For God, my parents, my son & his partner, & the memory of a great English professor at U. of Iowa, Sherman Paul, who helped greatly improve my writings.

SA110 is DvJM's 195th book overall so far, & with his other writings & photos too, David Joseph Marcou is Wisconsin's most prolific author.

David Joseph Marcou, ca. 2008
(Ctsy. Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman).

Cover BW Photo Captions-Credits: Sunrise Near Cameron Avenue, LaX, 2019 (DvJM)

By Author David Joseph Marcou (DvJM)
Author's Note: I was intrigued by a FB post I shared on my FB page recently. It stated that Colin Kaepernick was ignorant about history for criticizing the Betsy Ross Flag. If what I read is thoroughly accurate, Old Betsy opposed slavery. She was raised Quaker, and the Quakers not only were abolitionists in America, but they also helped end slavery in Britain. Along the way, they were key facilitators of the Underground Railroad for slave-escapes in pre-Civil War America. We need more Betsy Ross Flags not fewer!(There is some debate as to whether she created the first American flag, but tradition attributes it to her, because she made many, many flags in those days.--DvJM.

The Case of the Old Rocky Road, by David Joseph Marcou.

Schenectady was in bed, trying desperately to fall asleep, when the phone rang. He was supposed to be up in four hours to meet with Sheriff Sam McIntosh and the county coroner, Dr. Matt Freedman, about a case of murder that had him and everyone in Silver City stumped. He forgot all that briefly, though, when he heard the voluptuous voice on the other end of his phone. “Hello, Mr. Schenectady?” it purred. “Yes, this is Schenectady,” came back his feeble affirmation. The voice went on: “I’m sorry to call you in the middle of the night, but I could really use your help. My name is Holly Bush and I’m the daughter of City Councilman Mel Bush.” “Yes, Ms. Bush,” he said, asking, with his tone, for more. “Well, Mr. Schenectady, I’m wondering if you could do something for me, as a paying client.” “That depends,” he said, already almost decided in his mind to take her case, “On what it is you want me to do for you and whether or not you’re willing to pay my fee.”

Holly coughed seductively and continued, “Here’s what I’m up against, Mr. Schenectady. I need to pay off a man whose threatening to blackmail me, and I don’t have the $50,000 he’s demanding from me. You see, he has some compromising pictures of me with the governor of New York. He’s sent me a few already. My father’s career and the governor’s could be on the line.” “What can I do?” she added slowly. “He wants to meet me at 4 p.m. today and for me to pay for the prints and negatives.”

Schenectady thought an instant, then said, “I’ve got an idea on how to handle him. Can you meet me at 11 a.m. with the pictures he’s sent you so far?” Holly purred again, “Of course, Mr. Schenectady, where should we meet?” “At the bar in the County Country Club—and be sure you’re there at 11 a.m. sharp,” he said. “By the way,” he continued, “I get $150/day for expenses plus $5,000 if the case is successfully resolved.” “Sounds okay to me,” Holly agreed. “Then we’ll see you at the County Country Club at 11 a.m. sharp,” he said. The 40-something private eye with a fondness for pretty women then said, resolutely. “Thank you for the work, Ms. Bush.
Until 11 a.m., then? “Yes, until 11 a.m., Mr. Schenectady. Good-bye.” He said “Goodbye” and hung up.

At 8:15 a.m, Schenectady was in the coroner’s office dressed in his tattered trench-coat, chatting with Dr. Freedman, as Sheriff McIntosh strode in, late for their scheduled 8 a.m. meeting. “Hello, Skee, Doc. Sorry I’m late; I had to serve a warrant unexpectedly this morning, and I just got back. Have you briefed him on what you’ve found so far, Doc?” Matt replied, “Yeh, we’ve gone over the important things, Sam.” “Good, anything you’d like to know from me, Skee?” Sam asked.

The private eye extraordinaire, who had long had a good working relationship with both men, piped up: “Just one thing, Sam: Have you found the murder weapon yet?” The sheriff replied, “As a matter of fact we had some luck in that regard yesterday. A group of boys on bikes found a tire-iron in the weeds near Old Rocky Road and Clemens Avenue. It has blood all over it, but no fingerprints. We did a quick check on the blood sample, and it looks like it is Denise’s all right.”

“Can I have a look at it, Sam?” “Sure,” Sam replied, “it’s in my office now. Should we head up there next?” “That will be excellent,” the private eye replied. Turning to Dr. Freedman, Skee said, “Thanks, Matt, for everything. Your findings will help me a lot; and I expect Sam is happy about them, too.” “Yes, I am,” said the sheriff. “Thanks, Doc, for showing him what we have down here. Now, let’s head up to my office, Skee.” “Sounds good,” came the detective’s even-handed reply.

Up in the sheriff’s third-floor office, the two men discussed Dr. Freedman’s preliminary report, before entering the evidence room. “So, you think it was a robbery gone bad, Sam?” Schenectady asked. “Yes, I do, Skee. I don’t see any other alternative as viable. Do you agree?” “Well, I would agree with you normally, but one thing bothers me yet. That piece of cloth torn from Denise’s skirt. Why would the murderer tear her skirt like that and not have had sex with her? It was the piece right in front, after all.”

That’s an interesting point, Skee, but we’ve talked about that before. I think he wanted to have sex with her, but something prevented that from happening. Maybe he didn’t know Denise and suspected she had HIV or something.” Schenectady’s eyes darkened a bit, then he said, “I expect this murderer DID know the victim. And you’re correct to say “he”, judging from the boot size your staff got from the footprints out there on Old Rocky Road—Size 15-EEE doesn’t fit many women.”

“All in all, Skee, I think it would be an open-and-shut case, if we only had some fingerprints on the tire-iron.” The sheriff and Skee then entered the
evidence room and Sam McIntosh retrieved the murder weapon. “Here it is. What do you think of it?” he asked, as he handed the packet the iron was in to Schenectady. The private eye answered, “I reckon this iron belonged to the murderer.” The sheriff asked, “How can you tell that, Skee?” “Because it’s brand new and Denise’s car was a 1982 Cutlass. Her iron must be well broken-in by now.” “That’s right, Skee. Good bit of deduction, I’d say.” “But there’s more,” Schenectady said. “You see this iron belongs to a big V-8, something like a Lincoln Continental or Cadillac. It’s good-sized, but it’s also got a steel-head. You don’t see many of them these days—and generally only on Continentals and Caddies.”

Sam said, “That’s good, Skee. Anything else?” Schenectady started out the door, answering as he reached the next room. “Yes, there’s more, but I can’t let you know about the rest yet. Still working on the details of another case. In fact, the two cases could be related, but I don’t want to say that for sure yet. I’ll call you this afternoon as soon as I know more.”

“This other case,” shot back the sheriff, “does it have to do with a pretty woman?” Schenectady looked surprised, “How did you know that, Sam?” “Because you usually tell me you can’t reveal the details of cases with pretty women involved, until the last minute—pretty women, hold onto the details, it never fails,” Sam said and chuckled. “Yes, I guess that’s right, Sam. My word, your powers of deduction are improving daily.” “That’ll be the day,” the sheriff said with a smile, then added, “Just make sure you call me soon.”

At 11 o’clock sharp, Holly Bush entered the County Country Club bar. Schenectady was waiting for her in the last seat at the bar. He was the only male customer there then, and he and the shapely blonde quickly moved to a table at the back.

“So, Ms. Bush,” he said, “may I see the pictures?” She immediately picked them out of her bag and showed them to Schenectady. He blanched a bit, then something funny occurred to him. “It looks like you and the governor got to know each other very well on at least once occasion, Ms. Bush. How did the blackmailer get these pictures?” “The room had a two-way mirror in it. Was I dumb or what?” she asked with a seductive smile. Skee said, “And you’re certain this man will give you all the negatives and prints involved?” “That’s what he told me,” she said, smiling coyly. “Then here’s what we’ll do, Ms. Bush...,” Schenectady began.

By 12:15 p.m, Schenectady had finished with Ms. Bush and phoned Sheriff McIntosh. The sheriff was at lunch, but the detective left a message with Dave Purcell, one of Sam’s deputies. Then the sure-footed private eye headed for the home of Dan Witmer, husband of Denise Witmer, the murder victim. Dan
and Schenectady went way back—to the Vietnam-War era, when they studied Political Science together at a state university. Dan was still feeling the loss of his wife, but he also trusted his old friend and, now, private eye, immensely.

As Schenectady pulled his red Hyundai Excel into Dan’s driveway, Dan emerged from behind the backyard fence and waved immediately. “Skee, how are you doing? Find anything new?” Schenectady shook hands with Dan and said, “Yeh, quite a bit actually. Especially, if your connections to the old jocks around here and some national politicians bear up.”

“What do you mean?” Dan asked. His buddy said, “Well, it’s like this, Dan: I think whoever murdered Denise also is trying to embarrass a city councilman and unseat the governor of New York.” “Which councilman?” Dan shot back. “Mel Bush,” Schenectady said. “His daughter Holly has come to me for ‘help’, and I—being of sound mine—am lending her help. She claims she’s being blackmailed but she’s likely involved in Denise’s murder, if I’ve figured this right.”

“Holly is a beautiful-looking woman, Skee. Why is she claiming she is being blackmailed?” Schenectady’s eyes narrowed slightly, then he said, “Because I think she enjoys it.” Dan asked, “you mean she’s part of a set-up that she’s arranged?” Schenectady answered, “Well, the lovely ‘unposed’ pictures her friend took of her making it with the governor of New York certainly are authentic and could give Mel Bush and Governor Morrow headaches. But she knew they were being taken, and I’d guess it was her idea because the fellow I suspect is her partner can’t be too brainy.”

“Are you sure, Skee?” “As far as I can tell so far. Now, can you do me a favor? “What?” “Do you still have that counterfeit money that we used in college: “Sure do,” Dan said, “Good, then here’s what I want you to do....”

At 4 p.m. sharp, Holly Bush pulled up to the site of her “drop” —the abandoned cement factory on the Old Rocky Road—in her 1988 Toyota. Schenectady was hidden there ahead of her, as planned. Soon another car pulled in—this one was a 1992 Cadillac. The car was not small, but the man who emerged from it was huge. He looked like Bubba Smith, only meaner, uglier. Schenectady had seen him around town once or twice, but he hadn’t thought he was a murderer until it was discovered Denise Witmer’s killer wore size 15-EEE boots. In Silver City, there were very few men who wore that size, and Schenectady was sure the man in question came close.

Schenectady watched as the two people in front of him made their “exchange”. Then when the Caddie pulled out, Schenectady headed after it in his Excel. The man in the Caddie knew he was being followed; but he did not guess the money in his possession was counterfeit; he knew only that it
was “unmarked”. The Caddie soon gave the Excel the slip; but Skee wasn’t concerned. He went home and checked his messages; the sheriff had returned his call. Schenectady now phoned Sam.

“Hello, Sam? “Yes, that’d be me, Skee. Find anything out from your lady friend?” “Yes, I did. I know who murdered Denise now, and I know why.” “Care to fill me in on the gory details?” Sam asked. “Be happy to!” Skee exclaimed. “Here’s what I know…”

Two hours later, counterfeit money turned up at the local airport. When the sheriff got the call, he was visiting with Schenectady, and Skee knew what to do. “Phone the New York State Police, Sam, and watch what happens next…."

Soon, Sheriff McIntosh got a return call from the head of the New York State Police. Mel Bush’s daughter and her pal, Dude Carter, had been apprehended at Kennedy International Airport as they disembarked from their plane. Dude said only one word, “Shit!” but Holly had plenty to say. It was the biggest news to hit the “Big Apple State” in 20 years, but since Gov. Morrow was going through a divorce then, he and his staff tried to shake the “news” with BS. He didn’t have much luck with that.

Back in Silver City, Sheriff McIntosh had a beer with Schenectady, Dan Witmer, and Dr. Freedman. Everyone wanted to know how Skee had figured this one out. “You see,” he began, “yesterday I went out to the old cement factory to check out the site of Denise’s demise. I noted again that blood had been spilled there, and I checked for other clues, like fingerprints. A bloody glove I found there belonged to Dude Carter, whose prints were on file. I also remembered what Holly Bush told me. She had been in New York several weeks ago with her father at a fund-raising benefit for Gov. Morrow. Her father Mel graduated from Columbia University with the governor. Dan, you filled me in on that intriguing detail. But already yesterday morning, when I met Ms. Bush for the first time, I knew she wasn’t being honest with me. She wanted to be caught in this, because she knew her pal, Dude, would be too. He killed Denise, and you, Dan, know the old jocks around here. Denise suspected there’d been dubious contacts between Gov. Morrow and Holly. And Holly knew this because Denise, and you, Dan, knew the old jocks around here. Denise spoke with Dude at the country club and she didn’t tell you about it because she didn’t think that much of it then. The bartender at the club overheard them. Dude knew later he’d misspoken, and when he saw Denise driving on Old Rocky Road six weeks ago, he lost it, got her to stop, and killed her. When Holly found out, she began planning Dude’s demise. Now, she might get 10 years and parole in two, but Dude will get life. As for the dress fragment, it was Holly’s favorite color. She wore sky-blue when I met her, and that was the color of Denise’s dress, too. Holly tricked Dude into the
exchange ruse by faking going to her Dad for the $50,000. She did all this to get back at her dad and Dude for their warning her off Gov. Morrow. That’s the case as I see it.”

Dan Witmer rose for a toast: “For services rendered beyond the call of duty, we salute you, Skee!” “Here-here!” the others chimed in. Skee made another toast: “To the memory of Denise, Dan’s loyal helpmate for 11-1/2 years and a good friend to us all”

Later, as Schenectady went to bed alone, he had visions of phones ringing off walls, so he carefully reached over the nightstand and pulled the phone-jack out of his wall. Holly Bush or no Holly Busy, he thought, he, Schenectady, needed a good night’s sleep.--Originally written&published in the 1990s by DvJM/me; I like this fictional short-story a fair amount, mainly due to the character of Schenectady. My best fictional short-story so far, though, is likely “Refuting a Stereotype the Hard Way”, about a part-African-American journalist in ca. 2000 Seoul. That story may be published in an upcoming SA volume. If not, an early version of it can be found in my 1998 collection “Going to the Well When It Counts.” (The well was a water well on my Grandparents-Muskats’ farm.)--DvJM.


“Scar Lover”, by Harry Crews.

Although the promotional literature for this gritty, courageous, profoundly comic novel alluded to its Faulknerian ferocity, I thought while reading it of John Steinbeck’s work and of the kind of idealism that earthy experience inspires in “common people”, most particularly in “The Grapes of Wrath.”

Take an “ordinary,” put-upon protagonist like Pete Butcher and expose him to the likes of Max Winekoff, an 85-year-old walker-talker on God’s green Earth; Gertrude Leemer, the half-crazed survivor of a double mastectomy and Pete’s future mother-in-law; George, the Burnt Nigger, and Linga, his conjuring wife; Jonathan, Pete’s scarred younger brother; and Sarah, Pete’s wife-to-be, as strong a woman as any of Steinbeck’s Joads by novel’s end; and you have the makings of a tour-de-force for Crews, not to mention Butcher.

Perhaps it’s not surprising, then, that Crews has dedicated his 18th book to that fascinating and ferocious ex-Madonna-man, Sean Penn, for they both have led provocative, hardball lives. Pete Butcher, too, has been around a bit, and been hurt as much as he has hurt others.

By the time we meet him, though, he is hurting, bad, slaving in a boxcar for dirt-cheap wages and dreaming, badly, about the little brother he accidentally
caught between the eyes with the back-end of his hammer just before his mother and father died in a fiery truck crash.

Running from a past that has scarred and blamed him, Pete avoids all personal contact. Then Sarah Leemer, the oddly beautiful girl next door, walks into his life. Slowly, sweetly, Sarah pulls Pete back into life, and into the ever-increasing complications of love, family, death and deliverance. For Sarah has made Pete her own, and as she stakes her claim, we see the miraculous power of love without boundaries or fear.

Crews’ language hits home, as does his imagery. The comic use of the skull of Sarah’s deceased father, and everything that goes into the story following his death, is the stuff of great tragicomedy, nothing less.

From Pete’s sure-sighted identification of Henry Sterns Leemer’s corpse at the mortician’s to the snatching and cremation of his body to the playful-sadistic placement of Henry’s skull on the post of Gertrude’s bed, and all the pithy language that accompanies the shenanigans in between, not a beat is missed.

John Steinbeck and William Faulkner would have been pleased to meet a man like Harry Crews of “Scar Lover”, a man who is unafraid to say what’s on his mind by tale’s end, and man who spins a spellbinding tale to hope upon, in a world that appears dismally bereft of hope at times.

Three cheers for Harry Crews, and three cheers for “Scar Lover.” The book and the man hit home. --DvJM.


“My nature is too passionate, my emotions too fervent, and I am a person who has to cling to someone in order to find peace and comfort.” So wrote Queen Victoria during some of the best years of her life. Despite her dour, censorious puritan facade in the popular mind, Queen Victoria was as susceptible to romantic love as any British sovereign before or since. We have Theo Aronson to thank for shedding some much-needed light upon this aspect of that very becoming royal personality.

Queen Victoria began life without the easy company of boys or men surrounding her; but by the age of 17, the pretty princess was coming to realize the very delicate delights that she had been missing during those early years. Prime Minister Lord Melbourne was her first true mentor and love. From there, she moved on to Prince Albert, who stood gallantly by her side for 22 years of marriage, and who fathered their nine children before his
much-mourned death in 1861.

Queen Victoria fell notably in love with at least six men. In addition to the two already mentioned, she also carried on romantic relationships with Napoleon III; her gillie, the rough-hewn John Brown; another Prime Minister, the silver-tongued Benjamin Disraeli; and her Indian servant, the exotic Munshi Abdul Karim. Indeed, one of her last requests before dying in 1901 was that a picture of John Brown and a lock of his hair be placed in tissue paper and buried in her left hand underneath a posy of flowers.

The appeal Queen Victoria felt for these six apparently [otherwise] disparate characters was that they were [all] men of distinctive personality. There was something exceptional about each of them. And they all—and this was probably their greatest attraction in the eyes of Queen Victoria—treated her as a woman first, a queen second.

Perhaps it was Disraeli who earned her confidence as much as anyone besides Albert. “Dizzy” presented her with the rights to the Suez Canal and its resultant prize, India. On 1st May 1876, after a choppy passage through [Parliament], the Royal Titles Bill was passed and Victoria was declared Queen-Empress. She was thrilled, and, blithely ignoring the fact that she was imperial only as far as India was concerned, the Queen signed herself with the imperial title on every possible occasion. Disraeli was awarded with a larger-than-lifesize portrait of his sovereign. He also gained perceptibly in the realm of romance.

And yet the greatest love of that industrious, richly appealing queen’s life was no one else but the handsome, sensitive and intelligent Prince Albert. No one received as many superlatives in her journal entries as her “Angel”, Albert. No one else assisted her rule as much as he did—her emotional and intellectual superior as husband, if not her legal equal as Prince Consort. Certainly, no one else commanded her supremely undying love. In fact, it was more than five years after his death before she could be convinced to officially open a Parliament.

By focusing on the Queen’s romantic associations and by making full use of recently revealed materials, Mr. Aronson has painted a fresh, intriguing and startlingly different portrait of Queen Victoria. With his talent for narrative and characterization, he has produced one of the most incisive and readable of his many royal biographies.--DvJM.

LA CROSSE—Demonstrators picketed outside the La Crosse Center Thursday—including walking around the building seven times to mimic the biblical story of Jericho—to protest a rock concert by the shock rock group Marilyn Manson.

Thursday’s protest was the latest in daily picketing and marching outside the center by local religious groups upset about the Gothic-techno group’s visit April 5.

Since March 21, when 18 protesters walked around the center once, the group has added one more walk around the center each day, until Thursday’s climax. The protesters also sang Christian songs. Police were not in attendance.

The group’s leader calls himself Marilyn Manson and took his stage name from the late actress Marilyn Monroe and killer Charles Manson. Its leader calls himself a reverend of the church of Satan, and the group is known for vulgarity and anti-Christianity themes.

Despite protests from clergy and some residents, the La Crosse Center board decided March 13 to let the concert proceed. The city attorney had advised that canceling it would risk a lawsuit.

Glenn Walinski, the center’s director, said 2,130 tickets had been sold by Thursday. The center seats 7,000 for concerts. Organizers expect to sell 3,000 to 4,000 tickets.

No alcohol will be served during the concert.

Walinski said 10 police officers would be on duty for the concert. Security for concerts is usually four to six officers. “I am hoping that it goes without incident,” he said.

Richard Lindley was among protesters Thursday.

“Thirty-two years ago, I would have called protesters heretics and radicals. But do you know what they call Jesus? They called him a radical. And now I feel I am doing God’s calling,” Lindley said.

Pastor Charles Robinson, of La Crosse’s First Church of Christ, one of the protest leaders, said, “I am not sure how God will exact his justice if Marilyn Manson performs, but I will leave it in God’s hands.”

Marilyn Manson is “just another rock show. It’s nothing different from [hard rock groups] Nine Inch Nails, White Zombie and Pantera, Walinski
said. “It’s not even different [for us] from country groups. We’re going to try and protect the safety of everyone there—the band, the protesters and the people attending the show.”--An AP photo by Dick Riniker was published with my/DvJM’s story.


LA CROSSE--First Federal Capital Corp. announced a 3-for-2 stock split and an increase in its quarterly dividend to 18 cents at its annual meeting Wednesday.

Both the dividend and the stock split—in the form of a common stock dividend—will be payable June 5 to shareholders of record on May 15. The dividend will be payable on a pre-split basis.

First Federal also reported profits hit an all-time high in 1996, rising from $10.6 million in 1995 to 13.6 million.

The bank’s total assets in 1996 stood at $1.515 billion, compared with $1.402 billion for 1995. Deposit liabilities in 1996 were valued at 1.024 billion, compared with $969 million in 1995.

Also at the annual meeting, First Federal announced that Robert B. Rennebohm had retired as a director. Rennebohm is the former president of the University of Wisconsin Foundation and has been active with First Federal for 35 years.

Shareholders at the meeting approved three motions: on the outstanding share stock option, on the nomination of three candidates to the board and on the ratification of Ernst & Young as auditors.

At the end of 1996, First Federal had 48 bank office locations statewide; since 1994, 23 new locations have been added. First Federal plans to open four more by the end of this year.

About 125 shareholders and others attended the meeting at the Radisson Hotel in La Crosse.--DvJM.


LA CROSSE—An 11-year-old boy was killed in a fierce fire at a paper recycling warehouse that one neighbor characterized Thursday as a playground for children.
Daniel Davenport was playing on the Paper Recycling of La Crosse property with two other boys when the fire started about 5 p.m. Wednesday, authorities said. The other youths escaped the blaze with only minor scrapes.

Thomas Dayton, 30, who was visiting relatives across the street, tried but failed to rescue the boy after he heard the youth’s screams. “I jumped over the fence, but by the time I got there the fire was too hot,” he said.

Dayton’s uncle, Edward Dayton, who lives across the street from the fire site, said he has regularly chastised young boys for playing in that area.

“I’ve heard the boys have built tunnels underneath [the bales],” he said.

Fire Chief Peter Stinson said the fire apparently started in the yard, burned through the building’s north wall and spread to the roof. By 6 p.m., all four walls had collapsed.

The fire was still burning Thursday morning, firefighters said, adding that a strong east wind made the blaze difficult to control.

At Jefferson Elementary School, also on the city’s north side, Daniel’s fifth-grade classmates were taking the news hard.

In fact, Thursday was “a very quiet day at Jefferson School,” principal Harvey Witzenburg said. “When we find out the day of [Daniel’s] funeral, we’ll try to make attendance as easy as possible.”--An AP photo by Erik Daily was published with my/DvJM’s original story.


LA CROSSE—Two brothers were sentenced Tuesday to life in prison for the slaying of a beer truck driver.

Nathaniel Lindell, 22, of La Crosse, was found guilty last month of first-degree intentional homicide, burglary and arson in the November 1996 death of Donald Hamacek, 64.

His brother, Joshua Lindell, 20, also of La Crosse, pleaded guilty to first-degree intentional homicide in October in the same case and testified against his brother.

While both were given life sentences, Joshua Lindell, who admitted his involvement in the slaying, will be eligible for parole 25 years before his brother, who continued to claim his innocence.

At his sentencing Tuesday, Nathaniel Lindell turned to onlookers seated behind him and said, “I just want to thank the people who do know me and
[have] not [listened to] all the propaganda of the media that’s been out there in the case."

La Crosse County Circuit Judge John Perlich sentenced Nathaniel Lindell to life in prison with parole eligibility in 50 years. He also was sentenced to a total of 50 years for arson and burglary to run concurrent with the life sentence. He plans to appeal.

“I think of what [Don Harmacek] can’t do anymore—watch the snow come down, take the dog for a walk,” the judge said. “He can’t do that anymore because of what you did.”

Joshua Lindell was sentenced to life in prison and will be eligible for parole in 25 years.

“There is no apology or words that can be said to undo this crime,” Joshua Lindell said.

The substantial difference in parole eligibility for the brothers was the result of Joshua Lindell’s cooperation with authorities compared with Nathaniel Lindell’s lack of remorse, District Attorney Scott Horne said.

Both were convicted of first-degree intentional homicide, which carries a mandatory penalty of life in prison.

“The sentences reflect the difference in the two brothers,” Horne said. “Obviously, both participated in a very brutal and violent crime. On the other hand, there was enough difference in the matter of remorse for the judge to vary the eligibility dates.

The Lindells stole money from Harmacek on the night of his death, but officers later found $8,000 still hidden in Harmacek’s home after the fire. Many coins were found in glass jars and currency was found tucked in the pages of books and magazines.

Harmacek was found during a fire at his home. At first, authorities suspected he had been shot in the head, but an autopsy showed he had been bludgeoned. He died of head wounds and smoke inhalation.

The brothers struck Harmacek several times with a hammer or wrench when they heard him stirring in his sleep. Then they poured bottles of liquor throughout the house and lighted it just before they fled, according to court records.—DvJM.

Woman Convicted of Abusing Husband—Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 7-12-97, by David Joseph Marcou.

LA CROSSE—A 53-year-old woman accused of banishing her husband to
the cellar for three years was convicted Friday on a misdemeanor charge of battery in a plea agreement with prosecutors.

Muriel E. Smith had been charged with felony abuse of a vulnerable adult for confining her 64-year-old husband to the cellar of their one-story home after he urinated on the floor of their bedroom.

However, she agreed to enter an Alford plea in La Crosse County Circuit Court to the lesser charge, said her attorney Timothy Guth. In an Alford plea, the defendant does not admit guilt but acknowledges there is sufficient evidence to convict.

Smith was charged with keeping her husband, Leroy, in the basement and allowing him upstairs only on special occasions. He had to ring a porch bell to get food or changes of clothing and had to walk to a convenience store eight blocks away to use the restroom, according to the criminal complaint.

A water meter reader called police on March 26 to report seeing Leroy Smith sleeping in a chair in the cellar over the past three years, the complaint says. [Mrs. Smith] was arrested the next day.

Muriel Smith has denied that her husband had been banished to their 6-by-8-foot basement and said she did not abuse him.

Muriel Smith faces up to nine months in jail when she is sentenced later this month. Under the original charges, she could have been sentenced to up to two years in jail if convicted.

Guth said he would first ask the judge to credit Muriel Smith with her five days served and ask for her release.

La Crosse District Attorney Scott Horne said his office agreed to the plea bargain out of consideration for Leroy Smith.

“It was critical to the agreement that the victim really wanted this result,” Horne said Friday. “This whole thing has been humiliating for him, and he was very concerned about the emotional trauma of going through the trial.”

Leroy Smith has apparently found another place to live, and Muriel Smith said she might move after sentencing.--DvJM.

**Woman Sent to Prison in Fatal Crash: Drunken Driver Also Must Visit Victim’s Grave—Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, 9-21-96, p. 5B, by David Joseph Marcou.**

LA CROSSE—A judge Friday ordered a La Crosse woman who killed a man in a drunken driving accident while she was free from jail from a previous drunken driving arrest to make an annual visit to the grave of her victim after
she serves up to 15 years in prison.

Crystal Glynn, 26, was sentenced in the February death of Michael Wilhelm, 33. Glynn was found guilty of reckless homicide in August.

After serving her prison sentence, Glynn will spend six years on probation. During that time, she must pay more than $17,000 in restitution to Wilhelm’s family and perform 30 hours of community service each month in the form of emergency room visits and participation in meetings of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

She also is required to visit the grave of her victim once a year.

“She’ll be eligible for parole in a little more than four years,” Deputy District Attorney Loralee Clark said.

“There is not a day that goes by that I don’t think about Michael and the pain I have caused your family,” Glynn told the victim’s family Friday. “There’s nothing I can do that can bring him back.”

In his admonishment to Glynn, La Crosse County Circuit Judge Michael Mulroy said, “It’s not a situation where you didn’t know what you were doing at the time.”

“Though facts are not recalled [by a drunken driver], the facts occurred as they happened.”

Glynn drove through three consecutive red lights and rammed into the side of Wilhelm’s car Feb. 24, traveling at at least 57 mph in a 25-mph zone, according to testimony in her trial.

At the time of the accident, Glynn was out of jail on a signature bond for her arrest on a previous drunken driving charge.

Clark called the sentence significant.

“I think it sends the message that drunken driving won’t be tolerated,” Clark said.

Glynn’s blood-alcohol content was 0.255% that night—more than twice the legal limit for drivers in Wisconsin [with a more recent change in law, Glynn’s B-A level was more than 3X the legal amount for driving], according to evidence in the two-day trial.

“I hope now that she is in prison, she will get her life turned around,” Said Wilhelm’s mother, Evelyn. “Nothing she can do will bring Michael back, but maybe she can go on and lead a useful life herself.”

Glynn’s attorney, John Brinckman, said the sentence wasn’t as tough as it could have been but was harsh compared with other sentences in similar
situations.--Though I did not know Evelyn Wilhelm personally then, she later became a Western Tech College extended ed writing student of mine, whose work was included in SA1. Also, if I’m not mistaken, Crystal Glynn did get her life turned around for the better after she left prison.--DvJM.


An English professor of mine used to speak of a “poetry of thought” that we all should prize. He meant thought that is poetic in essence—thought that is aware of the world so basically, so spiritually, that all the language describing it is “poetic” to a crucial extent.

Although Kent Nerburn and Peter Leschak exhibit different approaches to experience, they share an awareness of the world that can be termed poetry of thought.

Both men live in northern Minnesota, in the backwoods so to speak, and both respect nature as a result. Nerburn is more of a mystic, Leschak a “detective/firefighter”.

Nerburn reminds one of the mystical author and biologist Loren Eiseley, whose “The Star Thrower” and “The Immense Journey” reflect on humankind and spirituality in language that is ethereal. Nerburn, however, adds many American Indian ideas.

Leschak is more of a genial Dashiell Hammett, with language that is terse yet metaphorical. It draws on Indian thought and is sprinkled with a fair amount of firefighter slang [he fights wildfires during the summer], along with literary and scriptural allusions.

Nerburn’s “A Haunting Reverence” is a series of personal responses to the less obvious conflicts between European and American Indian cultures, and between humankind and nature.

A sculptor and author whose books include the acclaimed “Letters to My Son” and “Neither Wolf nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder”, Nerburn documents his life deeply, showing his belief in the spiritual world of rocks, trees, winds, birds, animals and humans. He deals repeatedly with the buffalo, that age-old symbol of Indian [interdependence with] nature, from discussions with a buffalo rancher to his discovery of an old buffalo sculpture that has been robbed of its spirituality by a fence that symbolizes the way...
Western society makes sacred things merely “important”.

Leschak’s book is filled with enthusiastic responses to wild-fires, saunas, skiing, marathon running, mountain climbing, Secret Lake (near his home) and his wife Pam (he swears they will never have children, to help save the planet). Then there is his threefold plan to love, learn and laugh, which he calls “The Awesome Triple-L.”

Raised as a Catholic, Leschak abandoned that faith under the influence of Garner Ted Armstrong and graduated from a fundamentalist Christian college in theology before becoming an agnostic. He has studied many religions, but he has come to believe in living decently “in the moment” instead. That is where he believes eternal life resides. His god, like Nerburn’s, exists in a human connection to nature and the cosmos.

Nerburn and Leschak are blessed with a gift for language, yet neither has gained the respect that he hopes for. Although Nerburn has been published in Europe, his meditations and essays are little known in other parts of this country. And Leschak complains that although his work has appeared in Harper’s, the New York Times and Outdoor Life, he has trouble drawing people in Minnesota to his book-signings.

Yet neither man believes he is destined for a life of fame, and both know they take risks in their writing. Both see the positive value in a life of awareness through writing.

Readers of these books will empathize with both authors, who share a “poetry of thought” that begins and ends with a belief in spiritual gifts that are the inheritance of all human beings.--DvJM.