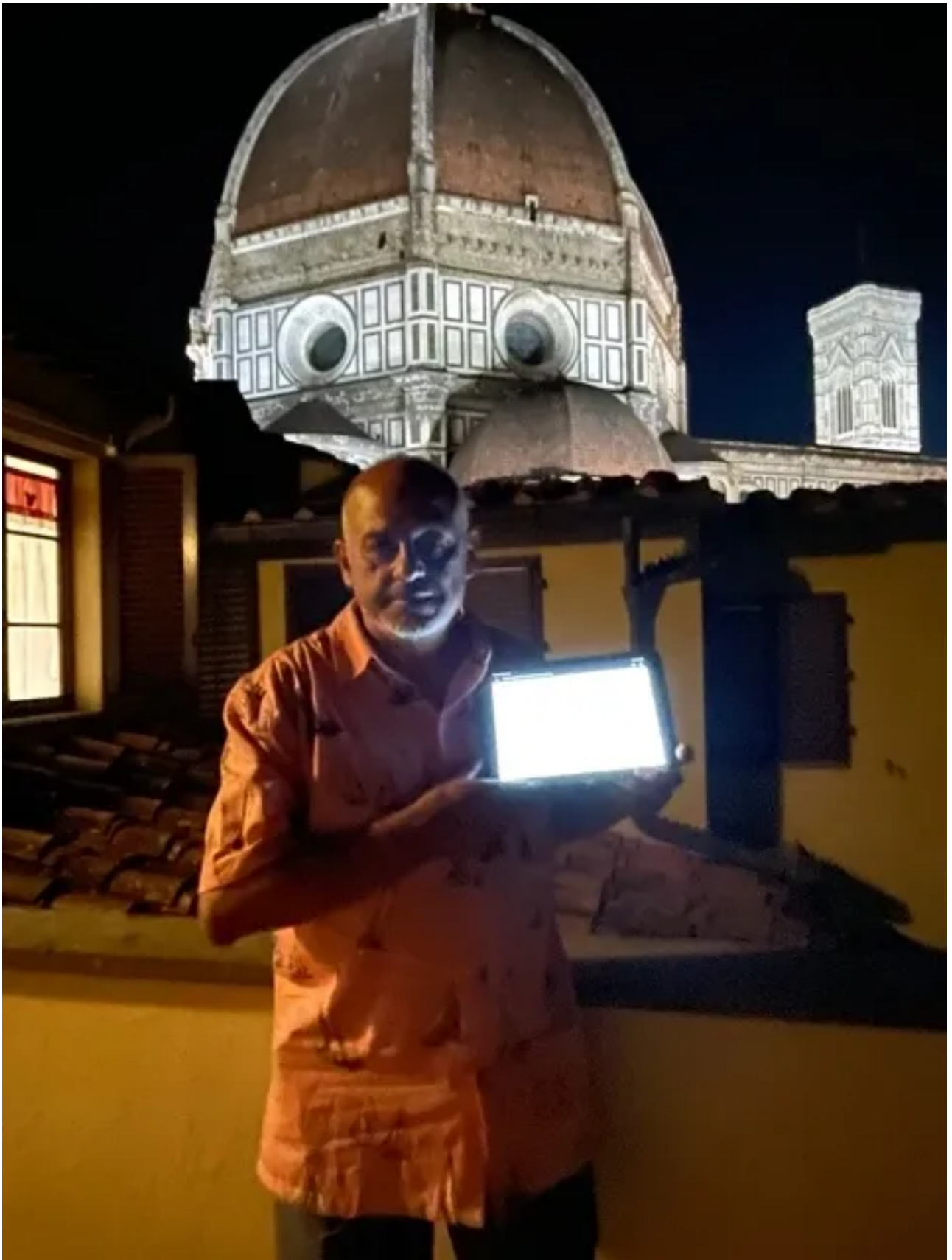
One more careful pass over the Publisher's Manuscript should do the trick. I was asked by the brilliant BRW Head of Marketing, Minna Rothe, to select a quote from the novel, so I asked Joe Serrano, who literally just finished reading it in Florence Italy (continuing this blog's Italian theme), to choose one. He picked a winner. It captures the essence of

The Claire Trilogy. Thank you Joe (and thank you Donna for letting him read it on your romantic vacation).

Anyway, I'm back manually pumping monkey juice into my new tree' root systems so I have to cut this short. And speaking of short, thank God this is a short work week. You all have a wonderful day!

Joe Reads KMAG In Italy!

September 7, 2021



Joe Serrano was kind enough to send me a photo of him holding an iPad in Florence Italy on which KMAG is opened.

This time we are able to see the novel on his iPad. Thank you Donna for snapping the photo. Joe, you look great. Thanks for sending. Love to Donna. Godere!

Italy is indeed a beautiful country. I highly recommend Diane Lane's film "Under The Tuscan Sun."

I'm looking forward to Joe's final critique. I'm not sure if he's met his namesake in the novel just yet.

Yesterday was indeed laborious. But the basement level is spic-and-span (except for my office, although its floors are spotless). My back is always a bit stiff after the event, given that I have to shift all of the living room area furniture and large throw rugs to get all of the floor with broom, vacuum and mop. But it's worth it. Also changed out the AC/Heating system filter and picked up some more monkey juice for the roots of my trees, which I will begin administering this morning.

Claire was a little put off that I did not show her the normal attention and respect she is accustomed to when she came, multiple times, knocking at the back door while I was cleaning, so she nibbled off a few of the lower branches of my faux pear trees in protest. Stardom is definitely getting to her head. I'm lucky she does not own a cell phone she can throw at me.

Well, I am morphing back into my lawyer mode for the shortened week so I need to take care of my morning rituals before hand (including soaking the tree roots).

Before I go, a quick shout out to one of my readers, Stu Buckmann, of Clay Center, Kansas. Thanks for the email Stu. Best to your wife!

The rest of you five readers have a wonderful and happy day.

Sleeping Dogs

September 6, 2021



I actually decided to SOMA most of yesterday, so I have lots of chores awaiting me this morning - Lisa is working.

Basement is due for a cleaning. Have I told you how much I really hate cleaning.

Yesterday morning, Lisa and I drove to a small town called Lyons. It's a funky, artsy kind of place, where hippies go to die, and hipsters go to study them. It has cool little shops along a couple of main streets and lots of outdoor cafe places to grab a bite. It's got a Cali - Venice Beach -- feel to it. I was surprised to see a lot of foreign tourists milling about. When you lived and worked in NYC your entire life, you know how to spot a tourist (and hippies and hipsters).

Lyons is along the western part of 66, and you must pass through it if you are heading towards Estes Park and the mountains. Lots of authentic motorcyclists passed through the town in high decibel clusters. If you ever happen upon it, stop for a while and enjoy it. There's an awesome park on its western edge you can even camp in. And the weather was beautiful yesterday.

Speaking of Colorado, I received a very cool review yesterday from a woman who concluded it as follows: "This book grabbed me with it's crazy plot twists, then topped it off by ending in the very part of Colorado I spent my formative years in. I played sports against the young women of Berthoud a gazillion years ago and actually grew up in Johnstown. (Yes, they are real towns and the indoor shooting range does actually exist, although it didn't when I lived there). Thanks for the trip down memory lane Mr. McCaffrey. Loved the book, getting ready to dive into the next adventure."

That means a lot to me, not just because I respect female athletes, but because when you are setting a story in a geographical location that is really not your home, you need to show that place and its inhabitants the respect they deserve. So even though life in NoCo was indeed like Life

on Mars -- completely foreign in so many ways -- to this lifelong New Yorker, it is a wonderful and magical place and its inhabitants are warm and welcoming. So you want to recreate it in your fiction in a way that they can be proud. Speaking of tourists and foreign places, Joe Serrano texted me from the Tuscany area of Italy, yesterday early afternoon, my time. He let me know that he is half way through KMAG and picked up two typos, which will be fixed during the publisher's manuscript phase. He also let me know that he is really enjoying the experience (He has read TWA and AAA, as well) and that The Claire Trilogy is the perfect vacation read. This comes from a guy who told me that TWA was the first novel he read in 20 years.

Speaking of firsts, that is the first time I am aware of where KMAG was being read by someone in Italy. A momentous occasion. The Claire Trilogy has gone international, can translated versions be far behind. . . . Grazie!

Speaking of Italian and Joe (and Donna), the OFC arbiter of proper Italian usage, Lenny, had me in tears (of laughter) yesterday when he pointed out in our OFC group text that the slang usage of my sincere wishes for enjoyment to J&D in yesterday's blog, "Godere," is "orgasms." I stand by both usages as wishes for the happy couple.

So as Lisa and I were sitting on the back deck yesterday afternoon, I was happy to see that both of our dogs, Jeter and Blue (yes, that one) took the time to enjoy their own feista along with us. I snapped the above shot to memorialize the moment. That scar on Blue's flank was given to her by Maeve (yes, that one, RIP) during a melee that occurred on the very first day Blue and I (and our other animals) arrived at our new home in Colorado. Maeve had moved here from the Bronx a few years earlier with Luke and Georgie. The event was a tornado, right out on the

back part of the property. Maeve threw Blue a McCaffrey welcome party, and once Blue accepted her position in the pecking order, they then became fast friends, and a permanent peace settled among the McCaffrey Animal Kingdom.

Anyway, there will be no peace if this guy doesn't get through his chores before his long suffering wife returns from laboring on Labor Day. So I better get to it. The rest of my five readers, put your feet up or go to a barbeque or do something else fun to celebrate the unofficial end of the summer. But whatever you do, have a great day.

Passing The Torch

September 5, 2021



Yesterday, while I spent the day toiling around the property doing my weekly shit-shovelling, trough cleaning, hay

unstacking/distribution, barn cleaning, and seeing to ensuring that Claire's and Honey's Winter hay order was in and their winter coats were dropped off for mending and cleaning at Hygiene Feed & Supply (mentioned in TWA, and a wonderful mom & pop establishment, I highly recommend if for anyone in NoCo with equine or other large animal needs), Lisa was playing Grandma and attending a busy day at the Butterfly Pavillion in Westminster with daughter-in-law Georgie, and granddaughters Scarlett, Savanna and Stella (all three are characters in The Claire trilogy - we do like our alliteration). I am absolutely certain that Lisa's job was far more exhausting than mine.

Afterwards, while Stella (still an infant - but a major player in KMAG) went home with mommy for nap, Lisa took Scarlett & Savanna to our house for additional hours of arts & crafts and endless games of hot & cold and hide and seek. I was an observer - I also helped the little darlings cheat. Finally, when their dinner hour arrived, Lisa took the two energizer bunnies home to their own warren which is just down the road a bit. Lisa likes to make them run any time she can and yesterday was no exception. Scarlett - way out front in the above photo holding a wand (we also share the magic) - is showing signs of being a serious competitive runner (we've raised a D1 level 4 sport female athlete), and maybe a witch, so who knows? Savanna is still finding her legs but is very game, as long as she can wear flamboyant costumes in the process - yesterday's Bee ensemble was one of Lisa's gifts from the BP's Gift Shop.

Whatever it takes to pass on our Clan's competitive nature, especially to its females. It's a tough world out there and we expect our girls to beat the boys.

Speaking of the World, received news from Italy that Joe & Donna have safely landed and are enjoying the sights, the food and Amore. Godere!

Speaking of the jet setters J&D, I am now convinced that BC is pulling a double bluff by disseminating stories of vacationing at MV with the Obamas and squatting at J&D's house this weekend to make me drop my guard. I've alerted my neighbors to be on the look out for a suspicious looking milk truck. Eileen, I hope you haven't taken the weekend off from your fiduciary position as leader the BC patrol. A far more important role than the Black Watch (and your life as a professional socialite).

Lenny has spent the past few days stepping in for Anthony Bourdain (RIP) in texting J&D valuable tips on enjoying the full cultural and gourmet experience in Italy. Given that Lenny is only a quarter Sicilian, I am very impressed. He's definitely World-Wise, which still won't help him when the bulls are chasing him next year in Pamplona!

Anyway, I need to get outside while it is still dark so I can water my plants and trees. Sometimes I like to dig holes on my property during the night just to amp up the surveillance.

It gives the neighbors (who are all wonderful) something interesting to ponder.

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

Reading

September 4, 2021



I mentioned recently how my grandfather, Tom "Poppa" Burke was a reader and how I inherited a large number of

his books through my mother. My mother gave them to me because she knows I like to read.

I came to my love of reading through comic strips and comic books (now considered graphic novels). They painlessly introduced me to the idea of a visual story and dialogue.

And they did it in tiny bites without me realizing it. That's a good thing, because, given, as Posie often put it, my "contrarian nature," if I realized I was doing something positive back then, I probably would have stopped. And, as it turns out, speaking of Posie, my father's family also played its role in my love for reading.

Now the good thing about reading comics back in the day as a kid in the Bronx, is that none of your peers would fault you if they caught you sitting on a stoop with one in your hands.

After all, most parents looked down on comic books as a waste of time and money, so to the kids, you could not be faulted for sticking it to the authority figures by doing something they scoffed at. Of course I wish I was intuitive enough back then to keep all of my comic books, including a couple of first in a series or character, in which case I would be a very wealthy man. But I digress.

I loved the super hero comics from both DC and Marvel. In my simple mind, DC (with the exception of Batman) were a collection of ready made superheroes that were born that way, often from another planet. Marvel were the once normal human mutants, they gave me hope that through the exposure to the right dose of electricity, chemicals and/or radiation, I too could be something special. Of course, if I could accumulate enough wealth, I felt I was athletic and smart enough to pull off a Batman as well. I always thought Batman was better suited for Marvel.

Then I graduated from the thin, one-off comicbooks to comic collections of the great artists like Charles Schultz. They

were larger accumulations of many comic strips gathered into thin book form. I was a big fan of the Peanuts characters, especially Snoopy, so whenever one of those collections became available, I picked it up and carried it around with me, usually twisted into my back pocket, to be retrieved during intervals when people like Joe Serrano weren't leading me into mischief. They were always good for a laugh. And my relationship with my older sister when were younger always reminded me of the Lucy/Linus dynamic.

Now, given my rebellious nature, I refused to read anything assigned in school unless under threat of punishment by my watchful and enduring parents.

Then one day I was shocked to see my grandfather, Spaghetti, sitting on the enclosed front porch of our home on Mosholu Avenue with a copy of John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony* in his hands. I had never even seen Spaghetti reading anything. Not a newspaper or even the directions on a box. But there he was, glasses on, his pipe full of glowing Prince Albert, lost in the novel before him. I spotted a tear make its way down the crevices of his cheek. When he looked up and caught me staring, all he said was, "this is a good book."

To frame it in my total immersion Catholicism at the time, it was as if Moses had appeared before me with his tablets and said "these are good rules."

As soon as he finished the book, I swiped it and snuck up into our attic - the only place in a multi family home where you could find privacy - and began to read it. It was visually undaunting, being about only 100 pages.

From what I can recall, the title was a bit misleading because the story involving the pony only takes up the first part of the book. But its essence is about a young boy's

love for the pony he receives as a gift. It is also tragic, (spoiler alert) as the pony falls ill and dies. There are some internal recriminations, as some of the blame can be laid at the feet of the young boy, but it's an event that changes the character from a child into a young man. I'm sure the life on a ranch setting reminded Spaghetti of his youth on the Irish family farm. Life was hard. Every day. And loss is inevitable. Still, I despaired over the death of the pony and didn't touch another Steinbach novel until I was in high school. And yes, like Spaghetti, I cried when the pony died.

It was traumatic for me, and I did not read Steinbech again until High School, when the tragic end of *Of Mice and Men* put me off him again until I was an adult, when *Travels with Charlie* redeemed him for me. I've read all of his more lauded works as well, but I really enjoyed *Cannery Row* and his *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*.

I refer to Spaghetti's Red Pony moment in TWA. Indeed, I literally just realized this as I'm writing that you can draw a parallel between the two stories of the forging of a human and equine enduring bond, and the evolutionary impact of the equine on the human. There's something for a future literature class.

I ultimately graduated from comics to real books. I read every Hardy Boy Book ever written. Then I swiped my sister's Nancy Drew Books and read them too (which explains my penchant for strong female characters). I wish I had kept them all, they must be worth something these days. But I liked how, like the comics before them, a series of books introduced you to a main set of characters which became familiar to you like family, and made it easier to move forward into the next book with those same characters. That probably explains why I so enjoyed Dan

Brown's Robert Langdon series and Nelson DeMille's John Cory series (if you haven't read them, you should). More recently, that explains why I like Christy Cooper-Burnett's Christine Stewart Time Travel Trilogy, I became fans of the core group of characters in the first novel, *No Way Home*, and wanted to see what they got up to in the next two books, *Finding Home* and *Escaping Home* (another strong recommend).

So anyway, if you see a kid reading a comic book, don't scoff or tell them it's a waste of time. For me, from those embers the great conflagration of my love of reading arose. For those wondering why I have the photo of my reading gnome above, it is the only one of my gnomes that does not man Gnome Island in front of my house. I found him in a NoCo curiosity shop. He sits there on the window sill of my office, reminding me that even magical creature love to read.

So at some point over this long weekend, pick up a book. And have a great day!

An Alien Appeal

September 3, 2021



\$6.46



A Comedian Walks Into A Funeral Home

★★★★★ 24

\$0.99

#20 unlimited



Briarwitch Academy: Complete Series Box Set

★★★★☆ 15

\$9.99



An Alien Appeal (The Claire Trilogy Book 2)

\$6.99



Nothing to See Here

★★★★☆ 5,739

\$10.99

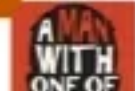


New Orleans Nocturnes Collection 1: A Frightfully Fun Paranormal Romantic Comedy Box Set

★★★★★ 24

\$7.99

#24 unlimited



A Man With One of Those Faces (The Dublin Trilogy Book 1)

★★★★★ 2,561

"Hi, my name is Tommy, and I'm a Amazon list addict! I've been free of the list devil for the past thirty minutes."

"Hi, Tommy! The coffee is in the back. Feed the kitty."

I know from watching TWA that these Amazon lists change every hour, but when I checked to see where AAA sat this morning, I was thrilled to learn that it was listed as #21 on the Dark Humor Comedy List, 17 spots behind TWA, which has settled in comfortably rotating through the top 5 spots.

And still months to go before it drops on December 23rd.

Amazon has become a monkey on my back that I cannot shake off. And you want to talk about the effects of

withdrawal, I recently went 3 days without seeing a new

TWA review (good or bad), and I was suffering the delirium

tremens. I had forgotten that sometimes there is a review

logjam that can take up to three days for a posted review to

show up on the web page. But when you're feeling the itch,

rationality goes out the window. Luckily the backlog filtered

through before things got ugly. I spent the time in

immersion text therapy with the members of the OFC.

That experience is comparable to a dose of the Monty

Python Abuse/Argument skit:

[https://www.bing.com/videos/search?
q=malaismonty+python+arguemtn+skit&&view=detail&mid=
E8481CE3EF46226DEE34E8481CE3EF46226DEE34&&F
ORM=VDRVRV](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=malaismonty+python+arguemtn+skit&&view=detail&mid=E8481CE3EF46226DEE34E8481CE3EF46226DEE34&&FORM=VDRVRV)

[https://www.bing.com/videos/search?
q=malaismonty+python+arguemtn+skit&&view=detail&mid=
94A54A6AF8996056CA4294A54A6AF8996056CA42&&FO
RM=VDRVRV](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=malaismonty+python+arguemtn+skit&&view=detail&mid=94A54A6AF8996056CA4294A54A6AF8996056CA42&&FORM=VDRVRV)

[https://www.bing.com/videos/search?
q=malaismonty+python+arguemtn+skit&docid=6080081333](https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=malaismonty+python+arguemtn+skit&docid=6080081333)

[30863198&mid=0ED30068C3D2D91489FB0ED30068C3D2D91489FB&view=detail&FORM=VIRE](https://www.italiancork.com/do-not-say-buona-fortuna-for-goodness-sake/)

Always does the trick. Note that we are now as old as these funny bastards, and still no where near as funny. But we try.

Speaking of the OFC, Joe and Donna are boarding their flight from Kennedy to Rome as we write this. The effects of Hurricane IDA made their overnight in Westchester NY more interesting than they probably wanted but here's hope they leave those problems on the Kennedy Tarmac and have nothing but smooth sailing for the next three weeks.

Luckily Lenny gave them the benefit of his wealth of "Life in Italy" experience, including the worst place for pick-pockets and a reminder to carry a swatch of *la carta igienica* when out and about. Speaking of the latter, I'm absolutely certain that BC will be *squatting* (in all senses of that word) in Joe & Donna's home during their absence (he swears he and his long suffering wife, Nan, are going to be vacationing off the Massachusetts' coast with the OBamas), which should keep the real burglars away.

I retract my recent *Buona Fortuna*, as I have learned that Italians hate this Americanized bastardization of the proper good luck ritual, which should be as follows:

"What we usually say to a person who is going to sit for a test or a job interview or is feeling unwell is '*In bocca al lupo*', which literally means 'In the wolf's mouth'. To complete the good luck ritual, the person, who has been told that, has to answer '*Crepi il lupo*' which means 'die the wolf'. The short version of the answer is 'Crepi', the lupo is implied."

<https://www.italiancork.com/do-not-say-buona-fortuna-for-goodness-sake/>

So, Joe & Donna, just as your flight readies for take off, "*In bocca al lupo!*" I sure hope one of today's readers responds "*Crepi!*" on their behalf.

Changing gears a bit:

I want to give a shout out to my dear friend Dianne Rosenfeld, who has recently lost her amazing fur baby Bella - loved that Dobbie, first one that didn't scare the crap out of me (and was very polite throughout my first reading of TWA). Dianne has since fallen a little under the weather.

Here's prayers for her quick and full recovery, followed immediately by my annoying visit.

Speaking of under the weather, my friend Colin Broderick's children have been suffering a rotating dose of ear infections, with the accompanying spiking fevers and general malaise, so prayers the antibiotics do their job and they all recover quickly. Thank God, children are a resilient bunch. But it is always a frightening time for the parents.

Get well quickly!

In bocca al lupo to both Dianne and Colin. Can I get a communal *Crepi!*

It is the Friday, before the 3 day Labor Day weekend, so anyone who does not have a great day has no one to blame but themselves. Sneak out of work early, I'll write you a note.

Just in case, have a great day!

Surprising Award

September 2, 2021



Heard from my dear friend, the award winning writer, Christy Cooper-Burnett, who informed me that TWA won a Silver

Medal in the Readers Favorite 2021 Award Contest. <https://readersfavorite.com/> There are a bunch of categories, and I came in second in the "Fiction-Action" category. I must start paying more attention to these things. Anyway, I'm thrilled to death. Reagan confirmed that he already has is uploaded into my metadata, whatever that means.

BTW, I've read the first couple fo chapters of CCB's newest book she is working on. A thriller. I am jealous as shit.

Must keep this very short today because I had to wait until 4 am before my internet came back up, so I couldn't enter this website to draft the blog. So, now I have to get the garbage and recycling out before my walk.

Have a great day!

Joe & Donna should be heading off to Italy sometime today.

Buona fortuna!

Claire Is A Star - Bon Voyage Joe & Donna

September 1, 2021



Yesterday I learned from the incomparable Reagan Rothe of Black Rose Writing that AAA is doing well in pre-sales and that I have risen to the rank of "Signature Author." That resulted in all three of my books appearing together on the moving banner on the BRW home page, with a separate, dedicated page acknowledging the event. I am honored and thrilled. Thank you Reagan! And thank you all five of

my readers, and all of your extended families, for your continued support.

Synchronicity is a thing, especially around Casa Claire. Magical things happen here all of the time. So, of course, just at the moment that I am opening up the BRW website to the separate page I mentioned, who appears at my office window but the star of The Claire Trilogy herself, no doubt in an attempt to work her Vulcan mind-meld on me for a renegotiation of her contract with an immediately payable bonus of a generous tithe of carrots at the back door. It was also her way of reminding me that I am nothing without her.

Point taken!

The moment had that movie feeling of when a bus in Manhattan with a large advertisement on its side pulls away from the busstop and reveals the actual film star or model that appeared in the ad standing at the curb. Voila! The face that launched a thousand ships.

Could a Big Foot sighting be far off? Must keep my iPhone ready.

Joe Serrano and his lovely wife Donna embark on their dream vacation to Italy tomorrow. I wish them nothing but good fortune (*buona fortuna*), great weather and lots of memorable moments. This old man (refuses to play knick knock paddywhack anywhere but) is terribly jealous. Send photos.

Cannot believe it is September. Why is it that the Summer months pass the quickest? Luckily, I love the fall.

Halloween is my favorite holiday (more on that as I get closer to 10/31/21).

Busy with legal deadlines that need my early attention so I'm going to cut this short.

Thanks again Reagan, Claire and my five readers. You all have a great day.

