Ms. Smith: Jan., '14
Rediget: Name @ Schmidt
5. Two Mead County Poor Farm?
6. Red Chief OK?
   - haircut? refer to in M's rec
   - refer to last Thursday "" ""
7. -day medics
8. -add glider pilots
12. - use "This was a god" again
12. - shortly at night: use w/ mitten
Good morning, Ivan and Carol.

At least I'm starting this on a VERY frosty morning. You've been watching—and enduring your own versions of frosty mornings. Yesterday afternoon and evening, I judged speech at a statewide meet held here in Helena, a 4 pm to 9:30 pm shift (I don't know how the kids or teachers do it). I parked my car foolishly facing into the wind. It was minus 4 when I went in, minus 13 when I came out. And while the car started reluctantly, it took long minutes before anything felt even functional. I had on a long down coat and a hat—and still I warmed up about midnight. Old bones, I think.

So—-I'll likely work on thoughts on The Dog Bus in stages. Big things first.

1. I couldn't tell you exactly all the whys, but this draft does seem substantially more substantial and lively. Actually, I will get the other version out before long and look in a couple places to see. And I do like the urban descriptions and such. Yea!! So, I got held still more! I like Herman more and have instantly less patience with Aunt Kate. I can "feel" the ride more.

2. The arrowhead. I have a variety of thoughts—none of which may be helpful and all of which you may already know. First, the part that I winced at a bit is that mostly in Montana—when I came—ranches picking up arrowheads and treating them casually seemed the norm. In the Preservation Office, we struggled a lot with getting ranchers to leave artifacts in place (artifacts out of context mean relatively little to scholars) and to take seriously the idea that their tipi rings had ANY value. So, Wendell would appear to be ahead of his time in any degree of stewardship. And then Donny may be doubly and unhistorically precious. I bet you have your own memories of arrowheads in fields. Second and this especially I bet you know--------Donny has pocketed obsidian and likely from Obsidian Cliff in Yellowstone National Park—a sweet circle of writing if I'm understanding Donny and Herman's route. The Cliff doesn't look like much, but I'm pretty sure I'm remembering just how widespread and important these obsidian materials are in documented Montana sites: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obsidian_Cliff Third, hmm, Indian thoughts are artifacts: While ranchers collected arrowheads and flakes and tools, I'm not aware that contemporary tribes do much. From the 80s on, Indians have had strong feels about NOT digging and documenting prehistoric sites. But in the 1950s, I'm not at all sure how many Indians would have made a lot of connections between artifacts and their cultures. Fourth, assuming obsidian to be the material, it will cut a hole through Donny's pocket in no time. Read a smile here.

3. I'm all over the map on Donny and age. Actually, I'm a little daunted too by when it's young Donny talking and when it's older Donny reflecting. But more on that later. So, you need to know that Amanda is about the only yardstick I really have on age--maybe Martha' Anna a bit. Truthfully, I think the three of us (Carol, Ivan, and Marcella) all grew up so much in the land of adult conversation and books that we are not the norm. So in all your writing, Ivan, I've found the kids to be more thoughtful, articulate, reflective than most kids are. I always just grant you that—because it makes, of course, for a far richer story. And it's why I always hear "you" in these kids' thinking. As to Donny, I think you're OK with the eleven-going-on-twelve framework, because—using Amanda as my frame—kids that age are all over the map: wise one minute, throwing tantrums the next, wanting to be older, but playing with toy-toys next, etc. So I think the age-frame is elastic. Still, I think that the amount of debate and discourse inside Donny's head is unusual—but an OK license. You might consider sometimes having Donny just say what he feels: I'M TIRED; I'M HUNGRY. Based on Amanda, it's also that great age of puberty unease, stink, body change, etc. Beyond curiosity and attraction, baths matter.

4. One place where Donny's maturity or absence thereof plays out is with his Kate Smith confusion. Did I write about this the first time? Hmm. You likely can and I can't put myself back with Kate. We listened to radio, but not enough for me to develop the kind of hero worship that seems to fuel Donny's wish for mistaken identify—his moments of gullibleness. So that's a place in the manuscript where I am a little disbelieving.

5. Should you have the slightest interest in using real life in your Readers' Digest Condensed book material, you can actually pull up their offerings here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reader's_Digest_Condensed_Books#1950
6. The paragraph at the top of page 2 is the place where I began an ongoing debate about when Donny was looking back from adulthood and when he was narrating his contemporary experience. And actually, in that paragraph, I think you want to substitute "then" for the phrase "for now." On page 6, second paragraph, there's another reflective paragraph—furthering that question of which thoughts are current and which later. In fact, in the middle of that paragraph, I'd change tenses in some spots. There seem to be time shifts again in perspective at the top of page 28.

8. This time I'm struck by how little Donny looks out the window and considers landscape—although I realize that we're talking Hi-Line and North Dakota.

9. This time around too I thought a little more about when Donny's parents die—and how long he's lived with being alone—with their loss. It seems like, chronologically following the war and some career with the big caterpillars, that they can't have been gone too long, though it feels longer in Donny's reflections.

10. Details:
   - Page 5 - end of the first paragraph feels an eence awkward.
   - Page 5 - end of the second paragraph - last sentence - one of Donny's particularly sophisticated observations.
   - Page 6 - Love the "do any bunnies have feet left" line!!
   - Page 11 - Paragraph that starts "grudgingly," I got lost in the middle of the paragraph.
   - Page 29 - Bottom of the page. I'm pondering whether Montana bus depots had bays. We still barely have airport gates.
   - Page 42 - Joke in third paragraph. I think you're OK with 4 wheels—but the scenic cruisers had 6 - and I keep peering at the pictures to see if any of the four-wheelers were actually double.
   - Page 47 - Typo with Sparrowhead about two thirds of the way down.
   - Page 85 - I do love your inclusion of the depot description.
   - Page 127 - Shag rugs come around in the 60s. (Don't you wish I'd mind my own business some times!!!)
   - Page 167 - Paragraph that begins "So, after lunch," I think you might want to say "a bit MORE progress"

More than enough!!!

All good.

What fun to have a peek into your molding and shaping a story, words, images!!

Take lots of care. As always, ignore me when I don't know what I'm talking about!

Love,

Marcella
Hi Ivan. I first read the 170 pages before between Thanksgiving and December 12. Then I, unexpectedly had to fly down to Sisters, OR to be with my sister Adrienne as she had foot surgery and for five days. I had expected to work more on the reading down there, but that didn’t happen. Then I had to catch up with all the stuff I had been planning to do at home during that time to get ready for Christmas. So no w, after Christmas, I’m back to this. Of course, I found myself thinking about The Dog Bus, on and off during the period between December 12 and Christmas, so I decided to give you my feedback in a variety of ways.

The story generated lots of memories for me: S&W stamps, canasta (I actually once knew how to play canasta back in the 50s), Reader’s Digest Books, the many colloquial sayings familiar to me from my Montana, Idaho father.

Loved having the Williamson connection. As a reader of your from the beginning, I felt connected with all the references to the English Creek, etc. But the references I don’t think are “off putting” to a new reader.

Dressing up to travel.

NOTES/COMMENTS I WROTE IN THE MARGINS DURING MY FIRST READ THROUGH:

CHAPTER ONE
Page 3, bottom paragraph: the reference to RD condensed books bring memories

Page 5, toward the end of the first paragraph: the phrase --the real one, I mean—didn’t compute for me; my note says the “real one”, as compared to what other?

End of second paragraph: “the worst of life crowded so close onto the best of it” I liked the phrase; my note called it “nice”

Page 6, the last two sentences at the paragraph continued from the second page, I really liked.

Page 7, on the middle of this page, I wrote the comment: “I’m caught in the story and the visual images come in my brain.

At the end of Chapter One, I wrote: At this point, I have a good sense of Donel and lots of questions about what is going to happen. And I am enjoying his thinking process as he traveled through known places.

CHAPTER TWO
Page 13, paragraph starting at the end of the page, I put a question mark in relation to the phrase “in no way was that like this” Somehow the phrasing confused me and I had to read it several times.

Page 22, in the first paragraph I could distinctly see the house.

Page 23, last paragraph, I wrote: Neat to your devoted readers to figure how this fits with Prairie Nocturne.

Page 25, first sentence of last paragraph, I wrote: I got interrupted with the first sentence. I’m trying to figure out why: something about the two “that”s I think.

Last sentence, I wrote Good! I’m glad he did that!!

CHAPTER THREE
At this point, I am totally grabbed. And I was already set up to think he was going to somehow get the
arrowhead, only my anticipation was that he would ask for it, but taking it was much better.
I also wrote: I'm wondering what happened to his parents.

Page 28, those brief descriptions of the people on the bus worked for me.

Pages 30-31, green stamps. This was cool; I remembered licking the stamps and putting them in the book. The only question I had was would this description work as vividly as it did with our generation? But I think it does.
My reaction to the story so far: this is delightful

Page 35, the word “Quink” I didn’t understand it.

Pages 45-46. Great, you answered my questions about his parents and that way you flowed in with Donny figuring out how he knew of Leticia to Dorie to the flowers on the crosses. The crosses themselves brought me memories of driving across Montana both as a child and as an adult and seeing all those crosses

CHAPTER FOUR
No comments

CHAPTER FIVE
p. 68. First paragraph, last sentence, I wrote: I almost missed this, but I like it. Is there a way to focus attention on it more?

p. 68, in the middle of the second paragraph, I decided I needed to look at a map. So they took highway 87 to highway 2 and along 2.

p. 70, first paragraph: Pleasantville—I liked this subtle reference

p. 70, second paragraph, I really like the images of the white centerline, jackrabbits and I liked the language in that whole paragraph.

p. 81, I was so caught up in this that I really got afraid that the man would get away with this.

CHAPTER SIX
p. 85, I loved the swayve and debonure

p. 85 and 86, you had him buy a milky way and then you have him munching chocolate and almonds. There are no almonds in a milky way.

p. 86, second paragraph, the sentence beginning “The missing detail that I had no fixed notion. . . .” I got lost in the sentence and had to read it several times.

pp. 87-92, I got all caught up in the teamster’s drive to St. Paul.

CHAPTER SEVEN
I enjoyed the Zimmerman interactions. They came at a nice time to calm me down after Donel missing the bus.
CHAPTER EIGHT
p. 121, the first use of “you betcha” by Herman. For me, “you betcha” is so owned by the Scandihuvians that it seemed out of place coming from a German. Each time Herman says this, I think of Scandinavians and not of Germans. The use of “I betcha” seems to work better than the “you betcha”

CHAPTER NINE
The description of the living room worked for me.
pp. 137-139: this reflection seemed appropriate in timing and content to tie together the events in the story up to this point.

p. 141: I got lost in the last sentence on the page; I don’t get what the words “rotten sort” and “better kind” are referring to.

CHAPTER TEN
p. 151, last paragraph. “make yourself useful as well as ornamental” was a quote used often by my father to us two girls. Only he would say “Make yourself useful as well as ornamental, on account of” leaving unsaid the “you’re not very ornamental”.

“i” is missing in swarming in next to last line of page.

p. 152, “Herman’s big footsteps” should that be footprints? Prints are visible, steps are heard. My father used to make us laugh by saying: I hear footprints approaching on horseback.

p. 158, last line typo: yu for you

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS YOU ASKED ME.
Does the story grab you fast enough?
This was a gentler entry than other of your works. I felt led in instead of pulled in. I got fully in it in the first chapter.

Do the situation, language and characters carry you without qualms until the arrowhead is stolen?
Yes, by page seven, I was into the story. Just when the questions I had about Donel would reach a point that I really needed to know, you would tell me something more that made me want to keep reading because I had more questions. I felt connected to the characters. I wanted to know more.

Donny, does he hold your interest? Get you pulling for him despite some of his actions?
Yes, he held my interest. I was pulling for him and did not feel put off by any of his actions. In fact, the actions endeared him to me. I found myself really intrigued by what you might say at the end to the story with comments by the adult Donal. But as I looked back at the manuscript, I was really surprised that it took to page 7 to get to his name. It was just a natural lead in and I was ready for his name (but didn’t feel any sense of missing the name till then) when it appeared on page 7.

Herman the German.
I don’t have a strong sense of Herman after my first read through.
He doesn’t really come across as German at this point. I hope Katharina can give you some suggestions on this.
The “I telled you....” on p. 130 did work.
I started to get a better sense of him on p. 156, but he is still not very vivid to me.
I loved his use of the photographic plates. That gave me a sense of him.
Knowing what I know ahead of time of his appearing on the bus with Donal, I am really interested in seeing how this develops. But I don’t have a sense of how a reader that knows nothing of the future might perceive Herman at this point.

**Aunt Kate**
I actually have a picture of her after my first reading.
But she doesn’t come across to me as a villainess.
She just seems to be a wife of the era (memories of my own childhood and parents with mother and father each being focused on what they each did)

**Strangers on the greyhound: anybody too outlandish? Not vivid enough?**
*They seemed pretty realistic.*
I enjoyed the trip and each interaction. I found myself picturing them each pretty clearly. I liked the variety and they seemed realistic for who might ride the bus across Montana. It gives Donal a chance to learn a little more about the world and gives him a sense of being able to handle whatever comes his way even though he doesn’t know it yet.

Three soldiers
Sheepherder on a spree
Nun
Leathery older couples
Vacationers
Leticia
Indian
Sheriff and prisoner
Newly released prisoner
Mae and Joe Zimmerman
Camp Kids
I decided to list the main strangers and I found I had a good sense of them with your descriptions and dialogue.

**Donny’s interior thought hopes and fears. How do they flow with the action? Do any of these sections seem redundant, tell you too much or too little, or simply are in the way when you want some action to happen.**
The imagination, hopes and fears clearly come through by pp. 3 & 4. It seemed natural and fit for me. The sections were not in the way for me, but seemed appropriate to the story. I didn’t have any sense of them being in the way. They seemed to fit in with the action and they didn’t overwhelm the action or get in the way for me. I liked the juxtaposition of the interior thoughts with the action.

**OTHER COMMENTS**

? Usually I like your long complex sentences Occasionally the long sentences got me lost:
p. 5 “Next on the route . . . .”
p. 98, middle of page, “The saving grace of an uncorked imagination...” I liked the meaning, but had to read it several times to get it.

p. 155, the paragraph that is one sentence starting with” Cowboys such as them...”

As I reflect back on the story after writing all these comments, I am very much caught up in Donal and what will happen to him. I am aware that I have no sense of how the story will end. But I want to find out!!

The story is staying with me as the days go on. The story so far does not predict what will happen. The only hint was the one mention of the return ticket. I think your readers would not be able to anticipate the road trip, but will really see it as natural to have happened when it does happen.
Very good morning to you, Ms. Editor, and a scribbler's grateful thanks for work and grace under pressure. I'm chagrined that you had to handle this amid so much else, and relieved that you managed to do it and can now go off and sail the seas of what I hope is tranquility. Bon voyage to you and Norm, in any case.

A few quick thoughts on your comments, which I'll take some time to digest and save the tangled-sentence ones until I revise enough to send stuff to my editor (who has not seen a word of this book-to-be):

--Terrific hint!--I betcha instead of you betcha. It solves the Scandihuvian inflection that has bothered me too, but Herman has to say something like that. You noted that he didn't seem all that German to you, and this is part of the plot: Donny is shocked to find out he is a German and was a soldier, immediately jumping to the conclusion (wrongly; Herman's a World War One vet) that his one friend and ally in that household was the kind of guy who shot the bejesus out of Donny's dad at Omaha Beach. So that, and their reconciliation, is to come in the story.

--Kate has a lot of work to be done on her yet, and I think I may walk a line where she indeed is a villainess to Donny but somewhat tragic in her own right, rigid and self-centered and ending up knowing it. We'll see; the rewriting I've done since Thanksgiving humanizes and complicates her somewhat, I think.

--Glad you liked the Zimmermans, and for just the reason I put 'em in, a pause in Donny's bus traumas and a glimpse of another way of life, which he's always yearning for. They're going to come back, I think, to check on him in Manitowoc, which will face them off against Aunt Kate.

--The National Geographic trove is now in Donny's room in the attic, and he holes up in the living room to read about Peru etc. (and probably to look at the naked folks) while Kate and Herman have a fight for breakfast every day.

Well, enough for now, just thanks, thanks, thanks. One change I think I'm going to make is the title. I'm finding that people who haven't been around the Greyhound bus level of society don't easily get The Dog Bus. Tentatively I'm changing to Last Bus to Wisdom, which is not only the little Montana town (south of Missoula in the Big Hole valley) where Donny and Herman will end up and find their salvation, but would capture Donny's (and Herman's, actually) maturation in his summerlong life-changing journey. Again, we'll see if that flies.

And now you must sail. See you next year.

Ivan

On Dec 30, 2013, at 8:38 PM, Ann McCartney wrote:

| <Comments on the Dog Bus..docx>
193 - remind, mo?
195 - fields/fields (pale)
221 - There? invasion (Emden in Prussia)
  Name Blasius
  these people
224 - A Horse makes unlaugt
235 - twice
235 - Donny must give to yo Herma
245 - crossed out, dup
245 -
279 - in. / should be cap T?
306 - Opieem /ingen OK?
320 - Poland is
323 - thinner / instead of thinner
347 - an

350 - H the unlaugt
352 - /ater
  wearers etc. - the
355 - Den Jumper (comp)
  Wunder etc
357 - Envir
361 - longer unlaugt
4189 - deals & changing, create
4197 - needs?
  deeps 59, 60, 104

Donny gives: $2
Schröcher "

Piels Pils

Prussians

Höhe Toter Mann

" " "

" " " (Kate gives D. the money)

veteran of Der Kaiser's army ( der Kaiser's Army)

finger spitzengefühl (m. pl.) capital letters?

spitzen finger (?)

police are coming is coming

Ja, I think so ( why past tense ?)

Here is am what is called an alien ( without an ?)

Heohe Toter Mann (m. pl.)

like der Kaiser's hunting lodge dem Kaiser sein Jagdschloß

Liebchen ( der kleine

Auf Wiedersehen

Number Eins

Fingerspitzengefühl

00 ?

09 ?

Or am J. (?)

duplicates pp. 59, 60, 104
Ivan,

The two columns below are always on our computer display for reference. May not work for Apple. Attached are characters for Italian, French, Spanish and Norwegian Hermans.

John

äh=132 Ä=142
ö=148 Ö=153
„=0132 “=0147
ß=225 €=0128
û=129 Ü=154
É=144 é=130
»=174 «=175
§=0167 ë=0162
@=64

• Hold Down Alt.
• Press above numbers
• Must be in NumLock.
Typing Foreign Characters

To Type German, Spanish, French, or Italian Characters on a Standard American Computer Keyboard (not Apple), select numlock and press alt plus one of the numbers (codes) below using the numlock keys. See next page for laptops.*

Alternate codes are shown in parentheses. Any number can be used in any language and are grouped by languages for easy reference. This method is valid for any application (e.g. word processing or email. Font is "Times New Roman", but most other fonts should work.

General: € = 0128 (euro); ° = 0176 (degree); » = 0187; «/» = 174/175 (quotes); ± = 0149
§ = 0167 (paragraph); $ = 36; @ = 64; % = 37; £ = 0163; ç = 0162; Û = 0188
¼ = 0189; ½ = 0190; ³ = 0186 (167); ¹ = 0185; ² = 0178; ± = 246; : = 0183

"General" category applies to most languages and keyboards (e.g. @ = 64).

German:
ä = 132 (0228)   Ä = 142 (0196)   ß = 225 (0223)
ö = 148 (0246)   Ö = 153 (0214)   „ = 0132 (start quote)
“ = 0147 (end quote) or use »/« for quotes. (174/175)
ü = 129 (0252)   Ü = 154 (0220)   é = 130 (0233)

Italian:
a = 0224 (133)   À = 0192   ò = 0243 (162)   Ó = 0211
é = 0233 (130)   È = 0201   ù = 0249 (151)   Ù = 0217
è = 0232 (138)   Ý = 0200
ì = 0236 (141)   Ì = 0204
ò = 0242 (149)   Ò = 0210

French:
à = 133 (0224)   À = 0192   ë = 137   Ë = 0203
â = 131   Â = 0194   ì = 140   ï = 0206
ä = 132   Ä = 142   ï = 139   Ì = 0207
æ = 145   Æ = 146   ô = 147   Ô = 0212
ç = 135   Ç = 128   œ = 0156   Ò = 0140
é = 130 (0233)   Ê = 144   û = 151 (0249)   Ü = 0217
è = 138 (0232)   Ý = 0200   û = 150   Ù = 0219
ê = 136   Ë = 0202   ù = 129 (0252)   Ü = 154 (0220)

Spanish:
á = 160   Á = 0193   ì = 173
é = 130   É = 144   ç = 168
ò = 162   Ó = 0211   ~ = 126
ù = 164   Ñ = 165   ~ = 0150
ú = 163   Ü = 0218   — = 0151 (repeat for quote line)
i = 161   Í = 0205

jmalaoo@aol.com for help. Revised 06-04-2014
NORWEGIAN

To Type Norwegian characters on a U.S. keyboard select numlock, hold down alt and press the following:

\[\begin{align*}
x & = 145 \ (0230) \quad \underline{A} = 0198 \quad \ddot{o} = 0243 \quad 
\ddot{O} = 0211 \\
\sigma & = 0248 \quad \Omega = 0216 \quad \acute{e} = 0233 \quad 
\acute{E} = 0201 \\
\hat{a} & = 134 \ (0229) \quad \hat{A} = 143 \ (0197) \quad \acute{e} = 136 \quad 
\acute{E} = 0202 \\
\hat{o} & = 0242 \quad \hat{O} = 0210 \quad \hat{o} = 147 \quad 
\hat{O} = 0212 \\
\hat{a} & = 0224 \quad \hat{A} = 0192 \quad \epsilon = 0128 \ (\text{euro}) \quad 
\acute{c} = 0162
\end{align*}\]

*For laptops, if there is no Numeric keyboard, there is usually a function key, when combined with the numlock key, that will place the laptop into numlock.

For Word in Numlock: Alt+1=©; Alt+0=.; Alt+23=€; Alt+24=j; Alt+25=t. Try Alt+(n+x) to get other characters.

Note: I have tested the above without problems, but only you can validate its use. These character codes are for occasional users. For heavier usage consider the several national keyboards provided under Windows.

jmaloof@aol.com for help. Revised 06-04-2014
Chapter 11
I like the break in chapter 10 into chapter 11—it fits.
The redo of the storm and ship is much clearer to me
Also the redo on taking out some of the description on p. 169 works better.

Chapter 12
p. 176, how well I remember Ma Perkins and Stella Dallas, listened to when I was home sick.
p. 186, middle of page typo Donny
p. 189 I remember Muumuu’s—I think I still have a pattern on one!
p. 190, last line on page typo: the t is missing from outfoxed.
p. 192 typo on largest paragraph, whp should be who
p. 192 – I missed the reference to the Campbells
p. 192, next to last paragraph, does that : before land belong?

Chapter 13
p. 205 first paragraph, typo, I n needs to be replaced with in.
p. 206, second paragraph, “somthiong” needs to be “something” and an extra space in the next line between “too” and “awfully”.
p. 211, Middle of page, fourth paragraph, type “So I was caught hy” should be “by”

Chapter 14
p. 220, typo in next to last sentence of first paragraph, take the s out of orphanage.
p. 228 typo in middle of first paragraph “going”
p. 228 typo in second paragraph in next to last sentence: need a space between “glow” and “I”

Chapter 15
No comments

Chapter 16
Pages 247 and 248 were missing

Two chapter 16s? p. 245 and p. 256?
At the end of p. 263, Donny is talking to Gram and at the top of 264, Herman is talking to Gram—how did that switch happen?
On page 265, you need to remove the repeat from the previous page.

Chapter 17 --this is my favorite chapter—so vivid, it pulls me right into the rodeo
p. 301 Description of dancers really worked for me; I could vividly see them in my mind.
p. 302 again great description of the chute area
p. 311, I like the sentence: Life can tickle you in the ribs surprisingly when it’s not digging it thumb in.
p. 320, next to last paragraph, second line. I found myself tripped up by the sentence. “you like the whole earth is his.” Is there a word or two missing?
p. 330, third paragraph, breathing on the glasses, brought so many memories.

Chapter 18
p. 333, third paragraph from bottom, “yallostone” doesn’t really give me a sense of how Herman pronounced this wrong, Perhaps “yallahstone”?
p. 336, second paragraph, 7th line down, typo the e is missing from deserved.
p. 341, second paragraph, sixth line, there is an I on the end of evident.

Chapter 19
p. 352, next to last paragraph, 4th line up from bottom of paragraph, typo, which should be which.
p. 363, third paragraph, second line, a Lone. This is the first I caught of “Lon.”
Chapter 20
No comments

Chapter 21
Loved the names of the hobos
p. 384, end of fourth paragraph: nicknLon
p. 390, Next to last paragraph: nLon? P. 394 nLon to sign their check. I got to thinking this might be a special hobo term that I didn’t know (like I didn’t know Qwink) so I tried to look it up and found nothing

Chapter 22
And here it comes again: 397 DilLon; p. 398 galLon; p. 399 flLon; p. 401 mLon, so my theory didn’t work. Loved the sense of the hobo camp

Chapter 25
p. 428, second paragraph, orphanag should be orphanage
p. 430, second paragraph, typo in buffaloed.
p. 433, second paragraph, first sentence: whoo, that is one long sentence! I had to read it several times.

Chapter 26
p. 438, I liked the last sentence of the top paragraph: Electrifying, to use a word that still holds true of such a shot of overnight growing up.
p. 438, last sentence in next to last paragraph is long, but it works well for me.
p. 439, toward the end of the last paragraph, third line from bottom “... an agitator and 00,” what is that?
p. 440, third paragraph from bottom, the last sentence: I stumbled a bit over it and I’m not sure why.
p. 443, next to last paragraph, sentence beginning “The Big Hole was showing off...” Really vivid for me.

Chapter 27
p. 449 type in second paragraph: hve needs an a.
p. 450 third paragraph, fourth line, typo raised
p. 451, second line, typo: aa for as
p. 451, last paragraph, shouldn’t Mrs. Rasmussen be Mr.
p. 452, first paragraph, sixth line, typo: the e is missing in deliberately; and last line of that paragraph, two typos: third word “ed” what is that? And last word office.
p. 453, first paragraph, next to last line, TYPO ALWAYS
p. 453, second paragraph, fourth line, space is missing between “the” and “phone”
p. 454, seventh paragraph, second line, type, “tnhis”

Chapter 28
p. 456, first paragraph, third line from end, type: payday
p. 460, vivid images of the ride to town.
p. 470, fifth paragraph, second sentence, typo: inquiryttoo
p. 472, first paragraph, fourth line from end of paragraph, shouldn’t that be respective brew rather than respective grew?
p. 472, last paragraph, fourth sentence, typo: twenty
p. 480, I smiled with the words of the third paragraph!
p. 482, third paragraph, next to last sentence: I think it is a typo with “toutes” instead of “routes”

Chapter 29
p. 487, should there be another question mark in that first line: “You are? I mean, are you?”
p. 497, end of first paragraph, typo diffewculty?
p. 497, next to last paragraph, should there be a question mark after Or am I? I have find myself asking about question marks several times in my reading; I’d love to learn from you about when you don’t use question marks on some things that I think seem to be questions.
Chapter 2
p. 23 Your taking out the information about the Major was a good decision. While I found it interesting as a long time reader of your books, it was an unnecessary sidebar that didn’t add to the story.

Chapter 3
pp. 26-28 The brief descriptions of the people on the bus worked to give me a strong sense of each person. I liked the addition of the orphanage.
I enjoyed the use of the language of the era: jif, tittytatting

Chapter 4
On page 53 last paragraph, should there be a question mark at the end of the first sentence? Yet there was another consideration, wasn’t there? After all, the prize sleeper was not the only autograph book candidate and possible conversation partner on the packed dog bus, was he?
Page 64, first line: You have written finder, keeper. I have only heard it in the plural: finders, keepers.

Chapter 5
I smiled at the beginning paragraph of this chapter.

Chapter 6
Page 82 I learned something new: the plural of bus can be either buses or busses.

Chapter 7
Page 94: hm, interesting, name change from Zimmerman to Schneider. Ah, on page 390, I see why you changed the name.

Chapter 8
p. 100 I love the addition of the condoms!

Chapter 9.
p. 118, third line from bottom, typo: need space between “old” and “Smith”
p. 133-135 I like the redo of the description of his attic bedroom
p. 136,137. The title of the book Deadly Dust is in English? But the text is in German? Would it be this way?

Chapter 10
p. 153, third paragraph, the phrase Photographic plates—should this be written as the three words? Photographic-plates. So something like that?
Howdy, Ann. You are actually very timely with your comments—my editor's are supposed to arrive early next week. She's FedExing a "lovely" cover possibility meanwhile, so things are about to start to perk. I see you did a really copious job of going through the ms—thanks a million one more time, my dear. Incidentally, the Lon gremlin and others I think I've taken care of. By the way, your Nat'l Geos are safe sound, waiting for you to come by for them and visit a bit.

Until then, heartfelt gratitude to an old friend who always comes through.

Ivan

On Jan 16, 2015, at 12:05 AM, Ann McCartney wrote:

Attached are my comments. I hope they make sense to you. Call me if you have questions.

I did key my comments to the page numbers I was reading. I worried that you might be working from an entirely different draft and these page references would not make sense. Let me know if you have problems locating where my comments fit.

I enjoyed the opportunity to read and make comments; I hope they are helpful. "Enjoyed" isn't a strong enough word. It was a privilege to learn more about your writing in this process. Thanks.

Ann

<Last Bus to Wisdom.docx>
Attached are my comments. I hope they make sense to you. Call me if you have questions.

I did key my comments to the page numbers I was reading. I worried that you might be working from an entirely different draft and these page references would not make sense. Let me know if you have problems locating where my comments fit.

I enjoyed the opportunity to read and make comments; I hope they are helpful. "Enjoyed" isn't a strong enough word. It was a privilege to learn more about your writing in this process. Thanks.

Ann
Some general comments written right after I finished going through the book the second time.

These comments are written after I did the page comments.

First of all, I didn’t want the book to end. Donny and Herman and all the other characters really came alive for me. As I look back over the list I made of the characters chapter by chapter, I think they all work, both the bigger roles and the smaller roles. See comments on characters at end of page comments.

So, are these going to be parts I, II, and III? It really helped me to have the dates for the sections.
I was thinking that he was longer in Manitowoc so when he pulls out the S&W stamps in Miles City to get the hats, I first thought there was a mistake and that he didn’t have the stamps anymore. I guess I had him staying longer in Manitowoc, so the dates set me straight.

The Dog Bus June 16-17, 1951 (wasn’t the trip 2 ½ days; I remember something about two nights, so shouldn’t there be three dates?)
Where Manitou Walks June 17-30, 1951 (chapter 9)
The Promised Land June 30-August 16, 1951 (chapter 15)

I did refer back to the original 176 pages I had read and it was really interesting to me to see both your big and little changes. Some I noticed and wrote down separately from the page comments, but here are some:
p.5/6 I like the change in the last sentence.
I like the little word changes, like adding “impressive” before Great Falls on p. 9
I looked up Quink on the internet and learned something!!
More later in the specific page comments.

Herman’s language. I think there is just enough broken English there to give a real sense of Herman’s German background. Some examples I remember:
p. 317 As means, stealed? Let’s think over. Difference case, that it
p. 378 ourselfs

There is something happening with “Lon”. It first shows up on page 363 (at least the first time I noticed it) in the third paragraph as they are going into the infirmary. I thought at first it was a typo with a capital L in aLone in the second line. Then it started showing up in chapter 21: p. 384, at the end of fourth paragraph, nicknLon.p. 390. Next to last paragraph: nLon? P. 394 nLon to sign their check, p. 397 DilLon; p. 398 galLon; p. 399 filLon; p. 401 mLon. You can see from my notes under the pages that at first I thought it was a specialized hobo word having to do with names, but it just kept showing up in odd places. Page 396, second paragraph end of sixth line, nLonI think there were a couple of other places, but I can’t find them again.

I started to try to jot down what stood out for from the book, but there were so many images, events, specific people that when I started writing something down, I would just think of something. When you were first talking about the future book and his traveling by bus, I never would have predicted where the story went. I loved the hobos, the Crow Fair, the cow, etc. I can sense that I will find myself remembering little happenings.

Comment written about specific pages as I read the entire book through the second time.
Since you are probably working on a whole different manuscript than I read, let me know if I have give you more information to find the place in the manuscript.

Chapter 1
The second sentence is really, really long, but I think it works.
I like the detail about “the shipboard chapters of Mr. Roberts”
p. 5 I like the change from poor farm to poorfarm with the additional phrase.
Characters:
I have placed them under the chapter where they first appeared, but my comments relate to all the places they are in the book.

Hefty gray-haired woman: just enough description
  Gram. Her way of talking gives me a sense of her and an image that I keep in my mind as she is referenced and appears throughout the book.
  Sparrowhead, Wendell Williamson: early descriptions and manner gave me a strong sense of him so that he was right in character when he showed up at the Crow Fair and accused Donny

Chapter 3  These all worked
Three soldiers
  Turk Turco, Gordon, Mickey
Sheepherder on a spree
Nun holy hood
Leathery older couples
Some vacationers dressed to the teeth
Pinched face agent
These all gave me a feel and picture of the characters.
Letty

Chapter 4
Indian with black braids
sheriff
Harv

Chapter 5
Yardbird/stealer of suitcase: didn’t really get a strong picture of him, but not needed

Chapter 6
Newspaper driver

Chapter 7
Mae and Joe Schneider

Chapter 8
Campers
Herman
Aunt Kate:

Chapter 13
Gerta and Herta

Chapter 16
Writer on bus. I figured out before the signature that he had to be Jack Kerouac, so you captured what I have perceived is his style.

Chapter 17
Louie Slewfoot and all the others at the Fair had enough description that I could vividly see the people in the context of what was happening.

Chapter 18
Minister: I somehow didn’t have a very strong image of him.
Dr. Schneider – Not much of a sense of him as a person, but seems adequate for his role.

Chapter 20,
Hoppy
Highpockets – I really like his “wisdom” and leadership

Chapter 21
Hobo contingent. When reading this section, I ended up looking up hobo on Wikipedia. I got a good sense of the whole crew here and this developed as we were in the kip and haying and went to the bar. So it totally made sense to me that they would all grab the hayforks there in the last chapter.

Chapter 23
Harv, I like how Harv is developed in this last part of the book.
Mallory

Chapter 24
Jones
NN—No sweat. Send it when you can. The achin' back tale is too tedious to go into—tell you later.

Best,
Ivan

On Jan 10, 2015, at 4:06 PM, Ann McCartney wrote:

Ivan: I didn't make the ninth with my comments. I got a three day sinus attack (which, I guess, they are now calling sinus migraines) and just came up from it on Friday afternoon. I'm plugging away with transcribing my comments to an email, but it may be a few days yet.

What happened with your back?
All the doctors are amazed at how clean Norm's arteries are, but he is still waiting on an appointment with the pulmonary doctor and the sleep apnea test.

All quiet and gloomy up here in Bellingham. Oh, we did trade in the Toyota 4Runner for a Subaru Forester.

Ann

-----Original Message-----
From: carol doig <cddoig@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, December 22, 2014 4:16 PM
To: Ann McCartney
Subject: Re: A very delayed reporting in

Ann, hi--

Appreciated your report, and don't sweat it about getting your reactions to the manuscript to me. I'll be working with my editor, and probably proofs, for some time to come, so tweaks likely can be made. Glad you like the ending--everyone seems to.

Tell Norm we always knew he had beautiful qualities around his heart. Here's hoping his medical stuff goes OK. Tomorrow I see the leading back doctor at Group Health, as my back has been hurting like hell since just after Thanksgiving. Nonetheless, we're looking forward to a dandy Christmas with Mark and Lou and Linda and Jeff, here--Carol scored a gorgeous rib roast at Costco today.

Happy holiday to you two, too.

Ivan

On Dec 21, 2014, at 11:17 PM, Ann McCartney wrote:
Ann--

There's a lot of manuscript here, and the holidays coming, so while I'm keen to have your reactions as soon as possible, if I could have them by Jan. 9 would be okay.

As to what to watch for: you're really good on characters, and this book ultimately has many--some in small roles--so please see if they feel right to you, rounded and consistent and I guess "real" in your mind's eye, as you encounter them. Herman the German has to be entertaining and companionable for a couple of hundred pages, for example. Katharina is looking over his "broken" English for me, but if you see something like the need for "I betcha" instead of "You betcha" as you so wisely did in the first batch of ms, please speak up. Aunt Kate also has to be fully rounded in more ways than one--selfish, imperious, but in the end shown to be deep-down scared and frustrated at handling a "handful" like Donny.

And of course, Donny and his actions have to be credible throughout, although sometimes surprising or off-the-wall as a kid might do.

Beyond that, just watch for sentences that ought to be simplified or changed, and for any places where the story slows down too much--i.e., your full editorial skills are welcome. I'm making small cuts to keep the story rolling, but those don't show up in your copy.

The *National Georographics* play their role, as you'll see. Thanks not only for the loan, but all the "indexing" you did, which helped me immensely.

Finally, because there was a repeated chunk in my printout, the ms skips from p. 268 to p. 297. That much less to read!

With big thanks again,
Dear Katharina (and maybe John!)

There's a lot of manuscript here, and the holidays and no doubt family doings coming, so while I'm keen to have your reactions as soon as possible, if I could have them by Jan. 9 would be okay.

Herman the German is on probably every page of the last half of the manuscript, so again I need your keen advice on his "broken" language. I particularly have him using "logical" past tense verbs--"sinked" instead of "sunk", for example, and I hope those fit with his linguistic circumstances? Also, Herman picks up western lingo as the story moves along--he adopts "git" instead of "get", for instance, and please let me know if that sounds okay to you or not. Also, of course, please point out anything else that doesn't sound right to you.

Also, more of Herman's background in Germany emerges, and I hope that sounds credible enough, particularly his presence at the Munich beerhall putsch. Herman is meant to grow in the story, and in Donny's eyes, into a carrier of history, an inadvertent witness to (and often victim of) big events of his time.

Finally, because there was a repeated chunk in my printout, the ms skips from p. 268 to p. 297. That much less to read!

With big thanks again,
Ann, hi--

Appreciated your report, and don't sweat it about getting your reactions to the manuscript to me. I'll be working with my editor, and probably proofs, for some time to come, so tweaks likely can be made.
Glad you like the ending--everyone seems to.

Tell Norm we always knew he had beautiful qualities around his heart. Here's hoping his medical stuff goes OK. Tomorrow I see the leading back doctor at Group Health, as my back has been hurting like hell since just after Thanksgiving. Nonetheless, we're looking forward to a dandy Christmas with Mark and Lou and Linda and Jeff, here--Carol scored a gorgeous rib roast at Costco today.

Happy holiday to you two, too.

Ivan

On Dec 21, 2014, at 11:17 PM, Ann McCartney wrote:

Hi Carol and Ivan:

Has it really been almost a month since Thanksgiving?! We got home, I cut the article on the blood cancer out of the newspaper and then never got the clipping, your address, and the card I was going to send in the same place at the same time. About two weeks ago, I was ready to have Norm make the clipping into a pdf and email it to you and I couldn’t find it. This has been an ongoing problem with me this year trying to get the clutter of my life into some sort of order. I’m starting to get there, but still can’t find the article.

I am into the second careful reading of your book. I really enjoyed the first time through, which I was going to do as an ordinary reader, but found myself making some notes as I went along. I love the ending and the whole section on haying in Wisdom. When I read the earlier draft, I had no idea it would end up this way. More later on the book.

I’m not quite sure where we left you with Norm, but the first tests indicated that the bottom left part of his heart was not getting blood when he exerted himself, so on December 17, Norm had a heart catheterization when they send a catheter from the groin up an artery to the heart (I know, I know, TMI, TMI!). The doctor reported that Norms arteries were “beautiful.” I guess he is so used to seeing all sorts of clogging. Anyway, so the problem is not his heart. What did happen though as they prepared for the procedure, was that his blood oxygen was 89 instead of 99. So he is not getting enough oxygen into his blood. So, off to the pulmonary doctor and to the sleep lab to check for sleep apnea. We’ll let you know more when we find out more.

Have a great holiday! Oh, we had a great turkey dinner on Friday night after Thanksgiving (thank you) and watched Cats. That was an amazing show!!

Ann (and Norm)

K. Ann McCartney
1229 E. Racine St.
Bellingham, WA 98229
360-647-1428
ann@silverbeach.com
Katharina, greetings, Ivan here calling on your linguistic expertise again.

First of all, I hope you and John are fully recovered from the China trip—we want to hear all about it at Thanksgiving.

Now my question. I need a last name for Herman that my boy Donny wouldn't recognize as German. I now have Herman as a native of Emden, way over next to the Netherlands, which I hope explains why he doesn't sound like the nasty Nazis in the movies, in Donny's estimation. Would a last name of either Zeitler or Brinker (which Donny would think are Dutch because of the Zeider Zee and Hans of the silver skates) be reasonable in the German language? It would be okay if it was unusual, I think, but I don't want to use something that doesn't fit the language at all.

Oh, and feel free to give me a phone call if this name question is complex enough that it would take up a lot of email.

I'm close to finishing this first draft of the manuscript, but need to spend some time revising etc. I had hoped to give you a copy at Thanksgiving, but after the holidays is probably a more realistic target. Will update you on turkey day. Carol sends best wishes, and we'll see you and John on the big day, what a great tradition it is.

--Ivan
Dear Ivan and Liz,

Sorry to be so slow to respond to the first half of the nicely re-titled LAST BUS TO WISDOM. I please junior-year madness with my girls, complete with recent road trip to visit prospective colleges. This stuff was a lot simpler in the old days!

Anyhow, I love the pages. Donal is another terrific young character, and I love all the characters he meets along the way, complete with the cameo (or I guess, cameos including what’s to come at the end) of my favorite sheriff ever, from Bucking the Sun. Or are those I guess the sons of that sheriff? Also childish, selfish Kitty/Kate and Hermann, and Dorie herself. Beautifully observed, and great through themes and motifs like the autograph book that so nicely capture the period and this set of characters. I was secretly longing for a repeat cameo from Leticia but maybe she is best glimpsed and gone.

I guess the one potential danger is the lack of continuing characters until Donal arrives in Wisconsin, but I think his worries over Dorie and his summer, and his attempts to piece together the wider world, build and sustain the tension well enough. And I love that we will in a sense knit the stitches together with a number of the characters on the way back west. Liz, what do you think?

Motor on!

Becky

PS Ivan, are you thinking you may finish before the end of the year? Just trying to project forward the next few lists and wondering if this one may make spring rather than fall.

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Dear John and Katharina, since Carol missed the fact that the email was from John and apologizes all over the place for the confusing email to you, Katharina--

Great news that you liked the book so much, John. We've spent the last week or so fixing typos, cutting a little and adding a little, the general fussing before it goes to New York. As to Donny and Herman on Masterpiece Theatre, like my agent says, from your lips to God's ear!

Truly, thanks a million, John, for your enthusiastic support of this book. Can't wait to present the two of you an actual hardback, around Labor Day.

all best wishes,
Ivan
162 - Zygoc-tiphul
164 - adorned
166 - schnauzer
168 - Fronia - harder German
170 - motion/

Last Bus to Wisdom
Höcke Töber Mann
They didn’t see eye to eye; more like tooth and nail. The absolute worst thing I overheard in one of their arguments was when Aunt Kate turned on him in fury and yelled:

“You’re not wearing a Kraut helmet any more. So don’t think you’re big and important.”

His face darkened, and for a few frightening seconds, I wondered whether he was going to hit her. Or she him, just as likely, given the way her fists were clenched and ready.

I was shocked. Thrown for a loop. Turned upside down in my loyalties. If what she said meant what I thought it did, Herman was the farthest thing from Dutch or some other squarehead nationality. He was a German. The people who had come close to killing my father on D-Day, the monstrous comic book Nazis.

Much fell into place. That Yah of his was Ja. And Hah? was halfway a “Huh?” and the rest the habitual “Ja?”

Another word hit me. Dummkopf. In the Sunday funnies, the Captain was always calling the Katzenjammer kids that when he wasn’t calling them “little stupids”. Both fit me.

Later, in the greenhouse.

“You look not happy,” Herman said beneath his usual cloud of cigar smoke. “Something the Kate did, hah?”

No, something you did, turning out to be a German! I wanted to holler at him. Swallowing hard, I managed to restrict myself to saying, “I-I heard Aunt Kate bawling you out in there.”
“Habit,” he wrote that off and tapped his cigar ash onto the floor. “She wouldn’t have nothing to do if not yelling at me.”

I had to know. The words almost strangled me, but I gulped them out.

“Did you really fight on the Kraut side, like she said?”

Wincing at that language, he looked at me in surprise. “She should wash her tongue.” The big shoulders lifted, and dropped. “But, ja. No choice did I have.”

“So you really are a”—I had trouble even saying it—“a German?” He chuckled. “What did you think I am, a schnauzer?”

“But, but how come you don’t talk like they do in the movies? The bad guys, I mean.”

“I am from Danzig. Gdansk, it is now. We were always a little bit Pole.”

Imagination did me no favors right then. My head filled with scenes, of landing craft sloshing to shore under a hail of gunfire from Hitler’s troops, and sand red with blood, and a figure on crutches in the hallways of Fort Harrison hospital trying to learn to walk again, which was not imaginary at all. Giving Herman the German, as he now was to me, the worst stink eye I was capable of, I demanded:

“Tell me the truth. Were you at Omaha Beach?”

“Hah? What kind of beach?”

“You know. When they invaded on D-Day.”

Realization set in on him, his face changing radically as my accusation hit home. “Donny, I am not what you are thinking. The Great War, I was in.”

What, now he was telling me it was great to have been in the war where my father got his legs shot to pieces? I kept steadily giving him the mean eye, hating everything about this Kraut-filled summer and him along with it, until he said slowly so I would understand, “World War Ein: One.”
I blinked that in. "You mean, way back."

He looked as if his cigar had turned sour. "You could say. Thirty-three years ago," which I worked out in my head to 1918. "Wearing a pickle stabber."

He put his hand on top of his head with the index finger up, indicating the spiked helmet of the Kaiser's army. Comical as that was, I was not deterred from asking, "So, were you in any big battles?"

He puffed out cigar smoke that wreathed his grin. "With my sergeant, many times."

"You know what I mean. Real fights."

"Shoot Them Ups, you want," he sighed.

At first I thought he was not going to answer further, but finally he came out with, "I was at der Hugel des toten Mannes, was all." -/

That didn't sound bad, nothing like Omaha Beach. Disappointed at his evidently tame war, I said just to be asking, "What's that in English?"

"Dead Man's Hill."

Of all the words there are, I never expected him to utter those three.

"Really?" My voice went way up in pitch. "The one in France?"

"How do you know where?"

"The Major was there, see."

"The Major? He is who?"

"Wait, I'll show you." I dashed up to the attic dungeon and came back with the autograph book.

"Major Williamson, see, at the Double W. I heard Meredice tell Gram once that's where he got his limp, his wound I mean, and a big medal for being so brave against the, well, you know. Germans."

I showed him the autograph page where the Major had written that the pen is mightier than the sword.

"He is a good man for thinking that," Herman nodded gravely.
Waiting for the Second Half

In Chapter I, I was carried by the stream of memory which seldom stopped for commas or periods, and cruised right into Chapter II and the Dog Bus trip. I rode along with Donny, first as a reader, but then as a companion hoping that his stories wouldn't get him into trouble. But if anyone has been alone and away from home when young, one's imagination is the only weapon available to build protection against an outside world, and it seemed effective in helping him in cohabiting with his bus companions. (I wish I had a purloined arrow head and Indian Mocassins when I was a kid.) I forgot that I was a reader when that sleazy heated dipstick salesman tried to steal his suitcase and would have liked to treat him to a few of his heated dip sticks up the gazoo. The old couple near the end of the trip deserved a hug. In fact, all his fellow riders had interesting personalities leaving one to wonder what was next for them.

Herman the expert on the American West seems to be a delightful character. I have a foreboding that Donny's grandmother is going to die and that he'll need Herman and may have to become the fourth hand at cards.

I think that some of Herman's "English" sounded slightly more Norwegian than German with my limited exposure to him so far. The Karl May Society in Germany will surely add Dog Bus to its required reading list.

So, I like the book very much and anxiously await the rest of it. I can't comment on it as a critic but as reader give it six out of five stars. Kathrin has the more difficult task and I have had all the fun.

John
Katharina--

Thank you for looking over this piece of manuscript, probably slightly less than half of the eventual book. I do have the rest of the plot planned out, if it’ll help to know what’s gong to happen. But primarily I need feedback on the story thus far, and of course, your help on Herman the German and his syntax and vocal habits. Herman the German and his and Donny’s nemesis, Aunt Kate, do not appear until p. 116 of these 170 pages, so until then, please read this as you would any book you would pick up and let me know how it seems to you in various ways:

--Does the story seize your interest fast enough? The opening scene and then the immediate longer flashback/background I felt I had to do for technical reasons, but as you’ll find, a crucial plot element happens as late as p. 25 with Donny’s impulsive action at the bottom of that page. Do the situation, language, and characters carry you without qualms until that happens?

--The characters: Donny at 11 is younger than the other kids I’ve written, so he’s somewhat more naive (and he doesn’t have Zoe of The Bartender’s Tale for company and foil, alas), rougher around the edges, but running over with imagination—and a theme of this book is where an active imagination can lead a person (and not only Donny; Herman the German, too). Does he hold your interest, get you to pulling for him despite some of his actions?

--Aunt Kate is the obvious villainess so far, but in the second half of the book I’ll be humanizing her somewhat. I think it’ll be revealed that she’s always wanted to be a singer but got no further than humming, for instance. (There’s a scene in the car where she’s nervously patting out rhythms on her thigh; that’s going to be changed to nervous humming, I believe.)

--Now as to Herman the German. He is very loosely based on my own great-uncle Herman Krause, from when I was similarly sent to Manitowoc for a summer with him and my great-aunt. Herman Krause had been in this country for probably 40 years, yet retained a distinct German accent, if not the “broken English” my character Herman Schmidt has. Accordingly:

--Do Herman’s occasional word confusions (later he is going to have trouble differentiating cayuse and coyote, and the baffling pronunciation of rodeo cowboys’ chaps) and his sometimes backward sentence structures, as compared with English, sound reasonable to you? Please feel free to mark where “No, he wouldn’t say that” and if you can, suggest a more realistic syntax or vocabulary. As I think I told you in the e-mail, Herman necessarily is something of a comic figure, puzzling to the eleven-year-old Donny to try to figure out, but ultimately he becomes a mentor and the boy’s hero.

--One plot element I’ve had to dodge as best I can is why Donny doesn’t recognize Herman accent as German in background earlier than he does. Accordingly, I’ve made him from Danzig, where as he says “We were always a little bit Pole.” Do you think that’s adequate to explain away his not immediately identifiable accent?

--I need your keen eye on Herman whenever he appears, but the section printed on yellow paper, still in rough draft, is quite crucial to the story. Does it seem acceptable to you, his World War One background and so on?
Lastly, and more generally, do the interior sections of Donny’s thoughts and hopes and fears, usually an amalgamation of what’s on his mind then and how it looks to him now, flow all right with the action of the story? I know there are several of them and there’ll probably be fewer as the book goes on, but I’ve felt they’re necessary to show his frame of mind as he’s out there, in those great words of the poet Housman, “A stranger and afraid/in a world I never made.” Let me know if any of these sections seem redundant, tell you too much or too little, or simply are in the way when you want some action to happen.

I greatly look forward to your comments, when you can regard me as your latest ESL student, but in reverse--trying to learn broken English/German!

Ivan
Ann--

Huge thanks one more time for looking over manuscript, at least a chunk of it, for me.

This is probably slightly less than half the book, and I do have the rest of the plot scoped out, if it'll help to know what's going to happen. But primarily I need feedback on the story thus far. As ever, don't be afraid to criticize, at this point a scrimmage is better than a cheering section (although it useful to me to know anything that you think works well or took you by pleasant surprise; who knows, maybe I can do more of it!)

First of all, please read this as you would any book you would pick up and let me know how it stacks up in various ways:

--Does the story grab you fast enough? The opening scene and then the immediate longer flashback/background I felt I had to do for technical reasons, but as you'll find, a crucial plot element happens as late as p. 25 with Donny's impulsive action at the bottom of that page. Do the situation, language, and characters carry you without qualms until that happens?

--The characters: Donny at 11 is younger than the other kids I've written, so he's somewhat more naive (and he doesn't have Zoe of The Bartender's Tale for company and foil, alas), rougher around the edges, but running over with imagination—and a theme of this book is where an active imagination can lead a person (and not only Donny; wait till you meet Herman the German). Does he hold your interest, get you to pulling for him despite some of his actions?

--Herman the German will be more fully developed in the second half of the book, but how does he sound so far? Katharina is going to help me with his broken English/German so he doesn't just sound like he's from Ballard, you betcha.

--Aunt Kate is the obvious villainess so far, but in the second half of the book I'll be humanizing her somewhat. I think it'll be revealed that she's always wanted to be a singer but got no further than humming, for instance. (There's a scene in the car where she's nervously patting out rhythms on her thigh; that's going to be changed to nervous humming, I believe.)

--The strangers on the Greyhound, the dog bus; anybody too outlandish? Not vivid enough?

Lastly, do the interior sections of Donny's thoughts and hopes and fears, usually an amalgamation of what's on his mind then and how it looks to him now, flow all right with the action of the story? I know there are several of them and there'll probably be fewer as the book goes on, but I've felt they're necessary to show his frame of mind as he's out there, in those great words of the poet Housman, "A stranger and afraid/in a world I never made." Let me know if any of these sections seem redundant, tell you too much or too little, or simply are in the way when you want some action to happen.

And of course, feel free to call me to ask or discuss anything. Handle this ms whatever is the handiest way for you, writing on it and sending it back (will reimburse you for mailing; unfortunately it's heavy enough it has to go a post office) or just mailing or emailing me your comments. Am looking forward to the Nat'l Geographic naked people!

Happy reading, I hope.--Ivan
They didn’t see eye to eye; more like tooth and nail. The absolute worst thing I overheard in one of their arguments was when Aunt Kate turned on him in fury and yelled:

“‘You’re not wearing a Kraut helmet any more. So don’t think you’re big and important.’”

His face darkened, and for a few frightening seconds, I wondered whether he was going to hit her. Or she him, just as likely, given the way her fists were clenched and ready.

I was shocked. Thrown for a loop. Turned upside down in my loyalties. If what she said meant what I thought it did, Herman was the farthest thing from Dutch or some other squarehead nationality. He was a German. The people who had come close to killing my father on D-Day, the monstrous comic book Nazis.

Much fell into place. That Yah of his was Ja. And Hah? was halfway a “Huh?” and the rest the habitual “Ja?”

Another word hit me. Dummkopf. In the Sunday funnies, the Captain was always calling the Katzenjammer kids that when he wasn’t calling them “little stupids”. Both fit me.

Later, in the greenhouse.

“You look not happy,” Herman said beneath his usual cloud of cigar smoke. “Something the Kate did, hah?”

No, something you did, turning out to be a German! I wanted to holler at him. Swallowing hard, I managed to restrict myself to saying, “I-I heard Aunt Kate bawling you out in there.”
“Habit,” he wrote that off and tapped his cigar ash onto the floor. “She wouldn’t have nothing to do if not yelling at me.”

I had to know. The words almost strangled me, but I gulped them out.

“Did you really fight on the Kraut side, like she said?”

Wincing at that language, he looked at me in surprise. “She should wash her tongue.” The big shoulders lifted, and dropped. “But, ja. No choice did I have.”

“So you really are a”—I had trouble even saying it—“a German?”

He chuckled. “What did you think I am, a schnauzer?”

“But, but how come you don’t talk like they do in the movies? The bad guys, I mean.”

“I am from Danzig. Gdansk, it is now. We were always a little bit Pole.”

Imagination did me no favors right then. My head filled with scenes, of landing craft sloshing to shore under a hail of gunfire from Hitler’s troops, and sand red with blood, and a figure on crutches in the hallways of Fort Harrison hospital trying to learn to walk again, which was not imaginary at all. Giving Herman the German, as he now was to me, the worst stink eye I was capable of, I demanded:

“Tell me the truth. Were you at Omaha Beach?”

“Hah? What kind of beach?”

“You know. When they invaded on D-Day.”

Realization set in on him, his face changing radically as my accusation hit home. “Donny, I am not what you are thinking. The Great War, I was in.”

What, now he was telling me it was great to have been in the war where my father got his legs shot to pieces? I kept steadily giving him the mean eye, hating everything about this Kraut-filled summer and him along with it, until he said slowly so I would understand, “World War Ein. One.”
I blinked that in. "You mean, way back."

He looked as if his cigar had turned sour. "You could say. Thirty-three years ago," which I worked out in my head to 1918. "Wearing a pickle stabber."

He put his hand on top of his head with the index finger up, indicating the spiked helmet of the Kaiser’s army. Comical as that was, I was not deterred from asking, "So, were you in any big battles?"

He puffed out cigar smoke that wreathed his grin. "With my sergeant, many times."

"You know what I mean. Real fights."

"Shoot Them Ups, you want," he sighed.

At first I thought he was not going to answer further, but finally he came out with, "I was at der Hugel des toten Mannes, was all."

That didn’t sound bad, nothing like Omaha Beach. Disappointed at his evidently tame war, I said just to be asking, "What’s that in English?"

"Dead Man’s Hill."

Of all the words there are, I never expected him to utter those three.

"Really?" My voice went way up in pitch. "The one in France?"

"How do you know where?"

"The Major was there, see."

"The Major? He is who?"

"Wait, I’ll show you." I dashed up to the attic dungeon and came back with the autograph book.

"Major Williamson, see, at the Double W. I heard Meredice tell Gram once that’s where he got his limp, his wound I mean, and a big medal for being so brave against the, well, you know. Germans."

I showed him the autograph page where the Major had written that the pen is mightier than the sword.

"He is a good man for thinking that," Herman nodded gravely.
Marcella, hi from arctic (33 degrees!) Seattle this morn--

    So, here is the worked-over first half, roughly, of The Dog Bus. To really immerse myself in it again after the booktour distractions, I went through the material pretty much tooth and nail, and Carol re-read it as well with good counsel as usual. I think I've handled, or at least made a start on, some of the points you discerned the first time around:

    --more of a sense of the bigness of the cities as Donny arrives to them

    --a bit more detail of what passengers are wearing etc.

    --I still don’t have the bus smell of petroleum and so on that you suggested, but I think it’ll come when Herman joins Donny on their bus odyssey west.

    What you’ll find quite promptly is that I’ve ratcheted up the plot with a new element: Donny impulsively pockets a prize arrowhead on his way out of the Double W ranch house, and it becomes in his mind an object of luck--sometimes good, sometimes bad--throughout his summer adventure. I suppose the arrowhead is a maguffin, in Hitchcockian terms ( vide the Maltese Falcon), but I’d been searching for some way to boost the consequences of Donny’s situation and behavior. I know it turns Donny into more of a rapscallion--a sneak thief, as he’ll be accused of being, although he sees the arrowhead as rightfully his, he found it in the creek fair and square, finders keepers--but I think it’s worth it to add some suspense. See what you think.

    Oh, and Carol made a key observation in her re-read, that Donny sounds awfully young for a twelve-year-old (compared with Rusty and Zoe etc. in my previous books), and so he’s now “eleven going on twelve,” as he always describes it. I think the age adjustment will help out on his sometimes naive take on things, and I’ll likely show him necessarily maturing, having to learn the ropes in a hurry, when he hits the road with Herman the German.

    Most of all, please just give this a general reading, see if the story still holds you or goes astray anywhere. This version is some pages longer, and if it drags anywhere, I need to know that, of course. Thanks one more time for all the help.

    If we’re not in touch before Thanksgiving, here’s hoping you have a good one. Lucky 13 of us at our place this year.

    Best,
Hello, Katharina. I have enough manuscript of my next book--167 double-spaced pages--for you to look over, as you have so generously consented to do. This is no more than half of the novel when I get it done, and it's toward the end of this material that the character I've told you about, Herman the German, comes into the story. But there's enough of him that I need your advice as to whether I am getting the diction and some of the word choices right in his "broken English." This is tricky, because while I'm trying to bring out the humor of two incompatible languages--I'm remembering your ESL student who had a "cow" in the chest!--I don't want him to sound just silly, as he is ultimately a hero to my eleven-year-old protagonist/narrator. I'll explain more of his background and the part he plays in the book's plot in a cover letter with the manuscript.

If I may, I'd give it to you at Thanksgiving. There is no great rush in reading it, you could keep it through the holidays, although I do need to show this material in early January to my editor in New York, who has not yet seen a word of it, trusting soul that she is. I'm also having Ann McCartney and a friend in Montana read it for me, two more sets of keen eyes.

Maybe the simplest way for you to handle the manuscript would be simply to mark on it as if you were grading a paper, circling things, using stickits or whatever, and then we'll get you and John over here for a meal and you can go through the pages with me? Whatever way you think best is fine with me. If that constant reader John would also like to have a look at it, I'd of course welcome his opinion(s), but he shouldn't feel any obligation.

Thanks so much. See you on Thanksgiving Day.

Ivan
Hi Carol and Ivan. Thanks for the Thanksgiving Update. I've been gathering ingredients for my pies and am planning on next Wednesday as my pie making day.

Sounds like a really good decision to "quiet down" the gathering. We are looking forward to good people, good food and great conversation--"Over the river (on the new Skagit bridge) and through the woods to Carol and Ivan's we go!"

Daisy Mae is all set for her sleep-over at Camp Boyhan.

I would be delighted and honored to read the manuscript chunk for you and I'm really excited about looking through the National Geographic indexes and issues. These are exactly the same issues that I, as an eleven to twelve year-old, was looking through to find "naked" people!!

See you soon!

Ann and Norm

-----Original Message-----
From: carol doig [mailto:cddoig@comcast.net]
Sent: Wednesday, November 20, 2013 10:18 AM
To: Ann McCartney
Subject: thanksgiving!

Hi, Ann and Norm

Gosh, we do this next week, already. For your pie-making skills, I wanted to update you on the congregation. Ivan shrank the guest list a bit this year, since he's just started a new, even more challenging medical routine and hasn't been sure how he'll react to piling on another medication. That's three, and all have side effects. So far he's managing.

The background is that there currently are four medications that will suppress myeloma (up from one when he started, seven years ago) and Ivan is on his second one. All lose potency over time, so his terrific hematologist has ordered boosters, in trying to extend the life of the main one.

That's by way of saying that a slightly quieter Thanksgiving is in order. So we talked with people who only come to Thanksgiving, and are not heard from in between, and asked them if they could make other plans. That includes Peter, Bill Calvin, and Katherine Graubard. All were extremely
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That makes 13 of us, at latest count -- a good number but not overwhelming.

Your guest quarters will be ready at the Doig B&B, and we look forward to your visit. Ivan wants to add a note, so I'll sign off. Oh, and please bring the tray tables as usual.

Carol

Hello there, Ann old pal--

Which leads in ever so subtly to asking a couple of favors, right? Carol has nicely laid out my medication situation--better living through pharmaceuticals, as I'm sure Norm will identify with--but life goes on and thank heavens I have the writing to do in mine. So, I'm 167 manuscript pages along in the next book and going strong (one of the quirks of the meds is that one of them, Dexamethasone, is partly a steroid, and while it raises absolute hell with my sleep for a couple of nights a week, it also wires me up for the writing), and I wonder if I could prevail on you for a couple of things:

--Read the manuscript chunk for me with, hey, your now much-practiced editor's eye. Doesn't have to be the copy-editing kind of attention, I just want your reactions to the plot, characters, voice, and so on as the keen reader you are. There'd be no rush on this; I'd hand it over to you on Thanksgiving if that's okay, and you could take it through the holidays--even the start of January would early enough, though I need to get the chunk in to my editor (she has not seen a word of it yet; talk about blind trust, eh?) fairly soon in the new year. I'm also asking Katharina to read over it, as there's a character called Herman the German who speaks somewhat broken English and I need her Teutonic smarts to tell me if I'm getting his diction anywhere near right or he just sounds like he's from Ballard.

--The other thing is, do you still have that National Geographic collection of your dad's? If so--and I hope I'm remembering that Nat Geos are indexed fulsomely--could you see if there's any article(s) back there in the '40s, anything before 1950, really, featuring South Pacific or Latin American tribal life and that anatomy lesson for American boys, bare-breasted native women? My protagonist/narrator is "eleven going on twelve" and starting to feel puberty over the horizon, and a kind of running gag in the plot is his early education, as it were. If you spot anything that'll fit this, maybe you could copy the article for me, I don't necessarily want you parting with the magazine even temporarily.

So that's it--let me know if all this okay by you. See yez on turkey day.

All best,
Ivan