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190 Duration

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## Gateway Genre

With my adult nose perpetually "buried in a book," Grandma delighted in recounting the end of my first day of kindergarten, sobbing and blubbering that "I went to school to learn to weed, and I can't weed." Something must have happened that second day but the real hook came when the pulp of the detective/mystery hit the palate. The Power Boys and Brains Benton were soon pursued by the Hardy Boys, often read by flashlight under the cover at night. Their 54 books plus the detective handbook still reside on my library shelf.

Sherlock Holmes and his sidekick Dr. Watson came calling while in junior high and by the time they had solved all their cases, I was in high school and ready for the hard boiled: Mickey Splillane's Mike Hammer. Suspicious of covers with bikini-clad vixens, Dad would toss them out, but my creative writing teacher tried a different approach. Struck down by what I thought was masterful ending of "I, The Jury" (How could you? It was easy), Jarosynski challenged me to a contest of writing a one-page Hammer parody, and then introduced what he considered the closest detective fiction has ever come to literature ... Raymond Chandler's Phillip Marlowe.

My brother argued for Dashed Hammet as memorialized by Sam Spade and the Continental Op, while others voted for Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer. Later on we would all trade the colored titles of John D. McDonald's Travis McGee series (the rumor was that his last title had black in it, would kill off McGee, and be published posthumously). In college, the symbolisms of Moby Dick had to compete with the new cases of Robert B. Parker's Spenser.

As the years went by and my reading spiderwebbed into the vast vault of literary treasurers, the gumshoes who had lit the enduring fire of reading for me slowly dissolved, leaving unsolved the last great mystery: why so many for so long have not found reading to be the critical port by which the world of abstract thought can be accessed.

Only Allah knows, I guess, or as the gritty writer Nelson Algren said in another context, "Some cats just swing like that."

Until next issue,



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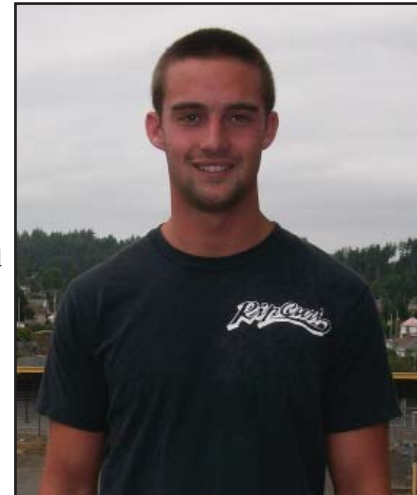


Megan: the case of the happy granddaughter

# Success Story

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## Jordan Rice



"Leaving the waters of the splendid East, the Sun leapt up into the firmament to bring light to the immortals and to men who plough the earth and perish."

--Homer, *The Odyssey*

It takes a lot to impress me but Jordan Rice has done it with overwhelming waves of effort, intellectual curiosity, and astonishing self-motivation. As a result, for only the second time in 60 issues, I am presenting readers with full confidence a "success story" prior to completion of their training program.

Jordan left high school early last spring to begin his occupational odyssey at Linn-Benton Community College for heating and air-conditioning. Because of his proven track record, Marshfield teachers allowed him to finish his high school requirements by independent study, and the Pirate Shop awarded him our scholarship (\$750).

You should have seen Jordan in class. Interested in mechanics, he would only have to be told briefly about the six systems to carburetors and handed a book. The next day he would be ready to describe what he learned and have questions about concepts he didn't understand. Wanting stuff the other kids were not going to get, Jordan studied latent heat of vaporization, change of state, plastigage and dozens of other topics in his drive to learn.

Asked why one Jordan will thrive and flourish while another wilts at the stem, this Jordan said "priorities". His parents taught him to get his work done first and play later. Pressed that it couldn't be that simplistic, he admitted that seeing others around him failing and fizzling always motivated him to keep on task. I never once saw him deterred by others that were off task.

The longer I teach, the more often Nelson Algren's voice arises from the mist.

## Here's How: Tips from the Field

### Whatchagawhen

Idea this issue from Bob Geddis

With student help, we are creating a dictionary of terms related to the endless delights in human behavior. *Candlestick Kid* is person whose arc welds still look like candle drippings, *Quail Effect* is the often seen disappearance of a group of boys when hard work appears. *Bop Juice* is a teenage girl's perfume so strong it makes your eyes water 10 feet away.

Bob Geddis is a machinist and gunsmith whose tip about holding pieces of work in a milling vice made me think of another dictionary word. *Whatchagawhen*. Call it an abbreviated sentence, it's a relative of everyday speech (as in Chout, for "watch out" or Dahell as an exclamation of puzzlement). *Whatchagawhen* means "What are you going to do when?"

*Whatchagawhen* serves as a springboard for discussions about the value of predictive diagnostics in all aspects of life. For our immediate purpose the question is what are you going

to do when the piece you are hogging away on your milling machine breaks loose of the vice? I know the problem is minimized by using expensive vices like Kurt whose jaws are parallel. But go ahead and tighten your work then tap it with a hammer. You might be surprised how easy it moves, especially if it's smooth. And don't think brass and bronze, being "soft," will hold better; it is slippery stuff and grabs cutting tools as well.

The tip? Screencloth. Get it from J&L/MSC. It is similar to the abrasive pad used on sheetrock. Designed with holes in it so as not to load up, it works to hold your pieces in a vice because those holes make the PSI go up as surface area goes down. Try it. Your work is held substantially tighter and the screencloth does not mar even soft aluminum. Thanks Bob!



The cartoonist is James Robert Williams (1888-1957) from the three volume set "The Bull of the Woods," created from his life working in machine shops.

# Pioneers of Technology

## Johnny Wolff

(1872-1947)

Portland, OR Feb 26, 1912 - The Oregon Wolf, a nine-cylinder hydroplane ... broke the world's motor boat record yesterday. --- *The New York Times*.

Schebler carburetor company was proud of Johnny Wolff's 42.85 miles per hour and used it in magazine ads as 9 of their carburetors fed the 1,365 pound Smalley engine (they didn't mention the three Holley carbs that fed on the exhaust side). Although there was still a category in 1912 for "displacement" boats that had to plow through water, it was apparent that the key to high speeds was to elevate the boat above the water that was 800 times more dense than air. Thus was born the age of the hydroplane of which Oregonian Johnny Wolff was an early pioneer.

Johnny Wolff was born to German immigrants in Portland, Oregon. His father, Fritz Wolff, started the Wolff and Zwicher Iron Works, and Johnny took after his father's mechanical side by graduating with a degree from Vander Nailens School of Engineering in 1893. His competitive nature surfaced in his early years. In 1897 and 1898 he won the Northwest Bicycle Championship and in 1900 built a sailboat named *Swallow* with which he gained fame as the Willamette River champion.



Johnny Wolff (left) and Oscar Peterson behind the 9-cylinder Smalley engine.

Wolff's real legacy in the boating world came with his nine-year dominance in West Coast powerboat racing which started in 1908 when he built a 34-foot long craft with a 100-horsepower six-cylinder Smalley engine. These early engines were so far removed from modern machinery it's funny. The engine took one person to operate, so another person had to steer the boat. Engine speed was often regulated by a series of switches that controlled the magnetos, and they couldn't be run wide open for long without overheating.

The funny never lasts for long though. Boaters scooped up the surplus 400 hp Packard Liberty airplane engines after WW I and then the famous Allison 2300 hp V-12 after WW II. The never ending need for speed culminated in 1978 when Ken Warby drove his hydroplane *Spirit of Australia* to 317 mph using a 6000-hp Westinghouse jet engine. Attempts to break this record have had such a high fatality rate that the speedsters are sniffing at this prize like dogs around a poisoned bone.

# Quarter Inch Drive

A quarterly newsletter for friends and graduates of Tom Hull's shop programs

Fall 2009

Number 60



Jerry Alvey stands by the first race boat he built sixty years ago in Coos Bay. He could get his "sea sled" to hydroplane by running his Johnson five-horse wide open while leaning forward during the races held in the bay. Jerry, now 85, still works 4 hours a day at his Eastside repair shop.

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David Plowden: *Vanishing Point: Fifty Years of Photography* (2007).

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, / You cannot say, or guess, for you know only / A heap of broken images, where the sun beats, / And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief...

----- T.S. Elliot *The Wasteland* (1922)

Many of us have been waiting a long time for this. After publishing over twenty books of photography, which prints does Plowden think are most representative of his 50 years of work? For a year he worked "relentlessly ... choreographing, rearranging the photographs over and over again, crawling about on the living room floor until we thought we had the right sequence."



David Plowden helped nudge me out of intellectual pubescence with his 1971 book *The Hand of Man On America*. The picture above was the cover and it was the first time I realized that pictures could be more; The Statue of Liberty guillotined by a phone line while at the base a "No Dumping" sign posted amid trash galore. What else does this guy have to say? Plenty, it turned out.

With the advent of digital photography, Plowden is the last of the old school purists. He has always developed his own photographs in a darkroom, works only with available light (no strobe or flash), and never crops in the print making process, but rather "in the ground glass on location before I fire the shutter." As he says, "Making photographs is not a matter of equipment or technical prowess. Making photographs is about seeing."

The results, whether they be trains, tug boats, architecture or landscapes, illustrate the special vision of a unique man. The oversized format of this retrospect (12" by 11") does justice to the photographs. If I could buy only one book for the year, this would be it.

# Short Stories For The Long Haul

Three decades in the mind mill and against all knowledgeable advice, here are my top ten picks for this genre. Substituting volume for credentials, over 5000 short stories have passed the gullet, and although criteria were applied (flawless flow, accessible symbolism, interties solidly locked and the posing of a universal question), it is in the end, of course, a subjective offering.

---the countdown---

## #10-*The Far and the Near* (Thomas Wolfe)

It was a brutal fight for inclusion, with denial based on the slightest infraction. *The Dead* by Joyce, offhand a shoe-in; too long. A dark horse then slipped in: Wolfe (Thomas, not Tom), the pioneering American master of stream of consciousness, author of the oft quoted *You Can't Go Home Again*, who had trouble keeping his novels under 1000 pages, here tightly wraps up a 3-page slice of the frailty of human understanding that transcends the ages.

## #9- *In The Penal Colony* (Franz Kafka)

Gotta have a Kafka. *Metamorphosis*, by nature of it's common inclusion in anthologies, obviously a candidate. *The Hunger Artist* is definitely in for the long haul. But the story that kept gurgling in the pool of memory was *In The Penal Colony*. Over 20 years since last reading it, was the vivid memory of Kafka's punitive engine of societal compliance justified? Had the gears of the dark machine really cracked the code of perpetual motion? Yes and yes.

## #8- *Harrison Bergeron* (Kurt Vonnegut)

Chintzy sci-fi beats out the crown jewel of Steinbeck's *The Chrysanthemums* and the total powers of D.H. Lawrence's fervor in *The Rocking Horse Winner*? Well, sorry, nobody before or since Vonnegut's 1961 piece has struck the nail so precisely and with such authoritative force when it comes to the dangers of societal structured equality. The humor is dark and the irony metallic. From his collection *Welcome to the Monkeyhouse*, this is a slinger.

## #7- *A Good Man is Hard To Find* (Flannery O'Connor)

After several re-reads and the urging of two friends, this story finally made the cut. If religious undertones is the theme, then the field is rich (Gabriel Marquez: *A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings* a runner up). Might as well go for the brimstone and there is no doubt: this womans writing hits like a slug of white lightning. *Parker's Back* had always been my favorite Flannery O'Connor, but the luminescent glow of *The Misfit* is the new neon.

## #6- *Saturday Afternoon* (Erskine Caldwell)

You were going to get a bowl of greasy southern stew, but the only question was the cook: Faulkner or Caldwell. Faulkner was a literary chef serving up meals full of texture and flavor, pungent and rich. Caldwell undercooked --- raw in places, banned in others. A good set of teeth and a strong stomach is required to get through Caldwell. Get him down and it's worth the meal.

## #5- *Boxes* (Raymond Carver)

The only "modern" writer to make the list (with strong contenders in Tim Westmoreland and Tobias Wolff), Carver has attracted a strong following for his minimalist landscape of the torn fabric of human relationships. Although I endorse reading the entire collection of Carver's stories, in *Boxes* he creates especially convincing dialogue and mental ruminations of a son boxed in and harnessed with a discontent mother forever on the move.

## #4- *Haircut* (Ring Lardner)

Surprise endings border on the gimmick and are thus banned from the top ten. From Saki to Roald Dahl that caveat took out a lot a great stories. Lardner almost took the hit on this one but I challenge you to find one word out of place in this wonderful tale of poetic justice. As others have said "Not a man could have done it better." Ring Lardner combines the humor of Twain with a bite unique and lasting. If you like *Haircut*, try *Who Dealt?*

## #3- *Indian Camp* (Ernest Hemingway)

Honest, it wasn't the threat of divorce that got Hemingway his #3 spot. The guy had the guns when it came to the pen. A story in 6 words, "For Sale: baby shoes, never worn." Wow. A knockout in every round. Great problem: which story. *Hills Like White Elephants* would have been a justified offering, but its semi-submerged symbolisms deny a wide audience. *Indian Camp* is Hemingway at his apex concentrating his considerable craft.

## #2- *I Want To Know Why* (Sherwood Anderson)

Sorry, Fitzgerald. You might have a chance in a future insert of top ten novels. In the short story, my money, Anderson does everything well, stitching tight with a voice that is as natural as friends and smooth as a Cuban cigar. This #2 spot goes to Anderson for his insightful unveiling of the puzzling nature of beauty and the dual nature it possesses to both delight and disappoint. I have never understood Anderson's fall from academic favor.

## #1- *The Second Tree from the Corner* (E.B. White)

"Ever have any bizarre thoughts?" asked the doctor.

So begins my top pick for short story, the subject being the wavering line that defines psychological balance. If it was realism only, then look no further than Sylvia Plath's *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*. Based on masterful treatment, then the winner would be Conrad Aiken's *Silent Snow*, *Secret Snow*. But I'm a simple man and the writer who brought us *Charlett's Web* also gave me Trexler and his master key to what it is that people want.