

The Fossil

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Wilson Shepherd in World War II

by John Shepherd

IN THE April 2019 issue of THE FOSSIL, I wrote an article about my dad, Wilson Hassell Shepherd. The article briefly covered Wilson's career in the amateur science fiction publishing field. It also explored his early years growing up in rural Alabama, his early attempts at printing and publishing various newsletters and magazines, and his correspondence with H. P. Lovecraft. We learned he was a founding member of the American Amateur Press Association in 1936. This article generated some interest, and I decided to write a more detailed account of his short publishing career.

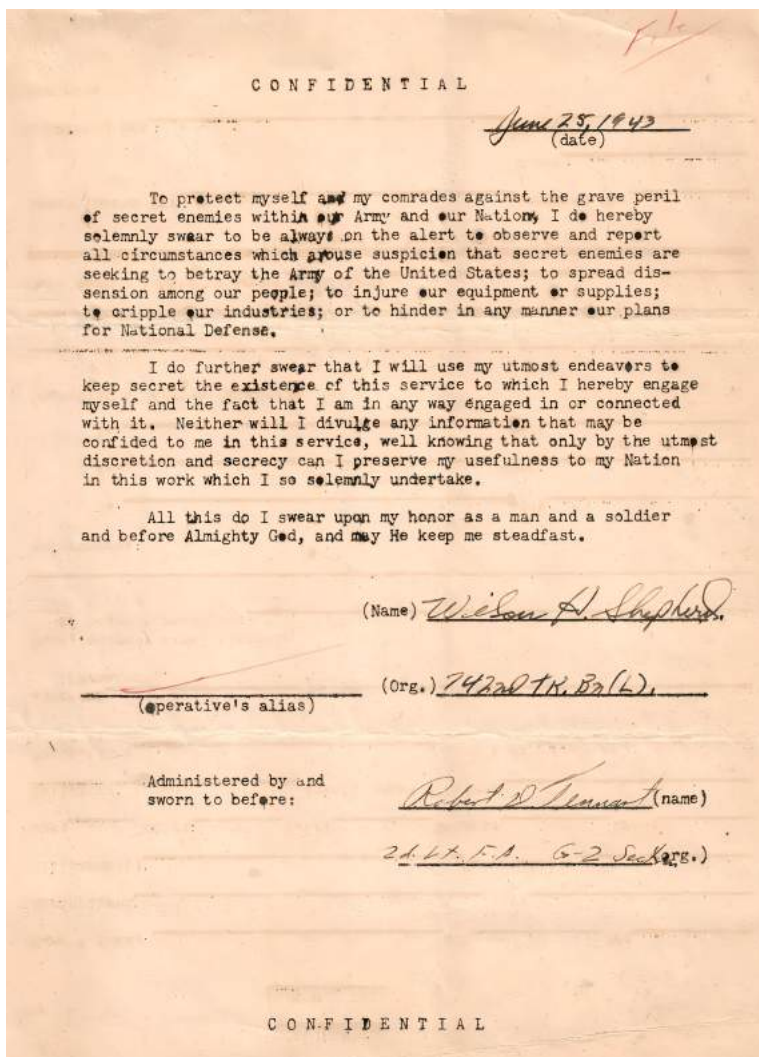
In the fall of 2022, I began to research and prepare an outline for a book about my dad's early attempts at publishing science fiction/weird fiction magazines. I narrowed the content to the years 1932 to 1938, which were his most productive. The book is entitled *H. P. Lovecraft, a Fine Friend: Wilson Shepherd Remembered, 1932-1938*. As of this writing (May 2024), the book is at the publisher in queue for the final polish and hopefully ready for printing this summer. The entire self-publishing experience has been quite educational and frustrating at times. I chose a hybrid publisher since I knew nothing about the publishing

world. So far, that decision seems to have been a good one. Still, that's a story for another day.

Today, however, I am sharing an interesting story about Wilson's World War Two experience that I ran across doing research for the book. Like most of his generation, Wilson would be affected by world events. By the late 1930s the U. S. was already the arsenal of democracy and would soon be drawn into a conflict not of its choosing.

At the time of the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941, Wilson had just married my mom, Katherine, that November and was working at the E. I. du Pont Powder Plant in Childersburg, Alabama. He was drafted into the Army at the age of 25 on March 9, 1942, and assigned to Camp Polk, Louisiana, for basic training with the Third Armored Division. On October 3, 1942, Wilson was hospitalized for cel-

lulitis thrombosis for several weeks. He would go on to have several more hospitalizations over the next few years. These medical episodes placed Wilson's duty status as "limited service," which meant he could not serve overseas. So, Wilson would remain in the United States until his discharge in 1946.



A signed oath to hold secrets close.

In February 1943, Wilson was sent to Camp Coxcomb, California. From there, in December 1943 he was transferred to Communication Headquarters in San Bernardino where he would come to work for the military intelligence division. I know this because we have records showing a form entitled "Military Intelligence Division: Loyalty Check Sheet" which he signed on June 25, 1943. One of the questions on this form asks what organizations that you are a member of, and Wilson listed "American Press Association." Another form that he signed the same day was titled "Confidential Personal Data." I include a copy of this last form below, but a telling sentence holds the signer to the following commitment, "All this I swear upon my honor as a man and a soldier and before Almighty God, and may He keep me steadfast." Woe be unto the soldier who could not keep secrets.

Wilson was now connected to the military intelligence division. What all they got up to, I have no idea. However, there is one well documented incident that occurred on January 4, 1944, in downtown San Bernardino. From an article printed in *The San Bernardino Sun* on January 5, 1944, we learn the following:

Two American soldiers wearing uniforms of the German army—swastikas and all—as an Army-approved stunt, were theoretically "captured" by an alert woman after they had walked the streets of downtown



Written on the back of this original picture, Wilson states. "That's Baker, one of the CIC men between the Sargent and Bonwitt in civilian clothes!"

San Bernardino less than five minutes at noon yesterday.

The soldiers, one of whom is a native of Germany and who speaks the language of that country fluently, were "captured" in the Harris Co. department store.

Mrs. Mercedes Clark, an employee of Draft Board 152 and the mother of two boys in the service, is credited with first stopping the soldiers, who then were quickly surrounded by nearly a score of other women.

Mrs. Clark grabbed the belt of one of the soldiers and demanded to know who they were. Soon she was joined by a crowd of other women also demanding answers. The soldiers mumbled an answer and walked away. By this time, people had called the police, and a real Army Military Policeman called for assistance and then questioned the two Germans.

As it turned out, the Nazis were being covered at all times by military intelligence members in plain clothes. The *Sun* must have been in on the ruse as well since a photographer from the paper was there to record it all. The two soldiers were U. S. Army Sergeant Bernhard Bonwitt and Corporal W. H. Shepherd, both attached to the San Bernardino headquarters of the communication zone of the California-Arizona maneuver area. Their commanding officer was Colonel James B. Edmunds who instigated this unusual action.

In doing a Google search about other instances involving uniformed enemies in public places, I could not find any other accounts. In the original story in the *Sun*, someone mentions that a similar incident took place in the Philadelphia shipyards. Other than that, I could not find any other similar stunt. As to why the local military intelligence unit saw this as a worthwhile endeavor, we can only speculate. It is a wonder that no one got hurt. In today's world, would someone take a



Photo used by San Bernardino Sun with caption, "Mrs. Mercedes Clark, employe of Draft Board 152 and the mother of two sons serving with the armed forces, is shown with two American soldiers dressed in German field uniforms taken from Nazi prisoners, Sgt. Bernard Bonwitt, left, and Cpl. W. H. Shepherd, whom she stopped in Harros' store yesterday as they wandered through the downtown district as an Army-approved stunt to test the city's alertness. Mrs. Clark, grabbing one by the belt, demanded they identify themselves. A score of other women in the store immediately joined her."



Typed on the back of this picture: "At Photo Lab in back of Hq at San Berdo, Tuesday, Jan 4-44. A couple of high-class Nazis look over the situation prior to taking over!" All said in jest, no doubt.

pot shot at the Germans? Many of the local men were no doubt away serving in the war effort, but the ladies seemed to have put the Nazi's in their place.

The Counterintelligence Corps was founded in 1942 and had its origins with the Corps of Intelligence Police created during World War I. The Corps would have an original complement of 543 officers and 4,431 non-commissioned agents. The CIC carried out background checks on military personnel, investigated possible sabotage, and looked into allegations of disloyalty. They often used informants within the Army. Agents mostly dressed as civilians and would identify themselves only as "Agent" or "Special Agent" to facilitate their work. Agents also carried an impressive looking Military Intelligence Badge. (Information gleaned from Wikipedia.)



Wilson in Army uniform from 1943. Home on leave, visiting his brother Loris, father Cam, and mother Bama.



Wilson with mom shortly before their marriage in 1941.

As far as Wilson's involvement with the CIC, we know of this Nazi caper but nothing else. Could Wilson have been assigned to the CIC to work on various projects? This is quite possible since Wilson had the highest Top-Secret clearance. However, it is mere speculation as I do not know. Like most people of his generation, he rarely talked about his past, and we didn't know enough to ask.

The remainder of Wilson's military service went without incident according to my records. On September 23, 1944, T/4 Shepherd was assigned as Chief Clerk, Discharge Section at Camp Beale, California. Wilson would be honorably discharged as a Technical Sergeant on January 4, 1946. ♦

4

Nº 437604 EV

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION

WAR RATION BOOK FOUR

Issued to Katherine C. Shepherd
(Print first, middle, and last names)

Complete address Oakman, Ala

READ BEFORE SIGNING

In accepting this book, I recognize that it remains the property of the United States Government. I will use it only in the manner and for the purposes authorized by the Office of Price Administration.

Void if Altered Katherine C. Shepherd
(Signature)

It is a criminal offense to violate rationing regulations.

OPA Form R-145 16-2507

Katherine's War Ration Book. She would travel to visit Wilson several times during the war.

A Fossil's Fine Memoir

by Ken Faig, Jr.

John Camack Shepherd, *H. P. Lovecraft, A Fine Friend: Wilson Shepherd Remembered, 1932-1938*, Bloomington, Indiana: Archway Publishing, 2024.

FOSSIL John Camack Shepherd has written a fine memoir of his father Wilson H. Shepherd's involvement with science fiction fandom and amateur journalism in the 1930s. Wilson (1917-1985) founded the International Science Fiction Guild in Oakman, Alabama, and published its first bulletin dated May/June 1934. Shepherd published six numbers of the bulletin in 1934-35 and followed with three numbers of the bulletin of the renamed Terrestrial Science Fiction Guild in 1935. He then partnered with Donald Wollheim in publishing eleven numbers of the legendary fanzine *Phantagraph* (dated July/August 1935 through January 1937).

H. P. Lovecraft wrote his first letter to Wilson under the date April 29, 1936 and provided much sound counsel and encouragement to his young correspondent. Lovecraft's story "The Nameless City" appeared in Shepherd's one-shot *Fanciful Tales* later that year. To celebrate Lovecraft's forty-sixth birthday on August 20, 1936, Shepherd printed sixteen copies of *The Lovecrafter*, containing "Background," one of Lovecraft's sonnets from the "Fungi from Yuggoth" cycle. Lovecraft wrote his final letter to Shepherd under the date February 17, 1937. He ended ominously:

Down at last. Doc has me taking 3 different medicines at once & am up only a little while at a time. Shall have to curtail all activities drastically during the balance of the winter.

In fact, Lovecraft was terminally ill with cancer, and his aunt Annie Gamwell wrote to Shepherd on his behalf on March 6, 1937. Lovecraft died nine days later on March 15, 1937. The author quotes generously from the Lovecraft-Shepherd correspondence; today, Lovecraft's half of the correspondence is owned by Brown University's Special Collections at the John Hay Library. The letters are published in their entirety in *Lovecraft's Letters to Robert Bloch and Others* (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2015).

Shepherd began publication of *The Rebel* for the American Amateur Press Association (AAPA) in March

1937. The inaugural issue included the tribute:

This issue of *The Rebel* is dedicated to
The Memory of
H. P. Lovecraft

A fine friend – A sincere critic

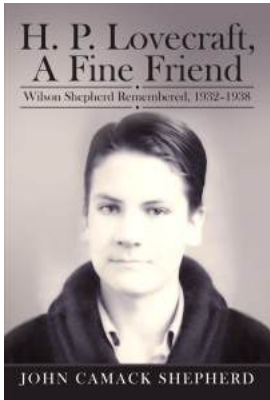
Shepherd published at least three numbers of *The Rebel* through September 1937. He circulated his edition of *Lovecraft's History and Chronology of the Necronomicon* through the November 1937 AAPA mailing. By this time, he had already started publication of *The American Free Press* for AAPA, beginning with a first number dated September 1937. He entered his candidacy for the presidency of AAPA, but was not successful in the election. He acknowledged defeat in the fourth number of *The American Free Press* dated January/February 1938.

Wilson married Katherine Crane on November 20, 1941. He worked a number of different jobs and was drafted into the Army in 1942, but was not sent overseas because of phlebitis. In the 1950s, he bought a printing company in Jasper, Alabama, and then in 1962 moved to Birmingham, where he owned a paint store. He kept a printing setup in his basement and continued to take jobs. He died in Montevallo, Alabama, in 1985.

John Shepherd has chosen Archway Publishing, Simon & Schuster's self-publishing arm, to produce his book. They have done so handsomely, featuring a young photograph of Wilson on the cover. Many early documents are reproduced, including the entire number of *Fanciful Tales* (1936).

While by no means a full biography, John Shepherd's work includes a section on his father's family background. The selections from the Lovecraft-Shepherd correspondence make clear how valuable a friend and counselor Lovecraft was for Shepherd. When the young printer expressed the desire to produce a memorial edition of Robert E. Howard's fiction, Lovecraft wisely counseled that Wilson ought to wait until greater experience assured his ability to produce the volume appropriately.

The amateur journalism hobby would surely benefit from memoirs of its former participants as thorough as this memoir by John Shepherd. We are grateful to him and his family for their support of The Fossils. I feel confident that Wilson Shepherd would be proud of his son's memoir. We who benefit from its contents thank John Shepherd for the time, effort and expense involved in producing it. The book is available on Amazon in hardcover, paperback and ebook formats. ♦



W. P. Kinsella and *Buzzard's Luck*

by Ken Faig, Jr.

NOT MANY professional writers venture into the world of amateur journalism. However, one such was Canadian W[illiam] P[atrick] Kinsella (1935-2016), of whom Clarence Wolfshohl wrote in his column "Never Enough Books" in the *American Amateur Journalist* Vol. 88, No. 3, for March 2024 (p. 7):

The other novelist [Wolfshohl had been discussing Susan Petrone and H. P. Lovecraft] was a member of AAPA in my early years with the organization, W. P. Kinsella, whose *Shoeless Joe* (1982) was adapted to film as *Field of Dreams* [1989]. Our mutual membership in AAPA enabled me to persuade him to visit Fulton, Mo., for a reading shortly after the novel was published. And later in 1999, when we both read at the Angelo State University's Writing Conference, we talked a bit about our ajaying. He used to publish an 8.5x11 digital sheet called *Buzzard Luck*. Does anyone still have any copies?

I had been an admirer and collector of the work of W. P. Kinsella for a number of years. I met the author briefly at a book signing at a Chicago Crown Books, but I was never aware of his participation in amateur journalism until I read Clarence's column. So I asked my friend Robin E. Rider, curator of Special Collections at the University of Wisconsin (Madison), home of the Library of Amateur Journalism Collection, if she could locate any copies of Kinsella's zine.

January 1984 was the first issue she could find. Like all the 1984 issues found by Robin, it appeared on one side of a single 8.5x11 sheet. Contemporary reports indicate he used a photocopier for reproduction. At the bottom of the first page of the January 1984 issue, Kinsella announced: "The six issues of *Buzzard's Luck* I have planned for 1984 will each deal with some aspect of baseball. Each as originally broadcast on CBC Radio

Buzzard's Luck

W.P. KINSELLA • BOX 1615 • IOWA CITY, IOWA 52244 • NUMBER ONE • JUNE 1982

"Buzzard's luck," says Eddie. "He can't kill nothing and nothing will die for him." - P. 225 *Shoeless Joe*, by W.P. Kinsella

I want to use the first issue of *Buzzard's Luck* for crass promotional purposes.

My novel, *Shoeless Joe*, which should be in your favorite bookstore by now, won the prestigious Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship. The same award launched the careers of writers like Philip Roth, Robert Penn Warren, and Willie Morris.

The novel is set near Iowa City, Iowa, and is the story of a young corn farmer who, on a blissful summer evening, hears a voice which commands him to build a baseball stadium in the middle of his cornfield. When he does, the legendary Shoeless Joe Jackson appears to play on the field. As the novel progresses the narrator again hears the voice and drives off to New Hampshire to convince the reclusive author, J.D. Salinger in tow, the narrator visits Fenway Park in Boston. With Salinger in tow, the narrator visits Chisholm, Minnesota and investigates the life and times of a baseball player named Moonlight Graham who played one inning of baseball for the New York Giants in 1905. They collect a player who claims to be the Oldest Living Chicago Cub, and all assemble at the baseball stadium in Iowa where much magic ensues.

Sounds improbable? Everyone thinks so, but rather than sing my own praises, let me quote from the critics:

"The most imaginative and original baseball novel since *The Natural*. The novel attests to the timeless game and the power of love." -*Publishers Weekly*

"Kinsella mixes his sentiment with melancholy in just the right amounts. With all the double-edged good cheer of a Frank Capra movie, *Shoeless Joe* makes us believe that bats, balls, and gloves really are 'accoutrements of wonder.'" -*American Library Association Booklist*

"A work as curious, compelling, artful and mysterious as the game it celebrates." -*George Plimpton*

"Kinsella's dreams and nostalgia could be the year's best writing." -*Ottawa Citizen*

"*Shoeless Joe* is an audacious achievement, and even readers who are indifferent to baseball will respond to its charms." -*Toronto Globe and Mail*

"What a magical tale this is, overflowing with good-spirited will, literary awareness, marvelous imagery, and natural beauty and incandescence." -*American Way*

"A quirky, magical tale captures the essence of what's American. He has created a work that outlive this season, and many more." -*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"Whatever else the field may stand for in this rich blend of fantasy and realism, it represents the transforming power of fiction and the fullness and exuberance of life." -*Miami Herald*

"I have read no baseball novel as delightful as this delicious blend of fact and fantasy." -*John Barkham, syndicated columnist*

"This isn't a sports story. It's an expression of love and family, and life, and beauty, and friendship, and sharing. W.P. Kinsella illuminates the page, his heartfelt joy of life pervading the text." -*Terry Burns, CBC Bookcorner*

"Kinsella's gift is to instill faith. He makes the reader believe. He transports the reader through a time-warp of imagination to a unique universe where facts don't matter, where reality is useless coin in a realm rich with dream currency." -*Mark Lowmy, Interface*



W. P. Kinsella

SHOELESS JOE should be available from your nearest bookstore. If they don't have it, ask them to order it.

My wife and I, and our battered Datsun will make a 3 month, 20,000 mile tour of the USA and Canada this summer, promoting the book.

I have one more year to teach at the University of Calgary, but my heart, and my post office box are in Iowa City, Iowa.

Review copy requests to: Lee Wilcox, Houghton Mifflin & Co., 2 Park Street, Boston, Mass. 02107

The first issue of W. P. Kinsella's *Buzzard's Luck*, appearing in the June 1982 AAPA bundle, was used for "crass promotional purposes" - the promotion of his new book *Shoeless Joe*.

in Canada." The January 1984 issue was identified as "Number 6" and was issued by Kinsella from P.O. Box 1615, Iowa City, Iowa 52244. In the first 1984 number, Kinsella dealt with the special fascination of baseball among all its competing sports. "Baseball is timeless," he proclaimed:

It is a game of anticipation. Most sports involve taking a ball and depositing it in a hoop or a goal, or carrying it across a line within a given time. The clock and a sense of immediacy, is evident in most sports. But baseball is for dreamers. At a baseball stadium the clock is forgotten. The ball is only in actual play for two or three minutes of time. The rest is anticipation.

The phrase "buzzard's luck" indicates ill luck or misfortune. Each 1984 issue of Kinsella's zine carried as an explanation immediately below the masthead:

"Buzzard's Luck," says Eddie. "He can't kill nothing and nothing will die for him." —p. 225 *Shoeless Joe*, by W. P. Kinsella. [Eddie Scissons was a character, "the oldest living Chicago Cub," in *Shoeless Joe*.]

Number 7 was dated March 1984. Kinsella covered

Kinsella in AAPA

by Dave Tribby

A SEARCH through old AAPA secretary-treasurer reports showed that W. P. Kinsella of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, joined the organization in March 1979, sponsored by Lauren Geringer. He maintained his membership until May 1996 when he lived in Idaho. *Buzzard's Luck* won an AAPA Honorable Mention Laureate award for Non-Letterpress Printed Journal in 1982-83.

I looked for references to "Kinsella" in Marc Brosey's "Jake's Journals" website and discovered that Geringer mentioned him in his *People Watcher* No. 188 for August 1988:

Baseball Legends

I sat on the floor of the Prairie Lights book store, among University students, to hear W. P. Kinsella read selections from *The Further Adventures of Slugger McBatt*, and from *The Valley of the Schmoo*.

Bill and Ann, his wife, from British Columbia, in Canada, were back in Iowa in connection with the filming of his award winning book *Shoeless Joe*.

They say they are pleased with the way the producer and director and actors portray his Iowa City story about baseball.

Movie stars include Burt Lancaster, James Earl Jones, Kevin Costner, and Amy Madigan.

I found several issues of *Buzzard's Luck* in my own collection of amateur journals. The first two were mainly promotions of his book *Shoeless Joe*. In the 17th (the last I found) he expressed his disdain for artificial turf. ♦

the topic of baseball superstitions and the mascot craze begun by the San Diego Chicken. In Number 8, dated May 1984, Kinsella wrote about an uncle whose baseball board game stoked his own imagination. At the start of the issue, Kinsella opined: "Baseball is far more than just statistics, averages, and box scores; it is stories, memories, anecdotes, nostalgia for times past." As for anecdote, Kinsella told the story of the manager who couldn't get messages across to his Japanese pitcher. Two players allegedly taught the pitcher enough English to communicate with the manager. So when the manager next approached his pitcher on the mound, the pitcher bowed politely and proclaimed, "Take a hike, fatso!"

In Number 9 for July 1984 Kinsella described how the fortunes of the Atlanta Braves declined after their mascot Chief Noc-a-Homa's teepee was removed from its usual position. When the Braves removed the teepee for good, Kinsella opined: "In the left field stands of Fulton County Stadium there was not only room for Chief Noc-a-Homa's teepee but for the Hindenburg, the Titanic, and the Andrea Doria."

In Number 10 for September 1984 Kinsella wrote about the decline of baseball nicknames. He wrote that the nicknames declined with the decline of their originators, the sports writers.

The final issue of *Buzzard's Luck* found by Robin was Number 13 for April 1985. "Signs and Signals" was highlighted as the subject of the essay. The explanation of "Buzzard's Luck" which had been carried below the masthead in numbers 6-10 was absent.

Fossil Editor Dave Tribby reviewed monthly lists of bundle contents appearing in issues of the *AAJ* from the mid-1980s and found numbers 1 and 2 of *Buzzard's Luck* were dated June and July 1982. Issues 3, 4, and 5 appeared in March, April, and June of 1983. Number 11 was November 1984 and 12 was February 1985. The latest issues he located were all in 1985: 14 (June), 15 (August), 16 (October), and 17 (November).

Kinsella's novel *The Iowa Baseball Confederacy* (1986) credited *Buzzard's Luck* for part of its content.

Why would a professional writer like Kinsella, with a best-selling novel to his credit, venture into amateur journalism? I think the answer is that Kinsella was always a hard-working writer, willing to devote considerable time and effort to the promotion of his work. The CBC scripts he used for his *Buzzard's Luck* were already in his files and running off the several hundred copies needed for the AAPA mailings was probably not much effort or expense. It was probably an easier way to get some limited publicity than hauling books to author's signings.

Kinsella had not had an easy path to professional success. He married early, had two daughters, and so had a need to generate income. In his earlier years, he

worked as a restaurant manager and as a taxi driver to make ends meet. Then he taught creative writing at the college level and bemoaned the lack of talented students in his classes. After he was finally able to stop teaching, he worked tirelessly to promote and to protect his work.

The majority of Kinsella's fans love best his baseball stories. For myself, I liked best his Silas Ermineskin native peoples stories, although he was much criticized for them. Whatever he wrote, his work was always marked by a strong dose of imagination. An injury slowed down his productivity in his final years, which

were also marked by complications of the diabetes he had lived with for many years. He loved Scrabble to pass the time, and was a ranked player. He was an assisted suicide after his health became too miserable for him to bear any longer.

I think we ought to be grateful for the time he elected to spend in our hobby.

References:

William Steele, *Going the Distance: The Life and Works of W. P. Kinsella*, Madeira Park, British Columbia: Douglas & McIntyre, 2018. ♦

How to Write Fiction

by W. P. Kinsella

[Originally published in *American Amateur Journalist*, Vol. 49, No. 5, July 1985.]



In 1993, W. P. Kinsella was made an Officer of the Order of Canada.

THE TITLE of course is a lie, as fantastical as any of my fictional creations. I cannot teach anyone how to write fiction. No one can teach anyone how to write fiction. What I can do in my capacity as a professional fiction writer is, if I find someone who shows talent as a storyteller, I can smooth the road for them, show them a few tricks of the trade: how to market their material, how to deal with publishers, editors, agents, and the like.

I never suggest what a would-be fiction writer should write about. If you don't have a few dozen ideas for stories floating around in your head, stories that have to be told, then stick to your other hobbies and forget fiction writing.

But if you have your heart set on writing fiction consider the following: fiction writing, I tell my students, consists of ABILITY, IMAGINATION, PASSION, and STAMINA. Let's consider each individually.

By ABILITY I mean the ability to write complete sentences in clear, straightforward, standard English.

This will not pose a problem for most of the people in the AAPA but it is surprising how many university students are unable to write simple sentences. If you can't express yourself clearly, abandon hope unless you are prepared to take a remedial English course. I've been known to suggest to my university students that they get a Grade 5 grammar book and begin their study there.

IMAGINATION involves the ability to create stories. Little children can create wonderful, uninhibited stories full of fanciful characters. But as the years pass the regimens of school and community kill the storyteller that lives within each of us. To write fiction you have to dig deep and discover that storyteller. Some writing instructors tell students to "write of what you know." I disagree with that. In 99 cases out of 100, writing about what you know will fill pages, but fill them with dull and uninteresting material. Let's face it, for nine out of ten of us our lives are so dull that no one would care in the least about them. The tenth person has a life so bizarre no one would believe it if it were written down. The secret of a fiction writer is to make the dull interesting by imagination and embellishment, and to tone down the bizarre until it's believable. I belong to the nine. I live a

very quiet life; I have a lovely wife who is a true helpmate and ultrasupportive of my career; we have a nice home on the ocean; we have the freedom to travel. In other words we are very happy. If I wrote about that I would soon be back selling life insurance or something equally vile. People don't want to read about happiness. Conflict is an absolute must in every story or novel. I think I clipped the following statement from an AAPA offering a few years ago: the master plot of all novels and stories is AN APPEALING CHARACTER STRUGGLES AGAINST GREAT ODDS TO ATTAIN A WORTHWHILE GOAL. Struggles against great odds are the key words. Something must be at stake, and the character must take some action. What will the conflict be? What action will the appealing character take? That is up to the author. Authors spend half their time writing and the rest looking at their story and saying WHAT IF? WHAT IF? WHAT IF? What if I take the story this way? What if I take it that?

PASSION is an almost nebulous ingredient. It is what an author does to make you love a character. It takes very hard work to analyze it. When you find a novel or story where you absolutely loved a character, where you had a sweet tear in your eye at the end of the story, or where you found yourself laughing uncontrollably at some point in the story, reread it again for pleasure. Then reread it ten more times for business;

analyze every line to learn how that author made you laugh or cry. When you learn the secret use it in your next story.

Never forget that fiction writers are ENTERTAINERS. Fiction writing comes from the days when the cave men were gathered around a campfire and Ugh stood up, pounded his chest, and said "Listen to me! I want to tell you a story!" And if his story wasn't interesting and suspenseful his companions soon wandered off to their caves. Fiction writers are not philosophers, or essayists, or pushers of causes religious or otherwise, and above all they are not navel gazers. All of these are types of non-fiction and should never be confused with storytelling.

One important point to remember! This is called Valgardson's Law:

Stories or novels are NOT about events, but about the PEOPLE that events happen to. The fact that the Titanic is sinking or a skyscraper toppling, or even the world ending, is not important unless you have created an appealing character who is going to suffer if the dreaded event happens. If you want to write fiction CUT OUT THIS PARAGRAPH AND PASTE IT ON THE WALL IN FRONT OF YOUR TYPEWRITER. It will save you weeks, months, maybe even years of struggle.

The final ingredient is STAMINA: Each of the others I have described is about 5 per cent of the writing process. Stamina is the final 85 per cent. Stamina is keeping your buns on the chair and writing even

when you don't feel like it. I know it's a cliché but though inspiration is nice, 98 per cent of writing is accomplished by perspiration. Stamina is doing as I have done, sitting down to write my fiftieth short story, the previous 49 having been unpublishable, knowing that number fifty will also be unpublishable, but that it will be 2 per cent better than the previous 49. Stamina is getting up at 5:00 AM, running hot water over your fingers so they will make the typewriter keys work for an hour or two before you go off to your hateful job. I did that for 20 years while I beat my head against the walls of North American literature.

If your head is still full of stories and you are still determined to write them down.... Lots of Luck! You'll need it. ♦

Sergeant Frederick J. Liddle, USMC

WHEN Fred Liddle (1925-2011) discovered amateur journalism in 1969, he quickly became one of the most active members of the American Amateur Press Association, and also participated in the National APA and The Fossils. His daughter, Ginny Liddle Parsons, described another facet of his life in the following Veterans' Day post she made to Facebook:

My father was a Marine in Saipan in 1944. A year ago yesterday, we were contacted by a researcher for the Japanese equivalent of the BBC who had managed to track me down (with a different last name and having lived in two other states than my dad). She was working on a TV show they were producing to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Saipan. She'd come across some audio of my then 19 year old father speaking from the battlefield and was looking to confirm that it really was him. It was! Copies of documents she had matched those that I have. His signature as a teenager was the same as when he died at age 86. We were not allowed to hear the audio, however, until the TV show was finalized and aired in Japan.

Fast forward to September of this year. I received a three minute audio of my father speaking about his experience in battle the night before and that day. In typical fashion, he was downplaying and describing with a touch of humor having been shot at by snipers the previous evening. He also spoke about where he was from—all accurate details. Even on an 80 year old au-



dio, I could tell with absolute certainty that it was the young voice of my father. I also received a copy of the Japanese TV show, which, of course, I couldn't understand. Last week I received a copy of the TV show that had been translated into English. I haven't had a chance to watch it yet but I certainly will soon. I cannot adequately put into words what a gift all of this has been!

Thanks, Pop, and all who have served. ♦

FY'23-24 Hawes Endowment Results

by Dave Tribby

A DECADE ago amateur journalists began raising money for a permanent endowment fund to maintain the Library of Amateur Journalism (LAJ), the largest collection of amateur journals and related artifacts.

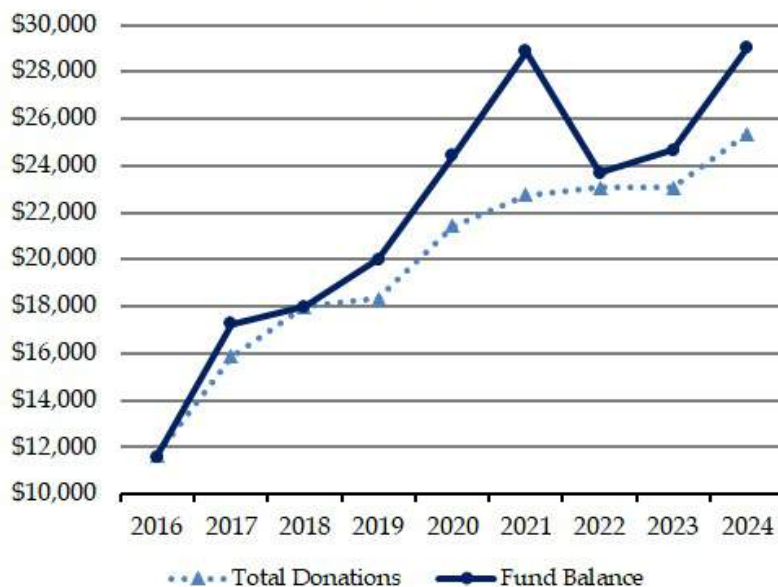
The LAJ started as the obsession of Edwin Hadley Smith (1869-1944), who spent most of 1896 to 1908 collecting, organizing, and cataloging as many amateur journals as he could – eventually accumulating about 27,500 papers. He found libraries in New York City that would house the collection until losing interest, but in 1916, when he could no longer find a willing partner, he sold the collection to The Fossils. Our group at first rented space in NYC so members could peruse the collection, then partnered with organizations in Philadelphia (1935-1967), NYC (1967-1982), and Stayton, Oregon (1982-2004) to make the collection available to the public. When a new home was needed, The Fossils found a willing recipient in the Special Collections department of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the LAJ has been housed in Memorial Library for the past twenty years.

UW-Madison has been an excellent host. Their efforts to preserve, process, catalog, and expand the LAJ have been reported in the pages of THE FOSSIL, as have academic research projects by Jessica Isaac (“Amateur Journalism: Rooted in Adolescence,” January 2016), Brian Rouleau (“America's Adolescent Armchair Diplomats,” July 2019), and David E. Schultz (“Adventures in Madison,” January 2023). However, the LAJ had to compete with many other projects for resources, and during its first decade in Madison progress in processing the massive collection was slow.

After the death of prominent amateur journalist Leland M. Hawes, Jr. (1929-2013), his friends in the hobby raised funds in his memory to preserve the LAJ. By September 2016, \$6,102 was raised for ongoing work.

UW staff suggested establishing a permanent special-purpose fund within the UW Foundation endowment to generate LAJ support in perpetuity. UW would be legally bound to use both contributions and income only for the LAJ. AAPA made the first donation in September 2014 and chose to name the fund after Lee. The Fossils, NAPA, and a variety of individuals also made donations, and two years later these gifts surpassed the minimum requirement of \$10,000. The Leland M. Hawes, Jr. Memorial Endowment Fund for the Library of Amateur Journalism Collection became a reality, with the promise that each year about 4.5% of the fund's balance would go toward supporting the LAJ. Remaining funds are invested by the Foundation, so the balance grows from the returns on that invest-

Hawes Endowment Fund



ment. Although the Endowment investment portfolio had a down year in 2022, it recovered afterward and boasts an 8.2% annualized return over the past five years, and a 6.6% ten year rate. Donations to the Fund are tax deductible, and information on how to contribute is available on The Fossil's website.

In November, the Wisconsin Foundation released its report on the performance of the Hawes Fund for January to June 2023, including a note that the fiscal year was changing from the calendar year to one starting on July 1. The FY24 report, covering July 2023 to June 2024, followed in December. During the eighteen months covered by both reports, the Fund received \$2,300 in contributions plus \$5,176 from investments, and provided \$1,753 in financial support to the LAJ. The Foundation charged \$385 in administrative fees. The Fund balance stood at \$29,036 on June 30, 2024.

During the life of the Fund, it has received \$25,356 in contributions and allocated \$7,153 for LAJ support.

In other LAJ-related news, the following announcement comes from the UW-Madison website:

As of December 20, 2024, Special Collections is now closed to all researchers and classes.

Beginning in early 2025, the Department of Special Collections will be updating its fire suppression systems. This update will involve a major construction project in all of the Department's spaces, and as a result, Special Collections will be closed to all researchers and classes for the entire year of 2025.

In January 2026 the department plans to resume operations and begin welcoming researchers back into its reading room. ♦

A Deep Dive Into Website Traffic

by Dave Tribby

APRIL 8, 2025 is the twentieth anniversary of The Fossils' website. Back then, President Guy Miller asked if I could save the amateur journalism history content on Mike Horvat's American Private Press Association site, which was being shut down. That content remains a significant part of our site, but has been joined by additional information, including issues of THE FOSSIL going back to October 2004, winners of Fossil awards, links to A. J. information on the Internet, and a description of public collections of amateur journals.

Every month I review the log files that record each access to our website. I use a program that provides a basic analysis, such as the number of hits, how many times each page and file was accessed, the number of errors, and the Internet addresses of our visitors.

Much of the traffic comes from "bots," automated programs that scan the entire Internet, gathering information. Index services such as Google and Bing are the most prominent, but every month the log shows dozens of other specialty search engines. Most are well-behaved and include an identifier within the access request. This automated traffic is segregated from accesses from individuals in web reports.

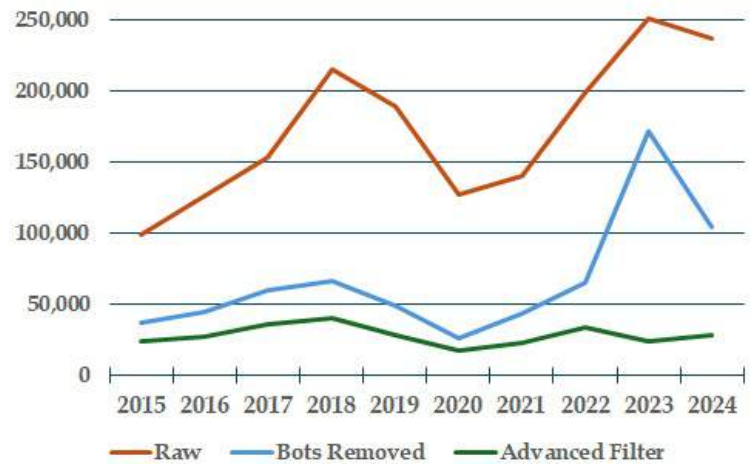
In 2018 I noticed a significant increase in "file not found" error codes. I took a deeper dive into the log files, writing my own analysis scripts to look for patterns. I found a huge number of requests for the file wp-login.php, obvious attempts to exploit old defects in WordPress, a popular blogging system that is not installed on our server. Later the errors spread to a wide variety of file names, no doubt attempts to exploit other defects.

In 2023 I noticed a different uptick in traffic, this time for existing pages. Sometimes this happens when something on the site is mentioned on a blog, but these accesses were for a variety of files spread over multiple months. I modified my tools to analyze where the traffic originated and identified several individual systems making 125 or more accesses in a single month—much as a bot would, but without identifying itself. Since this appeared to be automated traffic, I filtered those results out of my access counts to get a truer picture of how individuals use our site.

The oddest access originated from a server in Bulgaria. From August 21, 2023 to June 24, 2024 it read the page listing issues of THE FOSSIL about once an hour—a total of 7,411 times—but never downloaded an issue.

This month when I did my annual traffic analysis I noticed traffic from groups of servers that shared an

Annual Accesses to thefossils.org



Initial filtering of website logs removes traffic from identifiable bots. Since 2023, more advanced filters have been needed.

Internet address prefix. I added them to my advanced filter, and also removed requests with an error code.

I applied my advanced filter going back to 2015 and compared the raw (unfiltered) traffic, the traffic with just the bots removed, and the advanced filter (see chart, above). I found the raw traffic averaged 173,466 hits per year over the ten years, ranging from 98,939 in 2015 to 250,337 in 2023. After removing the bot traffic, applying my address filter, and removing hits with errors, the average dropped to 27,935; the low was 16,868 (in 2020) and the high 40,252 (2018). In 2024, the fully filtered traffic was 28,104, or an average of about 77 hits per day coming from about 54 distinct visitors.

The four issues of THE FOSSIL published during 2024 averaged 91 downloads, though the counts varied:

January	67	July	92
April	158	October	48

With 191 downloads, July 2006 was the most accessed of older issues. Others with over 100 accesses include July 2009 (181), April 2019 (117), January 2007 (113), July 2005 (105), and April 2012 (101) issues.

When renewing our Internet Service Provider, we chose a new plan that increases available file space by a factor of 10, from 100 megabytes to 1 gigabyte, while reducing cost from \$24.95 per year to \$35.91 for two years. The other website cost, domain registration, is \$15.16 per year. With additional space available, I added a 10-page scan of Helen V. Wesson's article "The Phenomenon of HPL," from the July 1957 issue of The Fossil and linked it to our "Amateur Journalism History" page. Let me know if you have any ideas on how we might use our new space. ♦

Asymmetrical Anti-Media
Issue 17/Spring 2024



The Review Zine With Lunatic Fringe Tendencies

books, and albums. He notes, "I only review items with physical mailing addresses because 1) I hate the internet 2) I want to encourage the postal network 3) I want to encourage participants in trades." I was amazed at the number of zines still publishing on paper and sent through the mail.

"AAM is available for \$1 (USA)/\$2 (World), stamps, or trade." You can reach Jason Rodgers at P.O. Box 701, Cobleskill, NY 12043.

Former Fossil Sean Donnelly, who lives in the Tampa Bay Area, was somewhat affected by hurricanes Helene and Milton last fall:

Fortunately, I'm on high ground mid-county in Largo. I was without power a few days but that was all. Some

Time to Renew?

Many Fossil memberships and subscriptions come due in January. Please check the expiration date on your mailing label, and if you are due before the next issue (April 2025) please send your renewal to Secretary-Treasurer Tom Parson – and consider donating a few dollars extra if you want THE FOSSIL to continue to be printed in color. ♦

people were without power for more than a week and others still don't have internet back up and running at their homes. The three hurricanes this year have shown us we're not prepared for them at all. I think almost everyone on the barrier islands and on the coast in Pinellas experienced flooding. Other residents inland, far from shore, were surprised to find that little creeks and drainage ditches filled and flooded their homes. Many, many people moved to Florida during Covid and some of them must be wondering if they really want to stay.

Fossil Dave Goudsward was on Boston's WGBH in October ("just in time for spooky season") to describe H.P. Lovecraft's connections to Massachusetts. A transcript of the conversation with Arun Rath appears online at

<https://www.wgbh.org/culture/books/2024-10-22/how-massachusetts-inspired-some-of-h-p-lovecrafts-scary-stories>

Dave included Lovecraft's connection to amateur journalism and his friendship with Tryout Smith. ♦

The Fossil

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION of The Fossils, a non-profit organization for anyone interested in the history of amateur journalism. Individuals or institutions allied with our goals are invited to join. Dues are \$15 annually, or \$20 for joint membership of husband and wife. Annual subscription to THE FOSSIL without privileges of membership is \$10. For further information, contact the secretary-treasurer or visit our website:

www.thefossils.org

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