



MI Sunrise Journal

a Literary Magazine

**CREATIVE WRITING
REGIONAL AUTHORS**

**PREMIERE EDITION
OCTOBER 2018**

First, welcome to this very first edition of the *MI Sunrise Journal*. We are grateful for the time you spend looking at the offerings which we hope to expand in the future. This literary journal is a non-profit endeavor intended for the sole purpose of creating an outlet for writers and soon-to-be writers in Northeast Michigan, the “East of Expected” side of the state.

Some full disclosure about myself as the key editor. I am not a journalist nor am I, to date, a writer of fiction. I am a librarian and I write some non-fiction in the course of my work. While traditionally Librarians have a habit of reading (and I am no exception), that was not the first motivation for this endeavor. Like most 21st century Americans I am a byproduct of a university experiment, yet with a couple of key differences. I was told I was being used in an experiment from day one and it had nothing to do with science. While many have been involved with medicine or engineering, in my native Iowa, a school instructor was working on an advanced degree in teaching creative writing. She was given three students from a middle school to test out her dissertation material. I was one of the three. Through the training I received, I was published in the journal *Lyrical Iowa*, as well, my only memory of learning the English language before the experiment was trying to stay between the lines, and a 4th grade teacher talking about gerunds. I was rather young.

What I do remember, was there was no such thing as “wrong”. There were no barriers in creativity and it was a safe place to make your writing public. Further, well before the phrase “fly over country” was coined, I read a book set in Iowa. The land and people that was just out my

window, portrayed in a realistic and accurate fashion so that any reader could have had the shared experience. It was a portrayal as detailed and complex as the reality I experienced. Later, I went on to read a book published ten years before I was born and knew, without Googling, that the author was from the same state as me. When an author is able to capture the sense of place and the character of people with such accuracy over such space and time, it is a marvel of writing.

The *MI Sunrise Journal* was founded to provide a welcoming platform for regional writers of all ages and writing styles. We cannot guarantee to print all submissions, but we can promise that all entries will be considered with a keen understanding that it takes great bravery for a writer to make their work public and open it up to criticism and that age and credentials will be secondary to writing and creativity with regard to publishing decisions.

Last, Northeast Michigan, from Bay City to Mackinaw City, east of I-75, has a different vibe even within Michigan. It is a region where fieldstone houses and cottage resorts still exist while chain restaurants have not yet taken over. At any given moment there is a good chance you will see a boat either coming or going to a body of water and it is highly likely that you are less than ten miles from a dairy farm or state forest, take your pick. Every region has its unique combination of identifiers and we would love for you to share your observations with us and the people who share the same experience.

Most sincerely,
Edwina Murphy

MI Sunrise Journal



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Interview with Regional
author, Pegg Thomas

Pegg Thomas is a published author who lives with her husband, Michael, in a farming community near the southern curve of Thunder Bay. Their hobby farm sports a flock of sheep, colorful chickens, several barn cats, and a well-behaved dog named Murphy.

She enjoys gardening, spinning her sheep's wool into yarn, and knitting, most notably lace. She is a proud owner of an antique walking wheel for spinning in addition to her traditional wheel.

She and her husband enjoy camping, fishing, and thoroughbred horse racing. They have self-identified themselves as boat-nerds.

Pegg is the author of *Embattled Hearts* (Pony Express Romance Collection); *In Sheep's Clothing*, (Bouquet of Brides Collection) and *Her Redcoat* (Backcountry Brides Collection). Look for Pegg's *Anna's Tower* in the Great Lakes Lighthouse Brides Collection out this November from Barbour Books. Find more on Pegg at www.Peggthomas.com.



Dodge Truck, 3rd street, Rogers City, MI

rise: How did writing start for you? I've heard authors say they cannot remember when they did not write. Was it like that for you?

g: Not true for me. I will be the exception to the rule. I started writing when the empty next hit. I had always wanted to write I always loved the idea of writing I had never tried it other than incredibly long letters to all my relatives back when it cost a lot of money to make a

long distance phone call. I wrote semi books then but they were actually letters. And then once we hit the empty nest then I needed something to do and I just dug down and thought what had I always wanted to do but never did and enjoyed it.

Sunrise: Did you have any formal training then?

Pegg: No, None. And if I would have known then, how much I didn't know I would have never started.



Michigan Central Railroad
Standish Depot

Sunrise: Can you give an example of one of those things you hit, things

that you did not know?

Pegg: I was always a good writer in high school I always got great grades in English and writing. I had several teachers comment on my writing over the years. But writing fiction is nothing like what you learned in high school. That does not prepare you for fiction writing because it does not tell you how to tell a story and the art of storytelling was huge. If I had not gone to a writer's conference within the first year I had decided to write, I would have quit. The writer's conference is where I learned how to write.

Sunrise: That is interesting. The buddy system really seems to help then.

Pegg: It does, and I had a leg up because my grandfather was a consummate storyteller. He knew how to tell a story. The man never graduated from high school but he was very learned, read the paper cover to cover every day, listened to the radio was up on everything. He was a self-educated man. Because he had such a huge base of knowledge, he could tell stories that were incredible and he just naturally knew how to pace them so that they were interesting, so that you hung on every word. Once I tapped into those memories along with what I was learning, and then things really came together for me.

Sunrise: You live on a small hobby farm in Northeast Michigan, a situation that some people could only dream of. You write for a living, to what do you give credit for being able to write full time for a living?

Pegg: A husband who works with a really good day job. [Laughter]. Seriously there is not a lot of money in writing. There just isn't. With the advent of self-publishing and ninety nine cent books we have devalued our commodity to the point where making a living by writing is pretty much impossible unless you are one of the half of dozen, I am talking fiction writers, non-fiction is a different thing, but for fiction writers there are maybe a dozen people who are really making a living without a spouse who is working and bringing in a steady salary.

Sunrise: I have heard non-fiction writers say that they earn more money writing articles as opposed to books as they money is greater for the time investment.

Pegg: That is because they have an area of expertise, but fiction is much more difficult.

Sunrise: Do you work with an agent? If so, how did you find a good match?

Pegg: I do work with an agent. Linda Glaz with Hartline Literary Agency is my agent. I was working to get engaged with a different agent when I talked to Linda at a writer's conference. The agent I was going back and forth with is with one of the largest agencies in the country, very prestigious, and I was shooting for the stars. We were going back and forth and we hadn't settled yet and she read my manuscript, she said she loved it, she loved my voice and whatever, she was hesitant, I could tell. When I met Linda at a writers conference she said, "Sure send me the manuscript". I did. I sent it to her on a Tuesday and on the Thursday she got back with me.



She said, "she read the whole thing, could not put it down, absolutely love what you have written and I would love to represent you." So I had choices. So I go with a bigger agency for the name for someone who is hesitant or do I sign with someone who loves my work. Well, I did not want someone hesitant representing me to publishers so I went with a smaller agency, still well known, but smaller and Linda and I have been together now for several years now and I find her invaluable.

Sunrise: What do you think working with a publisher brings to your writing and the overall effort?

Pegg: There is a larger sense of accountability. When you are self-published you are accountable only to yourself and you can pretty much do what you want to do which is good and bad. It allows you

to do things a publisher wouldn't pick up. But maybe the publisher would not pick it up because nobody is going to read it and you know publishers are wise they have doing this for a long time. They have a good handle on what sells and what doesn't sell. It also puts me in touch with a lot of professionals, not just the publisher; but there will be an editor that I will work with, there are proofreaders that will go through it, there is series of people that are going to see that material and read that before it ever gets printed. Not only do I feel that I have accountability to produce something that they will deem worthy of publishing but I also feel like they've got my back and any little typos or stupid little things I might have slipped in, someone is going to catch it before it goes out to the public and so it's good for both of us.

Sunrise: Maxwell Perkins, he was a well-known editor for Hemingway and Fitzgerald in addition to other Lost Generation writers and I think now I recognize his editing before I recognize the who he was editing for.

Pegg: Historically writers would send off what today we would consider a rough draft and the editor actually formed it into a story. That does not happen today because publishing houses do not have the money to hire editors to do that kind of work. So now, most writers have their manuscript edited at least once before they even send it to a publishing house. Professionally. I do, I send them to an editor before I even send them in to the publisher. This is because publishing houses, through all the changeover, got hit with really three things at once.

Appledore IV, Bay City MI



They were hit with technology. They were hit with self-publishing. And then they were hit with the fact that people just stopped reading. Their audience

shrunk to almost nothing almost overnight, historically speaking, overnight. They lost their audience so they had to cut down. There are very few publishing houses that keep anything like a full time editor; they are almost all contracted, third party contracts. It really changed things. Now when you submit your manuscript to a publisher it needs to be almost ready to publish or they will not pick it up.

Sunrise: Why do you think people have slowed down in reading?

Pegg: Too many other distractions. You know: TV, radio, cell phone, computer. There are too many other things vying for their time and reading is not the easy choice.

Sunrise: Do you think it is an age thing where the younger generations read smaller amounts?

Pegg: I actually do not think so. The young people I know, my nieces, nephews, my son, they actually buy books. They do not read on Kindle - they do not go that route. So I really do not think it is an age issue, maybe more of an education level issue. It amazes me that the young people I know, the 30-somethings, are still buying

books, still reading books and we see that in the industry. The sale of eBooks plummeted about last September. All the people ten years ago who said, "paper's dead, there will be no more paper books in five years" we are all looking back and thinking, "the sky is falling Chicken Little. Ha!" It did not happen. The same way escalators did not replace stairways, they both coexist and eBooks and paper books coexist. But it is a smaller market, definitely a smaller market.

Sunrise: You are a successful writer; can you take us through a typical day in the life of a working published author?

Pegg: You have to write every day. I have a word goal. Sometimes it flexes a little bit but somewhere between 1000 and 1500 words every day that I want to show up on my computer screen.

Sunrise: That is a fine days' worth of work.

Pegg: It is. That is several hours' worth of work. I am a morning person. I typically like to work in the morning. This time of the year, because of the farm and the garden I am typically outside in the morning when it is cool and I will be writing in the evenings. That is harder for me. I have a harder time hitting my word goals in the summer. Not because of summer and business but because it pushes me to write at night and I am a morning person so it is more of a fight. And in the winter time I can get up at 6:00 and be at my computer by 7:30 and write until I hit my word goal and I usually stop then even when I am on a roll, even if I feel that I could go on. I usually stop

then once I hit my word goal. I stop for the day and give myself a break because you can burn yourself out, you need to pace it.

Sunrise: How many books do you anticipate you write per year?

Pegg: What I have so far is what they call novellas. For people who are not familiar there is a short story, a novelette, a novella, and a novel. Mine are generally in the twenty to twenty-five thousand word range and it takes me six weeks. Six weeks to write it and then another month to make edits and fine tune it. Then it goes through my critique partners and they go through it and send it back to me all bleeding red and we go over it again. So for the novellas probably a good three months maybe even four depending on how it goes. A full length novel, which is what I am working on right now, my goal was to get it written in four months and I am not going to make the goal but in there my husband had to have surgery and there were some other things going (laughter) so I lost a few weeks in the middle of that but I am going to make it in about four and a half months and that will be about an eighty five thousand word novel. It's a lot of writing, a lot of editing. Before all that happens, because I write historical, I've got weeks of research before I even start writing. I have all my research and my saved web pages. I've got all that done before I even start writing and even so once I get going, there will be things I will need to look up.

Sunrise: Can you divulge where this book will be set in?

Pegg: It will be set in Michigan, southern Michigan,

Calcite front loader, Rogers City, MI



Jonesville which was a big sheep raising area back in the late 1800s and it involves a Civil War vet who is going back home and trying to pick back up his life.

Sunrise: Nice, I can see how that would be of interest to people.

Pegg: When my family moved back into Michigan from Canada, the side that were Tories during the Revolutionary War, they settled in Somerset Center which is near Jonesville and I picked Jonesville because of where the trains ran and what I wanted to happen in the story. But the fun part of this story for me is that my great great-great grandfather will have a cameo in the book. He served in the 7th Michigan Cavalry as did my hero in my story so that was fun for me to write in one of my ancestors.

Sunrise: It would be a hard thing to write a Civil War story without a railroad involved.

Pegg: [laughter] It would be.

Sunrise: In the past ten plus years, American readers have witnessed erotica becoming a more acceptable genre in the mainstream. In part with the publication of

Fifty Shades of Grey.

Pegg: I think most call it mommy porn.
[loud laughter]

Sunrise: I did not know that term. [more laughter]

Pegg: The term is “Mommy Porn” the term is out there.

Sunrise: You have maintained a foothold in Romance in your writing. How do you differentiate the two genres where you have material that previously would have been deemed unacceptable by some readers but Romance has almost always been accepted way back into the 1920s and teens and before that. What is the differential between the two?

Pegg: Competition with TV, people trying to compete with TV. Television is very visual. The biggest change that has happened in writing in the last one hundred years is pure narration which is what all classics are, where there is a narrator telling story to what we call a deep third person POV or point of view. Deep third person is where the character is telling the story. There is not a person looking down on the story telling people what happens which is what happens when in like Dickens and all the classics. There was a narrator outside the story telling you the story tell you what the characters were thinking, what the characters were feeling, what they were doing, it was all done in a narration form. With television and radio and other forms of entertainment coming in where everything is more personal, you are right there, you are seeing it. Writing has shifted to deep third point of view where the narrator is now the

point of view character. So if you have a Romance you have a hero or heroine and they are telling it from their point of view. It is a limiting point of view. You can't have anything in there from the heroine's point of view if you are writing from the hero's point of view. You can only write what he can see, smell, taste, touch, feel, just his perception but it makes it more like you are watching something on the a screen because you are just seeing it with his eyes. That puts the reader almost in front of the screen as it does in a TV. That has probably been the biggest change, to make that happen.

Bringing that back into Romance, people have just taken Romance one step further going towards the erotica, towards the pornography and I am fine with using the term pornography it's an accurate description of what we are seeing coming out and it is for people who want that type of experience when they read but that is not everybody.

I write inspirational fiction. My goal was to always write historical. I love history and my goal was to write Historical but I have not been able to sell Historical so I switched to Historical Romance and boom, boom, boom in a year and a half I sold four contracts. Romance sells. I have to struggle a little to write Romance, it is not necessarily what I want to write. But I have great critique partners who help me get it right, so that it is interesting enough, to help me carry the romantic thread because I could get lost in the history and be happy as a lark and not worry about the rest. [laughter].

Writing inspirational for me is like for, anyone can pick up this book. When I was a child, from twelve on, I was an avid reader. My grandmother was an avid reader and we

would share books. I want to write the kind of stories that any grandmother can share with her granddaughter and they can enjoy them together and not have to worry about having to explain things that they do not want to have to explain.



Sunrise: Or have an uncomfortable shared experience?

Pegg: And there is a big difference between romance and sex and when you get into the erotica you are getting into the sex part of it and that is not romance. If you think specifically what the words mean romance is the emotion, the feeling coming into a relationship. Sex is the rest of the part of it and we want the Romance to come through. We do not

need all the sex part. Frankly we know what goes on next but the romance, how did those two people come together, what brings them together, what forces them apart, what brings them back together, what are they overcoming to become a couple and that is what people are fascinated with. The sex part of it, some people really like, some people don't. It's not really where I am writing for. I am writing for that book, that grandmother can share with her granddaughter and talk about it later they can do this together.

Sunrise: I think the biggest compliment I have ever

heard about a Romance series, pertaining to the *Outlander* books, was that the author wrote about not just how a couple gets together but how a couple stays together. I think that is what I am hearing from you, too is that the bonding and the positive forces that bring people together are what is important.

Pegg: Yes. Having sex is easy. That just takes am a male and a female and there you go. Making it last, making it stick, making a lasting relationship, that is a whole other thing.

Sunrise: You also have Christian themes in your writing. Can you tell us a bit about how you came to work in that genre?

Pegg: Well I am a Christian, so it is a viewpoint I know. It is something that because I write historical I know. A lot of people make the mistake in writing that they think terms of today when they write about history. Historically the church was the center of a settlement. The church was the center of the town the church was center even if it was not a town, even just a gathering of huts somewhere, and the church is what brought people together. If you go back in history there were towns where it was mandatory, you had to be a member of the church, Puritans, Quakers. There were lots of places like that. Church was central to their life, so if I am going to write that time frame and I were to leave that out I would be so inauthentic it would be funny. It's just how they lived back then. I think it is a little more difficult to write from a Christian perspective for contemporary fiction. Contemporary is a whole other kettle of fish but historically what I write is true. What I write is how people live, what they would have thought, how things

govern their lives. We cannot just look back and change people's lives even though people might like to. That is who we were. I write a lot of Colonial history, Colonial through Civil War. Colonial is what I write most of the time and that is definitely a religious hotbed. To ignore that is to ignore who we were.

Sunrise: I trust that Christians are attracted to your writing that you have a good readership amongst Christians.

Pegg: I hope so. [laughter]

I do not necessarily bill my writing as Christian fiction, more Inspirational fiction. Some of my characters in a story are Christian, some are not. Some of mine are rebels and are running from what they perceive to be problems with the church, like my work in progress. My hero thinks there are problems and he is running away from them. It's not like I am trying to compact the Bible into the pages of my story. I am writing about people in an era where religion was a huge part of their life and they either agreed with it or disagreed with it but they are just living their lives as they would have lived them.

Sunrise: One of the biggest challenges I have had it helping young people to write history when they are writing about their own family's denomination and trying to be balanced on that. There is a real struggle for them at times. You always want to be respectful but work towards accuracy.

Pegg: Oh yeah, I was afraid that I crossed the line with *Her Red Coat*. It was set at Fort Michilimackinac during Pontiac's Rebellion; the only religion up here was the



indigenous peoples and the Jesuits who of course were French Catholics. At the very end when I bring in the Jesuit Priest I was afraid I might have offended some of the Catholics. I am not going to give away the ending but I have not. I have not received one negative comment. I think it was understood that this was the religion of the era and area and what happened there was plausible and could have happened

there but I did worry about that one. Modern day Catholics, without knowing the history, might have said, "wait, no that could have never happened." But I think it was very plausible for the time and the place that it happened.

Sunrise: Have you ever been tempted to use French words in your writing?

Pegg: Oh I do. Matter of fact there is a lady here in Alpena who is mentioned in the dedication in that story because she helped me with the French because she is from France, born and raised. She helped me with that.

Sunrise: When I think of that time period I think of pays d'en haut, what they used to call New France including Michigan so I imagine it would have been really hard not to use French.

Sunrise: We are sitting near the shores of Lake Huron surrounded by trees in one of the most sparsely populated regions of Michigan. What do you think your neighbors enjoy reading?

Pegg: Most of my neighbors are Amish, (laughter). I should not say most, probably half right here around me and they read my stories, they do.

Sunrise: Do you think they like mysteries too?

Pegg: I don't know. That would be interesting to know. I have quite a library downstairs and the younger gals especially, teenagers, they will now and then come and borrow books. Because I stock books that are inspirational fiction, their parents do not have a problem with that. They know I am not going to give them a book that will have anything that they would object to, that will be outside of their boundaries.

Sunrise: It's a safe place.

Pegg: It's a safe place to come.

Sunrise: What do you enjoy reading for fun? Who are your favorite authors?

Pegg: Historical of course, I am a history geek. Gosh my current favorites are probably Laura Frantz and Jocelyn Green, the both write Inspirational Historical and Inspirational Historical Romance. Jane Kirkpatrick does a fantastic job with great historical. She usually writes

about real life people. They are fictionalized stories but the facts are so good that she puts in there. She just did one a few years ago that I missed when it first came out and I just read it, about Dorothea Dix, who started the nursing corps. That is what I thought it would be about but it wasn't, it was about her early life, things I never knew. I was fascinated by that. I also love to read the Classics. I usually read a couple of the Classics every year. This past year I reread *Silas Marner* and *Little Women*. Even though it is completely outside your genre, it does not hurt to read Classics because they are Classics for a reason and it is just good to get back into that. Then I read books on the craft, how to be a better writer. (Laughter) You can never read too many of those.

Sunrise: Do you think a sense of place is important when you write to help the reader put themselves in that location?



Pegg: Depending on the genre, yeah.

Sunrise: Writers are artists and there are a lot of good writers out there looking to be published. Even if they never get to leave their day jobs, they want to achieve a level of acknowledgement or at least get their writing out there. What advice would you give them?

Pegg: Go to a writer's conference. Absolutely. If it had not been for a writer's conference it would not have happened.

Sunrise: to know the ropes and hurdles?

Pegg: Right. You have to meet with people who know what they are talking about and you have got to be willing to listen to what they say. Put aside your preconceived notions. Be realistic. The best one I have been to is right here in Michigan. It is called Maranatha Christian Writers Conference. It is open to anybody, you do not have to write Christian fiction to go there. The Grand Rapids area is the hotbed of Christian publishing. Baker Publishing is there, Kregel's is there, some of the biggest publishers that publish Christian material and those people show up for the conference. They do a great job of balancing the speakers with not just authors but people in the industry, people who sit on publishing boards, people who are editors, people who are publishers so you can ask questions. The attendance is usually low enough, around 150, and when you have a group that small with numerous breakout sessions you have a real chance with one on one talks with people who are in the industry and can answer your questions. The

first year I attended, I was greener than grass; I was too stupid to know what questions to ask.



Sunrise: To remind everyone one, you were not 20 when you first attended, you started a little later.

Pegg: No, I was in my late forties.

Sunrise: It goes to show you can start writing at any time.

Pegg: That's right. Going to the conference is definitely the best bet. It's expensive to attend a conference

because they are bringing in all these professionals, but it is money well spent. I do not know how people do it without going and learning and meeting others in the industry, hearing first-hand what you need to know. And you are going to need to go two or three times as the first time you will not even know what to ask. Then you go home with the information you learn and then you work with that a year and then you go back the next year and you've got questions. By the third time you go back you should have some work you can show people and start to get feedback on your own work. It takes about three years. In my experience the time between when

people say they are going to really get serious about their writing and the time they get published is generally seven to ten years. It is not an overnight thing. I had people say to me because I signed four contracts right in a row, "you know you are like an overnight success." And yeah it took me seven years to become an overnight success.



Thugo 5-2-6

Ernie Hinderliter, Lupton, MI
Member of the Mid-Michigan Writers

"Hello, City Times."

"Can I speak to the sports editor?"

"Transferring..."

"Jim Wilson," a gruff voice replied.

"I... I'm calling to complain."

"About what?"

"You cheat all the small high schools in the thumb; fewer pictures and shorter stories than City High," I shouted with my voice cracking and hand shaking.

"Who is this?" Wilson asked.

"Ah... Dr. John Smith," I tried to say with authority and looking at my buddies for support.

"Well, Dr. Smith we have limited column space."

"Small high schools like Grove never get fair coverage compared to City High."

"Well kid, Grove High plays City tomorrow so there's your big chance. We'll have a reporter there, you little punk."

"You're a jerk," I said shaking and slamming the phone down.

"Hey, we made our point. Let's go to practice," said Tommy slapping me on the back.

Practice went well and we felt ready to play City. We had a very good team. A few of the guys were outstanding

athletes and would play in college. For most of us, this would be our last hurrah in organized baseball and our very last game unless we kept winning. At a couple of positions, we were downright vulnerable.

“Hey, don’t leave yet fellas, I’ve got a surprise for you.”

As my dad, our coach opened the back of our vintage station wagon a cardboard box rested on our spare bats. As everyone moved in closer he pulled out a pocket knife and slit open the box. WOW! Fifteen white caps with green bills and a giant G adorned the caps. These weren’t cheap printed ones, these were the real thing, made of wool and embroidered.

“We’re going to look good tomorrow,” someone said adjusting the cap on his head. That night, I turned my pillow several times to the cool side but it never lasted long enough for me to fall asleep. An hour later and after an exhausting wrestling match with the sheets I finally fell into a deep sleep.

Michigan, like most states, had high school baseball divided into leagues by enrollment. Therefore, small schools like Grove never played the larger city schools. However, this year because of scheduling problems, Grove was selected to play City High. City was the largest school district in northeastern Michigan and played their home games in Veteran’s Park. Vet Park housed the most magnificent baseball field in the state. With a view of the river and seating for thousands, we were in awe when we walked through the massive green doors. The red clay infield and perfectly-chalked white lines were a stunning sight compared to the ballparks we were used to playing in. The sage green outfield fence was easy on the eyes and had popular commercial advertising on every panel.

OMG! Sweat was running down my face. I needed water. A white-hot noon sun baked the infield creating mirage-like heat waves rising from the infield clay. We took our practice positions as Jay, our lone ace pitcher warmed up. Missing easy ground balls and throwing wildly, Coach sensed our nervousness and called us into the dugout.

As we jogged off the field a door opened behind home plate and out came an army of the biggest high school kids I had ever seen. There must have been twenty of them dressed in tailored pinstripe uniforms. Even their coaches wore uniforms. They took the field like a precision drill team carrying out orders. At six foot two and 190 pounds, I was the second biggest kid on our team. Looking out I saw at least six players bigger than me.

"Fellas, listen to me. Is this home plate the same size and shape as the one at our place?" Coach asked as we all nodded. "Anyone know where Caroline, Puerto Rico or Silsbee, Texas are?" Most of us raised our heads and wondered what this quiz had to do with today's game. "They're the hometowns of last year's Major League Baseball MVPs. Boys, you have every right to be here and I wouldn't trade any of you for any two of them. We're playing for each other and all the small high schools in the state. Let's go play Grove baseball," Coach said with authority and confidence.

The game started and we settled down. Jay was throwing unhittable heat and wicked curve balls. City used two pitchers that were just as good. The game was scoreless until the last inning. I got nicked by a pitch and as I stood on first base Tom Hugo, aka Thugo, stepped on my foot and barked in my ear, "4-6-3 double play."

In baseball, every position has a number. The pitcher, Jay is 1, me, the catcher 2, first baseman 3, second 4, third 5, shortstop 6 and the outfielders from left to right 7, 8 and 9. In the official scorebook, a 4-6-3 means the ball is hit to the second baseman 4, thrown to the shortstop 6 at second for the out, and then thrown to the first baseman 3, for the second out resulting in a 4-6-3 double play. Somehow Thugo thought he could make this happen. But I didn't.

Tommy smashed the next pitch to left field. It bounced past City's outfielder and I scored. Our next three batters struck out. But we were winning 1-0 and only three outs away from the greatest victory of our lives.

Unfortunately, Jay's face told a different story. When he removed his cap to wipe his brow his red, sunburned face looked like a magazine ad for sunblock. When he touched his forehead it turned white then back to red. Rivulets of sweat ran through the layers of red dust covering his arms and neck. White rings formed around his bloodshot eyes. The first two batters hit the ball hard and were on base. Jay walked the next batter throwing three balls in the dirt and a wild pitch over my head. He was out of gas.

With the bases loaded and no outs, it was up to Thugo. He was the best hitter in the county. He had hammered the ball every time, but a leaping grab by Tommy and a long running catch by our center fielder kept him off the bases. He was a huge kid probably 6' 4", 230 pounds. He tapped his black cleats with his bat and rubbed the toes of his shoes on the back of his leggings till they shined. As he stared at Jay I picked up a handful of the red dust and tossed it on his shoes.

He looked down at them and then at me with disdain and whispered "farm boy." City players called every other athlete in the county by this derogatory name.

I just smiled and said, "You're welcome, T. Hugo, or is it Thugo."

"Time out!" shouted Coach as he marched to the mound. We gathered around Jay, and although we saw his exhaustion we all felt it would be unbearable to pull him. He was the soul of our team and had the heart of a lion.

Coach reached for the ball in Jay's hand and suddenly Tommy moved in and grabbed it. "We got this!" Coach hesitated and just stared at Tommy. "Coach, Jay brought us to this dance and that's who we wanna go home with."

Coach gulped for air then leaned into our huddle and said in a broken voice, "Okay, no matter what... I'm proud of you guys."

The crowd was shocked when Tommy handed Jay the ball. Thugo moved to the front of the batter's box. He was determined to hit Jay's curve ball before it had a chance to bend. This was it. If he pulled it to left field, our weakest link, two runs would score easily.

The crack of the bat hitting the ball sounded like summer thunder. I could smell burning horsehide. Halfway to third the ball suddenly dove to the ground a foot in front of third base and just inches inside the foul line. I imagined the radio announcer's voice in my head...It's a screamer down the left field line all the way to the fence...two runs will score and that's the ball game. City wins it 2 to 1.

All three runners took off and Thugo's twin brother, Dave, barreled down the line towards me, his giant body

blocking my view. Joe, our third baseman crouched close to the line but the ball was hit with such ferocity he could only take one step. He lunged to his right and speared hopelessly at the ball. His momentum took him into foul territory behind the runner.



I couldn't see the ball. Dave had run halfway home when Joe reappeared behind him with the ball in his bare hand.

"Throw it!" I begged as he took a couple of steps towards me and stepped on third base. Standing on home plate I expected a force-out with no tag necessary. But, after Joe stepped on third base for out number one I needed to stop Dave and tag him out before he reached the plate.

I moved up the line two feet, silently praying the ball got to me before the runner. It seemed to take forever to leave Joe's hand and I expected to be mowed over by the runner. He had a significant lead but Joe's cannon-like arm

made it an even race. His perfect throw sounded like a kid's cork gun and produced a puff of dust around my well-worn catcher's mitt.

Stepping forward I crashed into the runner, my hand was buried in my mitt with the ball tucked inside. He was starting his slide and I was bearing down on him.

The umpire's face was focused on the tag. When I held up my mitt and showed him the ball, he shouted, "You're out!"

Before I could celebrate, Tommy was screaming my name. Looking up I saw the runner slide to a stop in the loose dirt between second and third base, nervously obeying his coach's ear-piercing command, "Get back, get back!" He and Tommy were racing back to second. I cocked my arm and threw to Tommy, who was in a dead heat with the runner. Although a long shot, Tommy made the impossible plays possible.

"Get down!" I yelled as Jay collapsed onto the dusty mound and my throw just missed his head. I led Tommy too far, but he somehow got to the ball and tagged the runner. Losing his balance, Tommy tripped and rolled to the feet of the umpire. The ump stared motionless as Tommy opened his glove. Inside, lay a handful of red dust, and a dirty scuffed baseball.

The ump, as if throwing a lightning bolt, thrust his arm forward then drew it back roaring "You're oooouttt!" It was over in a blink... we beat City.

Later, a guy with an unlit cigar poked his head in our dugout and asked for Dr. Smith. Someone blurted out, "Not here!"

"Tell him he missed a helluva game."

Sunday's City Times ran the story on the front page above the fold, GROVE BEATS CITY 1-0 accompanied by pictures of Coach, Jay, our celebration and not one City player.

A few years later I saw Thugo at the local mall. As we passed he taunted "farm boy."

I turned and nodded, "Thugo, 5-2-6."

He hesitated, grinned and said, "touché."

After 130 years and over 200,000 professional baseball games there have been only 810 triple plays -- not one of them a 5-2-6.





Sacred Rock, Ocqueoc Michigan

Toussaint Renard

A clever fox lived in Ocqueoc
Fur like the autumnal equinox
He was very shy
Hunters he did try
Steal traps and bullets he did flummox



Elinor Finch
Rogers City, MI

Under a Dark Sky: A Novel (HarperCollins Publishers)
August 2018

by Lori Rader-Day

This is a novel set in the location of a fictionalized Headlands International Dark Sky Park just to the west of McGulpin Point Lighthouse. A young widow is struggling to regain normalcy after the tragic death of her husband. She has been reduced to living in bright light regardless of the time of day so when she finds that her husband had scheduled time for them in a Michigan dark sky park lodge she feels it might help to keep the reservations and go alone to the park. She arrives at the lodge to be immediately told that no one party has exclusive use of the lodge and that she will be sharing it with a party of young twenty something professionals also from the Chicago area who all went to college together. Before the first dawn - and full light- there is a murder and everyone is a suspect.

Using a dark sky park as a setting for a murder is both timely and trendy as they have boomed in popularity. As the story progressed, naturally the murder is revealed along with some of the darker secrets of the travelers. The reader is slowly fed details about the character and death of the hero husband a veteran of the wars in the Middle East. Also timely is the acknowledgement that he, regardless of his near rock-star status, suffered from PTSD. It was refreshing to read a murder mystery placed in such a unique setting.

Michigan readers may find some elements of the book overly familiar enough to be uncomfortable. The locals are imaged as being a bit slow, just not the sharp vivacious portrayal as the Chicagoans. The female sheriff is portrayed as a large, slightly mannish dog lover and the bigotry demonstrated towards her as a member of the force is at the very least implied if not overt. Rader-Day does a solid job at depicting the natural beauty of the Straits,

but paints a picture of seedy hotels and bars when the good hotels are too full of fudgies to house the murder suspects. Likely these are elements that readers outside of the region would not think twice about while enjoying a who done it.

Editor's Fresh List Picks

Fiction

The Novel Art of Murder: a Mystery Bookshop Mystery. Burns, V.M., Kensington Books

Young Readers

Thisby Thestoop and the Black Mountain, Gorman, Zac

Children's

Ocean Meets Sky, Fan, Eric & Terry. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers

Pippa & Percival Pancake & Poppy: Four Peppy Puppies. Diesen, Deborah. Sleeping Bear Press

Non-fiction

Whaleback Ships and the American Steel Barge Company, Pellett, C. Roger

Credits and Sponsors

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Next Steps:

The next edition is scheduled for May of 2019. Updates and information may be found on our website at:

www.misunrisejournal.org. You may reach us at misunrisejournal@gmail.com. Please feel free to email with cover art suggestions for the spring edition.