To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Tim Miller Strickland titled "The Journalism of Patrick F. McManus: His Niche in Outdoor Humor." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Communications.

Charles E. Caudill, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

THE JOURNALISM OF PATRICK F. McMANUS: HIS NICHE IN OUTDOOR HUMOR

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Tim Miller Strickland
August 1995

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated especially to
my wife, Pamela Strickland,
for her never-ending faith.

This project is also dedicated to
my son, Zachary Strickland,
my daughter, Caitlin Strickland,
my father, Sylvan Strickland,
and my mother, Judy Strickland.
Without your selfless emotional and financial
support and sacrifice, I would not have
attained this goal. I thank each of you
for the example you have been to me.

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I appreciate the support of Patrick F. McManus, the subject of this thesis, who has graciously fulfilled each of my requests for time and/or information during the course of this project, and who has granted permission to quote his work and to reprint "What Ever Happened to Worms?"

I also recognize the support of my co-workers at Press Community Newspapers in Cincinnati, and in particular I appreciate Publisher Tom Niehaus and Managing Editor Gary Presley for allowing me to use the company's supplies and computer equipment during this project.

I acknowledge the permission granted by Henry Holt and Co. Inc. to reprint "I'll Never Forget Old 5789-A."

ABSTRACT

The role of Patrick F. McManus in the genre of outdoor journalism is examined. Methods and procedures included a biographical study; a personal interview with the subject; an analysis of the critical reception to his work; and an analysis of his literary style. The findings include: that McManus' childhood lifestyle prepared him for his success as a writer; that while McManus is opinionated, he works diligently to avoid controversial topics, including those about which he has strong opinions; that McManus has enjoyed a largely positive reception from book critics; and that McManus now stands alone in his position in a niche as a monthly humor columnist for a Big Three outdoor magazine. Despite his protestations against the classification of his work, McManus must be classified as an outdoor humor writer. Still, McManus' ability — consistently and with high quality — to marry everyday human foibles and the outdoors in his work has led to his role as an ambassador from the sporting outdoors to the rest of the world, while retaining the outdoor enthusiasts themselves as the base of his audience. A complete bibliography of McManus' published works is included in an appendix.

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Introduction
MCMANUS: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Patrick F. McManus is a commercially successful writer. Since 1978, he has published 11 books — five of which have appeared on the New York Times Bestseller List. Most of the books are compilations of humor columns and stories that have appeared in Field & Stream and Outdoor Life magazines. McManus has produced a total of 258 outdoor humor columns and stories for Field & Stream and Outdoor Life since 1968. McManus currently writes a monthly humor column, "The Last Laugh," exclusively for Outdoor Life.

Field & Stream [paid distribution of 2,007,901], Outdoor Life [paid distribution of 1,502,676] and Sports Afield [paid distribution of 515,314] are regarded as the Big Three outdoor magazines. According to the 1994 Writer's Market, 62 periodicals are devoted to the subject of the sporting outdoors. According to the Outdoor Writers Association of America [OWAA], its 1,800 members produce work for 594 periodicals and 850 newspapers.

According to former Field & Stream Editor Jack Samson, "An outdoor writer, if asked, would say he is a hunter, or fisherman, or backpacker, who writes about the sport he loves. ... The outdoor writer concerns himself with activities generally considered 'outdoor

sports.' This does not include spectator sports, nor such urban games as golf or tennis."[1]

For the purpose of this project, an assumption will be that outdoor writing is a genre. According to A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory,[2] genre is "[a] French term for a kind, a literary type or class."

Also for the purpose of this project, humor writing will be defined in accordance with the Encyclopedia of American Humorists:[3] Humor writing is written by a humorist, and a humorist is one who intends to amuse his or her audience.

According to Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary,[4] a niche can be defined as "a place or position particularly suitable for the person or thing in it."

Patrick F. McManus is a humorist in the genre of outdoor writing. Within that genre, he has secured a niche: writing a monthly humor column for a Big Three outdoor magazine. Since the 1994 death of outdoor humorist Ed Zern, who wrote a monthly column called "Exit Laughing" for Field & Stream, McManus is the only writer working in that niche.

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[1] Jack Samson, Successful Outdoor Writing (1979), Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, p. 7.

[2] J.A. Cuddon, A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory (1991), 3rd edition, Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell Ltd., p. 366.

[3] Steven H. Gale, ed., Encyclopedia of American Humorists (1988), New York: Garland Publishing Inc., p. xvii.

[4] Jean L. McKechnie, ed., Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, Unabridged (1979), 2nd edition, William Collins Publishers Inc., p. 1210.

Chapter One
MCMANUS: THE BIOGRAPHY

The life of contemporary American humor writer Patrick Francis McManus, regarded as the "[f]unniest guy in the Outdoor Life and Field and Stream gang"[1] in part because of his ability to laugh at himself, began with — what else? — a comical plot twist. In late August 1933, the time came for Mabel McManus, an elementary school teacher, to give birth to her second child — but the exact date has been a matter of debate. Was it Aug. 24, 1933, or was it Aug. 25? Well, it was both. Sort of.

"All my life," the author said, "my birthday has been celebrated on Aug. 25, even though my mother claimed that I was actually born on Aug. 24. 'But because your birth certificate has Aug. 25 on it,' she once explained to me, 'I figured, what the heck, we might as well go with that.' "[2]

The confusion stemmed from the postbirth celebration. While Pat and his mother rested in the McManus' Sandpoint, Idaho,[3] home, Pat's father, Francis Edward McManus, and the doctor in charge of delivery toasted each other with a round — or two, or more — of spirits. By the time the doctor was ready to complete the birth certificate, he was no longer sure of the date. Thus, the mistake.[4]

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1 "The Grasshopper Trap," Kirkus Reviews, 15 June 1985, p. 572.
2 Mitch Finley, "Inside Pat McManus," Outdoor Life, Oct. 1989, p. 74.
3 "McManus, Patrick (Francis)," Something About the Author, 1986 ed., p. 156.
4 Finley, "Inside," p. 76.

This may be another of McManus' tall tales, although a reader could reasonably expect McManus to reveal a similar beginning for crusty recurring character Rancid Crabtree, a fictional woodsy cohort of the author's boyhood who appears in many of McManus' columns. The character is based on a mean old shack-dweller who lived near the McManuses when Pat was a youngster. "As far as anybody could tell, all he ever ate was corn flakes, and he never undressed at all, never took a bath," McManus said. "He was really wild. Once, there was a bee buzzing around in his shack, and he took his shotgun and blasted a hole in his roof going after that bee."[5]

It's not at all unusual for McManus to weave an entire fictional story out of a slice of real life. "Most of my stories are based on actual experiences, although some are purely imaginative," the author said. "Although I may base a story on an actual experience I've had, I usually will use characters who will produce the best comic effect from that particular situation.[6]"

The other characters have names such as Retch Sweeney, Crazy Eddy Muldoon and Fenton Quagmire. The names tend to serve also as adjectives.

"[T]hese characters have taken on their own identity. They exist 'out there,' waiting in the wings for their next appearance.[7]

"I use many characters repeatedly, and regular readers become familiar with them. This helps the humor writer, because he doesn't

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[5] Finley, "Inside," p. 95.
[6] Something About the Author, p. 156.
[7] Finley, "Inside," p. 95.

have much space in which to develop characters fully in a 2,500-word story. Many of my characters have long histories, developed through dozens of stories."[8]

Retch Sweeney and Rancid Crabtree are the fictional McManus' primary companions. They often accompany the fictional-yet-autobiographical McManus character on various outdoor excursions. Unlike the crusty, financially challenged Crabtree, Sweeney is a socioeconomic peer of McManus. He often battles for fishing position and ruthlessly attacks McManus' lack of coordination, which ultimately leads to uncomfortable predicaments on a regular basis.

McManus consistently uses childhood memories as bases for light-hearted columns. McManus' Cousin Buck, for example, was revered by McManus. "In those early days, I followed Buck around constantly, listening to him discourse on such matters as sex, life, death, hunting, fishing, sex, outer space, cars, sex, motion pictures, horses, dogs, motorcycles, and sex." As McManus grew older, however, he began to question Buck's veracity, in part because of Buck's incessant bragging about a hunting dog that almost never moved, much less hunted.[9]

One decidedly unfunny episode from his youth, however, helped shape his view of the world. When McManus was 6 years old, his father, a sawmill worker who had been exposed to mustard gas

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[8] Something About the Author, p. 156-7.

[9] Patrick McManus, Never Sniff a Gift Fish, 1983, Henry Holt & Co., p. 92.

during World War I,[10] died of cancer. The patriarch's surviving family, consisting of Patrick, his mother and his older sister, Patricia [referred to in many of McManus' childhood reminiscing stories as The Troll], lived in a log cabin near Sandpoint from 1939 to 1941.[11] Pat's mother managed to earn enough money from teaching to move the family into a Sandpoint house. But hardships continued to burden the family: Eight years later, the house burned down, so Mabel McManus was forced to find a way to have another house built at the same site.[12]

In the meantime, young Pat began to accumulate the outdoor life experiences that would one day help five of his books land on the New York Times Best Seller List.[13] But Pat, at his mother's behest, was forced to repeat the second grade because he was not particularly fond of devoting his time to classroom activities. "I spent a lot of time out wandering around in the woods," the author explained.[14]

Mabel McManus later remarried, and Pat continued his outdoor and academic educations. He earned his diploma from Sandpoint High School before heading for Washington State University in Pullman.[15] There, he earned bachelor's [1956] and master's [1962] degrees in

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10 Andrea Chambers and Meg Grant, "Fishing Is a Tangled Line of Work for Pat McManus, Chronicler of Life in the Not-So-Great Outdoors," People, 22 Feb. 1988, p. 58.

11 Finley, "Inside," p. 76.

12 Chambers, p. 58.

13 Mitch Finley, "Patrick F. McManus and the Funny Four," Outdoor Life, July 1988, p. 33.

14 Finley, "Inside," p. 76.

15 Ibid.

English, but not before marrying his hometown sweetheart, Darlene Keough, on Feb. 3, 1954, during his sophomore year.[16]

In 1956, after graduation, McManus served a short stint as a news reporter for the Olympia, Wash., *Daily Olympian.* He then returned to Pullman to serve as editor of a campus publication until 1959. At that point, he landed a job as an instructor at Eastern Washington University in Cheney. He held that position until 1967.[17]

From 1960 to 1962, McManus worked a second job as a news reporter for an Eastern Washington television station.[18] After he earned his master's degree, however, McManus dropped that sideline and began working on free-lance broadcasting opportunities. He filmed human-interest broadcast pieces with a second-hand camera and "sold the results to various TV stations around the Pacific Northwest."[19]

McManus was promoted to assistant professor in 1967,[20] but his financial situation didn't improve substantially. Although he had been selling occasional nonhumorous free-lance articles to magazines for several years, the family's cash shortage continued and eventually became a crisis that kick-started McManus' humor writing career.[21]

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16 Something About the Author, p. 156.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Finley, "Inside," p. 94.
20 Something About the Author, p. 156.
21 Finley, "Inside," p. 94.

"I was supposed to teach at Eastern (Washington University) one summer in the late '60s," McManus said, "but I got bumped at the last minute because another professor decided to teach who had more seniority than I did."[22] So, McManus looked for options — and found his calling in life.

"I took my little portable typewriter out on the dock at my sister-in-law's lake place and desperately wrote two outdoors humor pieces, one right after the other," the author said. "We didn't have any money at all!"[23]

McManus submitted the pieces simultaneously to Clare Conley, then editor of Field & Stream. Conley had bought some of McManus' earlier free-lance work, and McManus thought Conley could be the answer to his family's financial situation. He was right.[24]

"[Conley] bought both [articles] and paid me maybe $700, which in those days was more than I would have made if I had taught school," McManus said.[25]

The loss of his summer position ironically and indirectly launched McManus' outdoor humor writing career. But McManus says that's not where the irony stops in his career. "I started out to write the novel, the big one, and have ended up writing humor, the little one. It happened like this: I was writing 'straight' articles and [through his desperate situation] discovered that editors liked a little

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.

humor worked in among the facts. Since I was being paid by the word, and since editors hated to cut out any of the humor, I began to pad out the articles with more and more humor.

"Eventually, my articles consisted only of the padding, and as a result I became known as a humor writer."[26]

McManus began "Parallax," a monthly humor column for Spokane Magazine, in September 1978. He continued writing "Parallax" until June 1982. By this point in McManus' career, virtually everything he wrote focused on the outdoors, except "Parallax," which focused on Spokane's civic and political issues.

The following note appeared at the beginning of the first "Parallax" column:

> Parallax, you may recall, was a mythical Greek hero who, because he defied the gods, was sentenced to serve out eternity as a bartender in an Irish pub. It was while bemoaning his fate one night that he chanced to observe the quaint Irish custom wherein the serious drinkers, at the approach of closing time, sit down on the floor and wrap their legs around the brass rail. Having finally dislodged the last one of them and deposited him on the pub's front stoop, Parallax, who possessed the Greek fondness for taking a different view of the commonplace, threw himself on the floor and looked up. Eureka! Parallax discovered that by simply having changed to a new position, he now perceived the world as upside down and backwards and generally more interesting. His name was eventually given to this remarkable phenomenon, also known as the Greek position. Since for the most part, I share Parallax's view of the world, I am honoring his name by giving it to this column.[27]

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[26] Finley, "Funny Four," p. 33.

[27] Patrick F. McManus, "Parallax," Spokane Magazine, September 1978, p. 12.

McManus' humor also was appearing monthly in Field & Stream by 1978, and he switched allegiances to Outdoor Life — beginning with the December 1981 issue — when that magazine offered him a monthly humor column, "The Last Laugh," to compete with Ed Zern's Field & Stream column, "Exit Laughing," which had appeared in that magazine since 1958.[28] Ironically, despite the fame and wealth brought to McManus by his humor columns, the "humorist" label is not one of which McManus is particularly fond.

"Was Thurber a humorist? Some of his greatest stories weren't all that funny, but that's the way he's referred to. In my case, I'm put in the same category with newspaper columnists — also humorists — who are writing in another medium: the essay," McManus said. "Those who write stories with character, plot and structure —stories that happen to be funny — are somehow dismissed as not being sufficiently literary. That bothers me."[29]

One of the reasons McManus is bothered by the humorist's literary plight is the implication that humor is easy. "I find writing to be mostly hard work," McManus said, "but occasionally it is very exciting, particularly when a story comes to life and seems almost to write itself. Humor is particularly difficult, because its main purpose is to be funny. The writer never knows if other people will think the story is funny.

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28 Maggie Nichols, managing editor, Field & Stream, in personal telephone interview, May 31, 1995.

29 William C. Brisick, "Patrick F. McManus," Publishers Weekly, June 23, 1989, p. 42.

"Probably the very worst writing is a comic story that isn't funny, and the humor writer constantly worries that he may be writing that kind of story. Writing can be a very scary business, but that may be what makes it exciting, too."[30]

McManus' teaching days ended in 1983, and he has concentrated on his writing full-time ever since. McManus still writes the monthly column for Outdoor Life magazine. He is the author of 11 books, most of which are compilations of his magazine work.

Home for Patrick and Darlene McManus — their four daughters, Kelly, Shannon, Peggy and Erin,[31] are grown — is a modern, suburban Spokane, Wash., townhouse, but the couple spend a substantial portion of each year at a secluded "cabin" — actually a bona fide house — on an island near Hope, Idaho.[32]

"I spend a lot of time in the outdoors, though not as much as I'd like to," McManus said. "When we're working on a writing project of some kind, we pretty much stay here in Spokane, but the rest of the time, which is about half the year, at least, we stay at the cabin, and of course, the fishing is right there. We cross-country ski, snowmobile and snowshoe. A major part of my life has been in the outdoors. I grew up there. I *think* outdoors."[33]

But McManus doesn't seek a one-track-mind audience. "I've never viewed my pieces as outdoors stories, and I think that

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30 Something About the Author, p. 158.
31 Something About the Author, p. 156.
32 Brisick, p. 43.
33 Finley, "Inside," p. 96.

perception has limited my readership to some extent. They're funny stories, first of all, and I think more people are viewing them that way. They often comment: 'I don't fish or hunt, but I still read the stories.' Perhaps if they'd been published in the Atlantic they wouldn't be viewed as outdoors stories."[34]

Nonetheless, McManus likes to go to the cabin because he does "a different kind of work" with the residents of the area.[35] "We do a lot of talking about pickup trucks, and once in a while there's a shootout in a bar," he jokes, then turns serious. "But these are people who are quite self-sufficient. They live rather well on very little money — fishing, hunting and growing gardens."[36]

That instinct for thriving under difficult situations strikes a familiar chord for McManus. "Because of my precarious childhood, I've always been interested in survival, in having control over my life," the author said. "In society, you don't have this control; you're dependent on so many others for food, water, a job, etc. Here, people — the self-reliant ones — can do it all themselves."[37]

It's no surprise, then, that McManus has enjoyed success as a writer.

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[34] Brisick, p. 43.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

Chapter Two
MCMANUS: THE INTERVIEW

Patrick F. McManus is a surprisingly opinionated man, considering the effort he exerts to keep his political opinions out of his work. He diligently avoids controversial topics because his target is the reader's emotion, not the reader's opinion. He believes the effective humor writer can tap a wide range of emotions through comic-episodic writing, rather than the satire or sarcasm ubiquitous in newspaper opinion pages.

A student of the works of Mark Twain and James Thurber, McManus resents modern critics' tendency to label him exclusively as an outdoor writer or a humorist. He believes his work would be considered more important if it had appeared in a more literary setting, such as Atlantic magazine. But he's not bitter, at least in part because his success has enabled him to branch out into other venues, such as a touring stage production called "A Fine and Pleasant Misery," which started touring in 1993 and still is on tour.

The following telephone interview took place Oct. 26, 1993. The interview was tape-recorded and transcribed.

Strickland: When you were growing up — now, a lot of people have written about your life when you were growing up — what did you imagine your adult life would be like?

McManus: My plan was to be an artist, and to live essentially where I live right now. To be able to stay in North Idaho, and more or less lead the life people around here lead, and be close to the mountains, fishing, hunting, those sorts of things — a fairly independent kind of existence. I think that was probably what I thought was the most appealing kind of life to live.

S: That must mean that you have some flair for drawing or some other sort of art as well as for writing.

M: Well, I think that I did when I went off to the university. First of all, I did a lot of drawing and painting when I was in grade school and high school, took a lot of art classes in high school, and really planned on being an artist. So when I went off to the university, I got into a program that was primarily controlled by a faculty mostly interested in a very avant garde art — extremely abstract art — which I was interested in, but it wasn't the sort of art I wanted to do myself. I liked the work of Picasso a lot, for example, but I was primarily interested in being an illustrative artist, an illustrator, possibly even a cartoonist. I wanted my art to tell a story. Eventually, I ended up writing the pictures instead of drawing them.

S: At what point in time did you become aware of your love for the outdoors?

M: Well, I just grew up in the outdoors, and it was so much a part of my life. From my earliest memories we've lived in the mountains, and often in very primitive conditions. The outdoors was such a natural part of my life, I never wanted to leave it. I had a

long-term plan, for the way I wanted to live, and it wasn't necessarily to make a whole bunch of money. But it was to be able to make a living of some sort that would enable me to live the way that I wanted to live. As I'm sure you know, I was a university professor for over 20 years, and that afforded me a great deal of freedom and it was also something I enjoyed, and I still do some work with the university occasionally. The university teaching experience fit in very well with the kind of lifestyle that I wanted to lead.

S: What other career options besides art and being a college professor did you consider?

M: Well, I thought about the Forest Service, for example, and the Fish and Game Department. While I was in college, you were just beginning to hear words like ecology and environment — these were not words you ever heard when I was growing up. I had not even heard of such things as environment or ecology when I was in grade school or high school, and these are just commonplace words now. And everybody knows them. They don't necessarily understand the actual meaning of environment, but they have at least heard the word and have a vague sense of what it means. Anyway, the Forest Service and Fish and Game were some of the options that I was interested in. I never really expected to be a college professor. That possibility hadn't even occurred to me. What happens, I think, when you have a long-term plan or at least an idea of the kind of life you want to live, you make the choices, as they come up, that move you generally in the direction you want to go. So the course of your life

zigzags, but it zigzags in the general direction you have set for it. In my freshmen year, I switched my major direction from art to writing, but both occupations fit in with the kind of lifestyle I wanted.

S: Thus the English degree?

M: Yes, and so I switched my major to English and started taking English writing classes. And then I started working for a newspaper, the Lewiston Morning Tribune, doing feature articles and a little bit of reporting about the university for them. As it happened, the Lewiston Morning Tribune at that time had a great editor, a nationally recognized editor in Bill Johnston, and Bill would sit down with me over coffee and discuss his ideas of journalism with me and journalistic writing, and that was a big part of my education as far as journalism. Then I began more and more to learn about writing and how you could make a living at it. I was always very interested in being able to make a living out of writing, not simply to do this as a hobby or as art. I wanted to be able to make a living out of it, and I knew there was a long series of steps that I would probably have to go through. And so when I graduated I went into newspaper work and then television news, and I went back and edited magazines for Washington State University while I worked on my master's degree in English. But all of this was directed toward becoming a writer, a free-lance writer actually, an independent writer. Actually, let's see, I graduated in '56 from the university, and in '72, I think, I was finally making enough money as a free-lance writer that I could

have quit teaching at that point and supported myself completely as a writer. Well, let's see, '56, that would have been about 15, 16 years after being out of the university before I could have supported myself as a free-lance writer.

S: Do you consider yourself an environmentalist?

M: Yes.

S: And how would you define your role as an environmentalist?

M: Well, first of all, I think that just about everyone has to be an evironmentalist. Now some people have a fairly negative concept about what an environmentalist is, or what nature is. They see environment as something separate from man. A kingfisher, for example, lives here on the same small island as I do, but his environment is totally different from mine. Now, the kingfisher doesn't have any control over his environment, but I can affect both his environment and my own rather severely, if I should choose to do so. I can't do much by myself to improve either of our environments, but I could certainly act very destructively toward them, particularly the kingfisher's. The point is that we have to be concerned about all the different environments out there, not merely our own personal one. The logger's environment is different from my own because he makes his living cutting trees, and I make mine on the computer. But I have to be concerned about his environment, his livelihood, at the same time as I protest the massive destruction of our national forests by the U.S. Forest Service and the timber

companies. And I should also be concerned about the environment of the kids growing up in the inner cities, even though I live a long way from those cities. So for me, being an environmentalist is a very complicated thing. It means trying to be aware of all those different environments out there and trying to act positively toward them, as well as trying to protect my own immediate and personal environment.

S: Have you influenced writers that you know of, through your teaching?

M: Oh, yeah. I've influenced a lot of writers. I have taught a great many young writers over the years, and have helped a great many of them get started writing. Some of them have gone on to become quite well known. Many of them are professional journalists. Mostly what I did, I think, was show them how to get started, teach them certain skills that they needed to get started. I have probably influenced some of them stylistically. Typically, what happens when you talk about a style being influential is that you'll have people copying your style for a while if they really like it. But as they continue writing, eventually their own individual style will begin to dominate, and the style that they have been copying will begin to fade away, and eventually they will be left with their own particular style, whatever that may be. And occasionally they may come back and reread something of the person that they copied or imitated, just to kind of freshen up their style, as I do. I go back and read Mark Twain for example, and E.B. White, and other writers, but eventually

every writer carves out his own style based on his own personality. So, perhaps that's how I may have influenced some of my students stylistically, at least for a while.

S: You mentioned the writings of White and Twain. Now obviously there's no question that they're considered important literary figures, even though, occasionally, especially in Twain's case, there is a good bit of humor mixed in. What do you have to say to critics who call you an unimportant literary figure because they consider you "only a humorist" or "only an outdoor writer?"[1]

M: [Laughs] Well, I don't say anything to them, especially. I think that's not been one of my concerns, what critics say. Naturally, it would be nice if the critics all agreed that I was the finest writer of all time. I would like that. I do resent being categorized as, say, an outdoor writer. As for 'humorist,' humorists have never been highly regarded in literary circles. Humor is simply not regarded as a literary form. And I don't know why that is except perhaps critics are not very good at writing humor. (Laughs.) If they were, perhaps they would be a little more interested in it. What I tend to focus on is the audience itself and the response that I get from the audience The writer's duty is to his audience, not to the critics. My audience happens to be a very general one. I have readers who are professors at the University of London, for example, and others who have just learned to read in adult literacy programs. I often hear that one of my books is the first book ever read by people — men usually — in

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[1] See pp. 8 and 9 of this project.

these literacy programs. The books are read by enormously wealthy and influential people, and also by poor people who have trouble scraping together the money for the next paperback. Lately, I've noticed at autographing sessions that teen-age girls are increasing in significant numbers among my regular readers, and that is something I wouldn't have expected. Humor tends to be pretty universal. You don't have to be a housewife to laugh at Erma Bombeck's wonderfully funny stuff.

S: Would it surprise you to learn a staunch vegetarian is a fan of your writing?[2]

M: A staunch vegetarian? [Laughs] No, that wouldn't surprise me at all. For one reason, I don't believe anything has ever gotten killed in my stories. Killing doesn't lend itself to humor. So in my hunting stories, the animal almost always triumphs over the hunter. The deer always escapes. In one story, he escapes on a bicycle. A reviewer wrote one time, "I wonder how many hunters who read McManus stories realize that they are being satirized." I think most of them do. I satirize myself as a hunter, and by implication, satirize all sport hunters. In the case of the deer story I just mentioned, I received a letter from an antihunter who wrote something like, "I was so disgusted by your story about hunting that deer that I couldn't even finish it." I felt like writing back, "The deer escaped on a bicycle, you fool." But I didn't. I also satirize some common masculine pretenses, and as a result I occasionally receive an irate

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[2] The thesis author is the vegetarian in question.

letter from some woman complaining about my macho attitudes. Possibly the satire wasn't that clear, or it may even be that she is too dumb to pick up on it.

S: All right. A great many of my friends became very jealous of me when I told them about this interview. One of the overriding comments was, "Tim, be sure you ask him this: How does someone become a good writer?"

M: How does someone become a good writer? First of all you must read a great deal of good writing and even great writing. But if you are just getting started, it is probably not a good idea to measure your own writing against the good and great writing, because it is too discouraging, and you may stop writing. You must write. And write. And write. It is my theory that no one ever deliberately writes worse than they possibly can. You always write as well as you can at any given moment, and sometimes it's pretty bad and sometimes it's pretty good. All the reading you have done should enable you to tell the difference. I also encouraged my students to imitate various styles of writing that they like, because that is an excellent way to learn. There is very little danger that the beginning writer will end up writing like Hemingway or, say, Tom Wolfe, because eventually his or her own style will dominate.

S: What advice do you have for would-be humor writers who want to be taken seriously in a literary sense?

M: Well, first of all, I think that would be very, very difficult. Humor writers simply are not taken seriously. If you want to be

taken seriously in the literary sense, you probably should write funny novels. And funny novels are very difficult to write. I can think of only one great comic novel that has stood the test of time in this century, and that is Catch 22 by Joseph Heller. There have been some very funny novelists, but their books don't seem to last, at least not in the same way Catch 22 has lasted. One example is Peter de Vries. I enjoyed his novels immensely, but I doubt much of an audience remains for his books. There is another very funny novelist that I liked a lot, but I can't remember his name.

S: Ah, the fate of the humor writer.

M: The problem humor writers have is that people can't remember their names.

S: OK, what advice do you have for humor writers who don't necessarily care whether they're taken seriously in a literary sense?

M: Well, I think that's probably a very healthful attitude. (Laughs) And they will be much happier in the long run writing humor. Some wonderful things do happen in the writing of humor. I just recently wrote a play, which has been on tour.

S: I didn't know that. What's the name of the play?

M: Well, right now its name is "A Fine and Pleasant Misery — The Humor of Patrick McManus," which is of course taken from the title of the first book. I think over 20,000 people have seen it, and it's been to — let's see — gosh, it must be up around 80 performances now. I don't travel with it most of the time, but it was in Salt Lake City, and while it was in Salt Lake City, I was talking to the actor. He

very often gets standing ovations at the end of this play. He does an excellent job. Anyway, this woman came up to him with tears in her eyes, and she was smiling, and she said, "You know, the most wonderful thing happened. I just had to thank you and to tell you" — she's telling him this — she said that "My husband laughed so hard that at one point he laid his head on my shoulder and started crying." And she said, "This is the first time in all the years we've been married I've ever seen him cry." And she said, "And I wanted to thank you for that." So, when you talk about humor, you can tap people at some very deep emotional levels in that sense. And I think that critics and other people of that sort are generally not aware of that, of the depth which people can be touched with humor. And we hear this sort of thing over and over again. And I had a lady come up to me in a town in Montana, and this was at a book signing, and there was a long line of people standing there. And then the bookstore owner suddenly brought this one woman up to the head of the line. The lady was extremely well-dressed and very dignified. Gray hair, nice looking, very attractive. Probably about 50 years old. And she thanked me, and thanked the bookstore owner for letting her get up to the head of the line. And she says, "I have to fly out in an hour. That's why I have to hurry here." And I say, "Oh, where are you going?" She says, "Oh, I'm going to Florida, my son was just in a bad accident and is paralyzed. I have to fly down there, and I want to take some of your books down there to him." And then she says, "I've wanted to meet you for so long, and I'm just sorry it's under

these circumstances." And then she just burst out sobbing. And then she says, "Oh, I'm sorry," and she turned around and left and walked away. So, I am constantly running into these very, very emotional situations like that. And I said to myself, "But, all I'm doing is writing humor here. Funny little stories." But over and over again, I find out that people are touched at some kind of deeper emotional level through this humor. Now, I know I could write stories that would make people cry. I'm not interested in doing that. I'm interested in writing stories that make people laugh. Very often in the outdoor magazines, you'll see some story about some hunter whose dog died, and it has this kind of built-in emotional pull to it. I call those dead-dog stories. [Laughs] And it makes a lot of writers very mad if I'm judging a contest because I say, "Well, first of all, I'm tossing out all the dead-dog stories." I feel it's a form of emotional cheating, see, because I have had dogs, and it's a very emotional experience when you have to either kill a dog, put it out of its misery, shoot a dog to put it out of its misery, or even to, as they do nowadays, take it to the vet and have it put to sleep. It's a very emotional experience. I consider when you write about that, it's a loaded situation. I consider that a form of emotional cheating as far as the writer goes because he is simply tapping into this highly emotional situation and kind of bleeding it. I think if you can take the person to that emotional depth through laughter, then you have achieved something of perhaps fairly significant psychological value as far as that person goes. As far as the play goes, you see people coming out of the play and

they're just kind of transformed from what they were when they went in because they have laughed so hard during the two hours that the play has been on that they just come out, and their faces are kind of glowing and full of color. Whereas, when they went in, they were kind of slouching and tired after work and that sort of thing. So, I'm not sure why, when I see people respond to humor, why it is regarded as such a lowly thing by literary critics. But I ran into that even when I was at the university. I had this creative writing teacher who would never give me a grade higher than a "B" on a story. We wrote a story every week and turned it in, and so one time I wrote this story, and it was called "The Lady Who Kept Things." And I also had to have kind of a commentary that went with it, explaining how it was written, and then I had to present this in class. Well, first of all, the class laughed so hard that they were about falling out of their chairs. And then the professor laughed and laughed himself, had to take off his glasses and wipe away the tears. And I said to myself, "OK, finally I got an 'A.'" So, what happens? My paper comes back after being graded, and it's a "B." And so I went in to this professor and I said, "You know, I had that class in stitches in there. Even you were laughing." "I know," he says. "It was a very funny story. But, this is a class in serious literature, and that was not serious literature." [McManus laughs] He felt there should be some kind of symbolism or something else, some idea expressed through the writing. Since we were all sophomores, of course, any idea expressed would have been highly sophomoric. So, I felt it was a

great achievement to make all those people laugh. And I still think it's a great achievement to make people laugh. You can't simply write for fame and fortune and acclaim by the literary establishment. It's virtually impossible to get that kind of acclaim, and it's very difficult to sustain it. Eventually, that literary establishment turns on you, as they turned on Hemingway, and they turned on Steinbeck, and they turned on Faulkner, and right on down the line. John Cheever, one of the really great story writers of our time — they simply ignore Cheever anymore. That is not really something someone should aspire to because, even if you do get the literary acclaim, eventually they will turn on you.

S: What would you say is the primary goal you'd like to accomplish before you're through writing?

M: Well, I would like to write a highly original comic novel, just to have done it. I have no idea whether it would sell very well, but I think it would be fun to write, and I've kind of reached the stage where I want to do the sorts of things that I really enjoy doing. I want to move away from writing on deadline, and that sort of thing. So, probably over the next 10 years, I'll be concentrating a lot on writing more original material in book form. I'm not exactly sure I would call it a novel, but it would certainly be book-length pieces rather than magazine pieces.

S: What is your proudest achievement?

M: [Laughs] I've never even thought about that. [Pauses] Well, I guess I would say that I've made a lot of people laugh, and that

would have to be it. If they laugh, then I've made a lot of people feel good at least for a few moments.

S: If there was one thing you could change about your life, what would that be?

M: I can't think of anything. [Laughs] I've actually been very lucky. I've been able to live where I wanted to live. Well, things were pretty tough for the first four or five years after I got out of college, but since then, we've been really quite financially secure, if not well-to-do. We've always had a sufficient amount of money. I have tended to have secure jobs, and I've almost always worked at things that I've wanted to work at, things that I wanted to do, been able to live where I wanted to live. I've gotten a lot of recognition over the years for what I've done. I've just been pretty happy with the way things have gone. Especially when I look back and see how they started out.

S: How do you perceive yourself in the grand scheme of outdoor literature?

M: Well, let's see. There've been as far as I know only about three humor writers that have achieved any kind of recognition. There was Corey Ford,[3] Ed Zern and myself. I'd think I'd be one of

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[3] According to Field & Stream Managing Editor Maggie Nichols, in a personal telephone interview July 24, 1995, Corey Ford was a humorist who wrote for Field & Stream, The New Yorker and The Saturday Evening Post, among other magazines. His works appeared in those magazines from the 1920s to the 1960s. He wrote a column called "The Lower Forty" for Field & Stream from the 1950s to the early 1960s.

the three in there, among people writing humor for outdoor magazines.

S: How do you react to the following statement: Patrick McManus has influenced a generation of humor writers and a generation of outdoor writers.[4]

M: Well, I don't know how I would react to that. I'm not sure that it's true. I undoubtedly have influenced some humor writers. I know some that I've influenced. First of all, there are not a lot of humor writers out there to influence. [Laughs] Of the humor writers you can think of who are writing right now — and they're very good — there's Erma Bombeck, who does a wonderful job. There's Dave Barry. I think Dave is a comic genius, a very, very funny writer. That's about it. Jene Shepherd — Jene is one of the funniest writers around, if he would write more. I think he's involved mostly in radio and television and films now. Of the past 20 or 30 years, when you try to think of humor writers who are out there, there are very, very few. A couple of Southerners are pretty good humor writers, there are some pretty good newspaper columnists who are pretty funny. But now we're getting into some of the overall comic situation in this country. There has been this long trend toward mean humor, which is not necessarily new, but it gets much more coverage, I guess — much more exposure — through television and radio. Well, you have Howard Stern, for example. You get a lot of the shock humor, a lot of the black humor — meaning the humor by blacks, Eddie Murphy and

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[4] The statement is made by the thesis author.

so on, where they drift into shock obscenity sorts of things. Not just blacks, but I think that Eddie Murphy and Richard Pryor — they almost had their own school of comedy for a long time. Much of it was hilarious. Richard Pryor is, I think, a comic genius. Bill Cosby's early work I thought was wonderful. I never did care much for "The Cosby Show," but his earlier comic work, which he was doing entirely himself — he was writing it, and he was doing it — I thought it was some of the best comedy ever produced in this country.

S: OK, let's forget about humor for a moment and think about outdoor writing. Would you say it's fair to assess that you have influenced a generation of up-and-coming outdoor writers?

M: Well, I may have. I may have gotten them interested in outdoor writing, and I may have influenced them in the sense of working some humor into the work. Not taking hunting and fishing as the ultimate experience, as the life-and-death situation; that these are things to go out and become involved in and to enjoy. Some writers write about fishing as though they are nuclear physicists or something. [Laughs] I think maybe I might have influenced them somewhat in taking a little lighter view at going out fishing and camping and hunting, that the total of the technology of it and all of this — the electronics — and satirizing some of these things may have directed them a little bit toward my particular view of the outdoors. I may have gotten a lot of young people interested in outdoor writing and perhaps interested in the outdoors. I know a great deal of women come up and tell me that they've never been interested in

the outdoors until they started reading my stories, which they got from their husbands. And now they're into bird watching, if not fishing or hunting.

S: I've had trouble locating much existing research for this project. Do you know of theses or dissertations about the subject of outdoor literature in general, or of you in particular?

M: There won't be any. Outdoor literature in general is not highly regarded.

Chapter Three
MCMANUS: THE CRITICAL RECEPTION

A Booklist review of Pat McManus' first book, A Fine and Pleasant Misery, suggested that "McManus' humorous pieces for Field & Stream magazine reveal a writer whose skillfully told tales deserve notice by an audience considerably broader than just outdoor sports enthusiasts."[1]

McManus now has published 11 titles. Five have appeared on the New York Times Bestseller List.[2] They are The Grasshopper Trap (1985), Rubber Legs and White Tail-hairs (1987), The Night the Bear Ate Goombaw (1989), Real Ponies Don't Go Oink (1991), and The Good Samaritan Strikes Again (1992). Despite McManus' commercial success, he still struggles with the regional-author-in-limited-genre stereotype that has plagued other writers in the genre, including Ed Zern (Pennsylvania) and Charley Dickey (Florida/Georgia). The labels arise even from appreciative reviewers: "Northwest outdoor humorist Patrick F. McManus continues his tall and short tales of childhood and beyond in a new collection of biographical sketches. As a writer who doesn't take himself too seriously, he invites readers along on a very pleasant ride."[3]

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[1] "A Fine and Pleasant Misery," Booklist, April 1, 1978, p. 1232.

[2] Julie Williams, publicist, Henry Holt & Co., in personal telephone interview, Jan. 18, 1995.

[3] Paul Pintarich, "Remembering how funny it really was," The Oregonian, Oct. 2, 1994, p. E1.

According to the Encyclopedia of American Humorists,[4] humor writing is work produced by a humorist, and a humorist is one who intends to amuse his or her readers. McManus' intent clearly is to amuse his audiences through the genre of outdoor writing.

Research — primarily using the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and electronic library database searches — has turned up a total of 42 reviews of McManus' 11 books. As an aggregate, McManus' critical reception tells us that the most important accomplishment of McManus' work is that it succeeds in inspiring and entertaining a wide range of personality types — not just hunters and fishers. That success serves as the foundation for the bridge that McManus' work creates, connecting outdoor writing with humor writing.

On the whole, McManus has suffered few critics' jabs. Most reviewers use overwhelmingly positive language when discussing his work. The ones that mention gripes usually do so only in passing. For example:

> "The prose self of Patrick F. McManus, a humor columnist for Outdoor Life, is a cross between Paul Bunyan and Dagwood Bumstead, the klutz tromping through field, stream and kitchen. Real Ponies Don't Go Oink! is a new batch of memoir-essays, written from the perspective of a happily henpecked codger. Although fans of Mr. McManus' previous collections will probably welcome the return of Rancid Crabtree, the skunk trapper, and Retch Sweeney, his fishing buddy, others may have trouble keeping straight the stock lovable

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[4] Steven H. Gale, ed., Encyclopedia of American Humorists (1988), New York: Garland Publishing Inc., p. xvii.

> backwoods cretins. And as much as I laughed at (or with) drunken Uncle Finn laying waste to a Fourth of July picnic with fireworks that 'could bring down a B-29,' my favorite pieces were those in which Mr. McManus' sweet-spirited intelligence competes with the antic yarns: a defense of the fishing box — that repository of rusted reels, coagulated plastic worms and such 'things you might find a use for someday, although probably not in this century'; a discussion of 'thoughtful' versus expensive presents, in which the author realized that 'to pour both thought and expense into a single gift is to waste either thinking or money'; and a *tour de force* on the implacability of cement. Mr. McManus' sure comic hand fumbles only rarely and his narrative formula of escalating absurdities is a credit to the tall-tale craft — the book's dumb title notwithstanding."[5]

The exception to the general critical light touch is McManus' cookbook, Whatchagot Stew: A Memoir of an Idaho Childhood, With Recipes and Commentaries (1989). The New York Times Book Review, for example, was anything but complimentary of the cookbook:

"Whatchagot Stew is one long bad joke about how everybody these days is writing cookbooks. ... Since he seems to be unable to handle such an original idea by himself, [McManus] teams up with his sister, Patricia. Unfortunately, the writing is so seasoned with bawdy humor, loud laughter, bad whiskey, and endless psychological torment that truth is completely beside the point. The recipes in the cookbook are burdened with titles like Pat's Perky Popovers. After all the bad jokes, it's never entirely clear that the reader is supposed

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[5] Diane McWhorter, "Real Ponies Don't Go Oink!" New York Times Book Review, June 30, 1991, p. 20.

to take the recipes seriously. It doesn't matter, since you won't be hungry anyway."[6]

The critic's reference to "bawdy humor" was in stark contrast to most reviewers' printed perceptions. For example: In a world in which shock humor and obscenity are increasingly popular, "Refreshingly, McManus is hilarious without the props of sex, profanity or bitter cynicism about our frightened, dysfunctional and cowardly new world. McManus' characters make no excuses for who they are, and that's why Rancid Crabtree, an ornery old hermit, can face down the evil Skragg boys wearing a borrowed blue dress. 'I realized that Rancid possessed a quality that explained the restrained and solemn attitude of the patrons of Fat Edna's bar to the spectacle of a lanky old woodsman wearing a blue dress. That quality consists of a certain kind of presence in social situations, possibly what the French refer to as *savoir faire.*' "[7]

Most of McManus' books are cover-to-cover collections of previously published magazine articles. The exceptions are Kid Camping From Aaaaiii to Zip, a camping guide; Watchagot Stew, a cookbook with autobiographical essays; and How I Got This Way, McManus' latest release, a collection of previously published essays sandwiched by two new autobiographical pieces titled "How I Got This Way," parts I and II.[8]

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6 "Whatchagot Stew: A Memoir of an Idaho Childhood, With Recipes and Commentaries," New York Times Book Review, Feb. 4, 1990, p. 19.

7 Pintarich, p. E8.

8 Tom Carney, "McManus Explains How He Got That Way," The Oakland Press, December 1, 1994, p. E-7.

McManus' foray into the book business started with the publication of A Fine and Pleasant Misery in 1978. The reviewers gushed.

> There are books. There are funny books. There are books forgettable, books best forgotten, and books to be cherished and remembered in the small corridors of our minds where we park our sanity and hide it carefully from the onslaughts of reality. A memorable, valued, funny book is a window on the cosmos that helps us discharge our frustrations and helplessness, leak away the tension, and helps us to regain our perspective of ourselves and the rest of existence. It demands a literary genius perhaps first manifest in our culture in the comedies of Aristophanes. ... These tales come as sweet balm to set the world aright. The self portrayed in the book is a nebbish. The man who wrote it is one full of compassion, drawing on his own experiences, to embroider them with art so that we may see them as illuminating our fate. The publisher's blurb compares McManus with Mark Twain, and the coupling is not farfetched. Were McManus to broaden his survey of the human condition, he might well attain the eminence of Twain, for he is a master craftsman, a wordsmith of the highest rank. On campfire cooking: "If a bite of food showed no signs of struggle, you considered this a reasonable indication that it came from the cook pot and was not something just passing through." Read, that ye may be gruntled.[9]

Other gushings:

"Camping reminiscences by Field & Stream contributor McManus, whose 27 collected efforts rank among the funniest we've read, whatever the genre."[10]

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[9] Harry D. Baecker, "A Fine and Pleasant Misery," Best Sellers, July 1978, p. 125-6.

[10] "A Fine and Pleasant Misery," Kirkus Reviews, January 15, 1978, p. 89.

> For all who need a good laugh (and who doesn't?) McManus is a blessing. Here is a collection of pieces he contributed to Field & Stream, gems of humor that persuaded the editor of the magazine, Jack Samson, that McManus is the Robert Benchley of the outdoors. With that assessment and other remarks in Samson's introduction, the delighted reader will certainly agree. The title piece is a side-splitting complaint about modern technology, which has taken all the misery out of camping. Half the fun of camping, years ago, the author says, was getting back home with tales of terrible hardships. But now, "Hardship on a camping trip is blowing a fuse on your electric underwear."[11]

The reviewers didn't gush when the second book, Kid Camping from Aaaaiii! to Zip, was released. But the work, targeted to children, was generally appreciated. "Lists, recipes and good advice combine with humor to make this a valuable book for kids who like to camp. Roy Doty's cartoons add to the fun."[12]

They Shoot Canoes, Don't They? (1981) brought McManus critical success that rivaled A Fine and Pleasant Misery. For example:

"I think it's time to expose Spokane writer Patrick F. McManus for what he really is. He's a coward. He has no reverence for truth. He's a scab on the image of the true outdoorsman. He's also (dammit) funny. The stories in They Shoot Canoes generally are recollections of his warped childhood and his even more warped outdoor experiences as an adult — all complete with a cast of neurotic sidekicks, such as his crotchety childhood idol Rancid Crabtree. 'Rancid was a man who

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[11] "A Fine and Pleasant Misery," Publishers Weekly, January 16, 1978, p. 87.

[12] "Kid Camping from Aaaaiii! to Zip," Book Report, September/October 1991, p. 73. The book was re-released in 1991.

bathed only on leap years, and the previous leap year had escaped his notice,' McManus writes. 'He smelled bad enough dry; wet, he could drive a lame badger out of its hole at forty yards.' "[13]

The consensus was that Never Sniff a Gift Fish (1983), another compilation of magazine articles, is a book that provides plenty of fun.

> As before, many of the most engaging, least effortful moments come from glimpses of the McManus childhood: his first experiment with gunpowder, "in which my eyebrows were sacrificed to the cause of science"; receiving a Christmas hatchet — but being told, "Now don't chop anything." ... And when McManus does an outdoors/literary overlap, the results are almost always choice — whether discussing the philosophy-of-fish with Sartre and Camus or parodying Hemingway (a hilarious piece that suffers from overkill). True, there are filler entries here too, worth barely a smile: lists of mock-definitions, office exercises for outdoorsmen, the very limp title essay (about an outdoorsman determined to come up with an immortal new proverb). But, complete with appearances by such McManus regulars as Rancid Crabtree and Retch Sweeney, this is humor-column-writing of a remarkably consistent, likable, easy-going sort — and amusing for those who'd never dream of lifting rod or rifle.[14]

"As humor, [Never Sniff a Gift Fish] falls short compared with They Shoot Canoes, Don't They?, but there are enough laughs to satisfy his fans or to entertain new readers. McManus is a master at spoofing sportsmen and life in the Great Outdoors."[15]

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[13] Rich Landers, "McManus Exposed For What He Is — Funny," Spokane Spokesman-Review, June 14, 1981, p. B6.

[14] "Never Sniff a Gift Fish," Kirkus Reviews, July 1, 1983.

[15] "Never Sniff a Gift Fish," Publishers Weekly, July 15, 1983, p. 45.

The Grasshopper Trap (1985) was the first of McManus' books to appear on the New York Times Bestseller List.[16]

> Patrick F. McManus is a writer who makes people laugh out loud, hard. ... When writers for outdoor magazines try to be funny and fail, the cause is usually excessive heartiness, joviality and guy-ness. But what is so great about Mr. McManus is that he has an interesting and eccentric mind and he pays attention to it. Unlikely dangers loom at him — cows, for example. They chase him sometimes when he is fishing. He divides them into two categories: Fast Mean Cows and Slow Mean Cows. ... His best stories, especially the ones about growing up, are not only funny but clear and exact and unique. Everybody should read Patrick McManus, on the off chance. If you happen to be a person who thinks Mr. McManus is funny, most likely you will think he is *really* funny.[17]

Two reviewers expressed mild complaints about inconsistencies in the quality of the pieces in The Grasshopper Trap (1985):

"Though he seems sometimes to be resting on his laurels — or his poison ivy — McManus has the knack of getting some truths down on paper with a whittled stick and some blackberry juice. He's at his best, perhaps, in telling the balding set just how to have been a kid. A text light enough to keep in your backpack, even if you forget the compass."[18]

"Like all good humorists, [McManus] possesses the rare ability to keep his readers laughing. Of the 30 selections included here, about half are thoroughly hilarious, but the others are all worth a

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16 Williams, personal interview.

17 Ian Frazier, "Fast Mean Cows and Slow Mean Cows," New York Times Book Review, December 15, 1985, p. 8.

18 "The Grasshopper Trap," Kirkus Reviews, June 15, 1985, p. 572.

smile. ... Even readers whose idea of a trip to the wilderness ends with a park bench will savor McManus' wit."[19]

However, most commentary about The Grasshopper Trap was complimentary. For example:

"The 30 pieces assembled here run a bucolic gamut of outdoor misadventures. The author recalls his encounter with an inept wilderness guide: 'Once he got us so lost I resorted to firing three shots in rapid succession. But the light was bad and I missed him.' At other times McManus offers addled expertise. He tells new husbands how to build up a gun collection without attracting the attention of their wives. Hint: Get the little woman to stop counting rifles and start thinking 'all those guns.' He also offers some badly needed collective nouns, based on the pattern of an exaltation of larks: a sulk of unsuccessful fishermen, a whiff of skunk trappers, a cramp of camp cooks. All of which should beguile McManus' growing cackle of devotees."[20]

Another example: "The author's droll pieces describing outdoorsmen with more gumption than prowess are gems of satirical writing."[21]

Rubber Legs and White Tail-hairs (1987) was McManus' second book on the New York Times Bestseller List.[22] The critics were almost

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19 "The Grasshopper Trap," Booklist, August 1985, p. 1620.
20 "The Grasshopper Trap," Time, September 16, 1985, p. 82.
21 "The Grasshopper Trap," Publishers Weekly, June 21, 1985, p. 90.
22 Williams, personal interview.

unanimously enamored of the work. The lone exception uncovered by research appeared in the New York Times Book Review:

"Mr. McManus has become celebrated as an outdoor humorist, which is perplexing because his work isn't all that hilarious. ... Since Mr. McManus isn't a terribly versatile storyteller, satirist or parodist, the rest is pretty much the same old predictable slapstick, farce and gags."[23]

The rest of the critical response for Rubber Legs was overwhelmingly positive. For example:

"McManus' anthology is a loony look at human foibles in the backwoods and byways of life, but it is more universal than that. The outdoors and activities thereof are, for McManus, vehicles for showing the crazy side of human nature. ... These short pieces with long laughs should have special appeal for reluctant readers."[24]

Another example: "These humor columns are rural electrification, abuzz with irresistible comedy, just as they were in such previous McManus collections as The Grasshopper Trap and Never Sniff a Gift Fish. A sure-handed collection of yarns, boyhood reminiscences, and essays. A very funny collection."[25]

One more: "Humorist McManus does for rural America what Woody Allen does for urban life. ... McManus may seem to be writing

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[23] Harry Middleton, "Rubber Legs and White Tail-hairs," New York Times Book Review, Nov. 29, 1987, p. 20.

[24] Karl Penny, "Rubber Legs and White Tail-hairs," School Library Journal, December 1987, p. 110.

[25] "Rubber Legs and White Tail-hairs," Kirkus Reviews, July 15, 1987, p. 1049.

about the country, but the real subject of his books — our remarkable talent for making fools of ourselves — is as universal as laughter."[26]

McManus' third straight[27] New York Times Bestseller List book is titled The Night the Bear Ate Goombaw (1989). This release inspired critics to compare McManus to writers ranging from James Thurber[28] to Erma Bombeck.[29] Most of the reviews were glowing, but one reviewer called McManus' work "embarrassing":

> A book of essays or stories should be even in tone and pace to avoid the impression of limping. Unfortunately, The Night the Bear Ate Goombaw limps. Some of his essay/stories are funny, others are not. He writes mostly of the outdoors, but not in a way that can be compared to other nature writers like Annie Dillard, Barry Lopez or Edward Abbey. His is the view of the hunter or fisherman, strictly an outdoorsman as recreationist. Certainly there are opportunities for comedy in man versus the great outdoors, since nature, one on one, usually wins. Those of us who have been unceremoniously dumped by a cranky canoe, have watched helplessly as our canoe parted company with the top of our vehicle and bounced down the road, have had the big one get away, have been stalked by moose or bear or what we thought were moose or bear are aware of the possibilities for humor. Some of these stories are funny; anything that begins: "Give a man enough rope and it will still come out six inches too short" is going somewhere. Besides enough rope, Mr. McManus covers worm entrepreneurship, garage-sale hype and boy meets girl, backwoods style. Too bad that some of the pieces fall

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26 "Rubber Legs and White Tail-hairs," Booklist, September 15, 1987, p. 104.

27 Williams, personal interview.

28 "The Night the Bear Ate Goombaw," Kirkus Reviews, April 1, 1989, p. 526-7.

29 John Brosnahan, "The Night the Bear Ate Goombaw," Booklist, April 15, 1989, p. 1410.

absolutely flat, the labored effort to be funny making them almost embarrassing to read.[30]

The reviewer's statement that McManus cannot be compared with Dillard, Lopez and Abbey is correct. The three are not in the same genre or niche as McManus. McManus is a humorist who intends to amuse his readers by writing about the sporting outdoors. The other three are nature writers whose works are not intended to be humorous.

The other reviews of The Night the Bear Ate Goombaw are material for McManus' scrapbook. For example:

"What Erma Bombeck is to the American housewife and mother, Patrick McManus is to the outdoor enthusiast: an antic chronicler of the trials and tribulations that, in his case, confront he who would rather fish and hunt than work."[31]

And from Kirkus Reviews: "McManus, that straight-shooting, latter-day Dan'l Boone, has hit the trail again with another collection of lightsome selections. He's still in good form, and fans can be expected to take this ... hook, line and sinker."[32]

McManus ran his New York Times Bestseller List winning streak to four[33] with the critically well-received Real Ponies Don't Go Oink (1991).

"McManus' patented recreational comedy deals with such mundane matters as fish scalers, used plywood, and scary critters.

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30 Margaret E. Guthrie, "The Night the Bear Ate Goombaw," New York Times Book Review, June 18, 1989, p. 21.

31 Brosnahan, p. 1410.

32 Kirkus Reviews, April 1, 1989, p. 526.

33 Williams, personal interview.

What follows inevitably is bucolic mayhem, do-it-yourself failure, and rafting on the Tushwallop River. Of course, there's wife Bun, who likes camping in. 'She likes a little something extra between her and the hard, cold ground, preferably several floors of a luxury hotel.' ... There's nothing really new or earthshaking in these fey tales of hapless fishermen and numbskull Nimrods. But McManus watchers will want to know that the old rara avis is back in full plumage and chirping away, regular as the seasons."[34]

McManus' string of New York Times Bestseller List appearances reached five[35] with The Good Samaritan Strikes Again.

> James Thurber, echoing Wordworth's definition of poetry, defined humor as "emotional chaos remembered in tranquility," a statement McManus advances in this collection of 24 essays, most of which are reprinted from Outdoor Life. In his seven previous books, McManus offered many pieces about hunting and fishing, and here he adds more, although they are the least successful selections. But the articles on his career in public relations and his concomitant desire to make himself invisible will provoke smiles, the one about his winning high school football team will bring laughter, and the title piece, as well as "Rancid Crabtree and the Demon Bat" and "The Fly," will prompt guffaws. In these, McManus recalls how he ineptly tried to help a man hurt in an auto accident, the flight of an enormous kite bearing the town drunk during a windstorm, and a practical joke played on the officious head of a college janitorial staff by his oppressed employees.[36]

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34 "Real Ponies Don't Go Oink," Kirkus Reviews, April 15, 1991, p. 519.

35 Williams, personal interview.

36 "The Good Samaritan Strikes Again," Publishers Weekly, August 10, 1992, p. 61.

How I Got This Way, McManus' late-1994 release, hadn't made the New York Times Bestseller List as of June 1995. But if the book's critical reception is any indication, it's not because of a lack of quality. For example, from the Flint (Mich.) Journal:

> This review is a warning to all men who take themselves seriously and want the fairer sex to do the same. Patrick McManus, the dangerously subversive humorist, has published his latest outrage that once again illustrates the incompetent, lying, sniveling fool that lies buried just under the macho facade of every man. Oh, sure, McManus paints himself as the fool in these wildly funny stories. But anybody — most certainly any wife, girlfriend, sister, mother, niece, aunt or even casual female acquaintance — will immediately recognize that the author represents every man. Especially you, the reader. So if you can stand the humiliation, go ahead and read How I Got This Way — but, please, try to keep it out of the hands of women. There is no denying that this book is immensely fun to read, but the harm it can do to male self-esteem and our standing with women is incalculable. This review is, therefore, presented as a public service to all males. Hopefully, you've read this page before the woman of the house and can conveniently lose it.[37]

From The Oakland Press: "As usual, you'll find yourself laughing out loud throughout the book, although the slapstick humor isn't quite as prominent as usual. There's much more subtle humor from repetition wherein a certain line or image is employed several times throughout an essay for comic effect. As evinced by the drawing on the title page, this book marks the latest step in the

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[37] Tom Powers, "Quick, Men, Hide This Book Review," Flint [Mich.] Journal, October 2, 1994.

evolution of Pat McManus, humorist. Longtime McManus fans will applaud the progress."[38]

From Publishers Weekly: "There's a smile or guffaw to be had on almost every page of McManus' collection of essays, some of which are original, others reprinted from Outdoor Life. There's entertainment aplenty here that even indoorsy folk should enjoy."[39]

And from the Denver, Colo., Rocky Mountain News: "Author Patrick McManus is well-known for his northwoods humor. ... In fact, he's been cranking out a book at the rate of about one a year for more than a decade. And this year's offering pretends to be autobiographical. Rather, it is simply a pretense for McManus to spin more north Idaho yarns. Explaining how his interest in the out of doors was nurtured, he says, 'From age 12 on, I ran traplines, hunted with my own shotgun, fished every spare moment, roamed wild and free in the woods and mountains, and cultivated the company of ornery old men who smelled of tobacco, whiskey, and hard living.' He adds, 'It was nice.' As far as humor goes, McManus is hardly the king of one-liners. Instead, he tries hard for the continuous chuckle. He's the sort of storyteller one might find sitting in a country store, dusting off some oft-told tales about his life."[40]

Each of the following publications has reviewed more than one of McManus' books:

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38 Carney, p. E-7.

39 "How I Got This Way," Publishers Weekly, July 4, 1994, p. 47.

40 C.W. Buchholtz, "Northwoods Storyteller Has a Way With Yarns," Rocky Mountain News, October 19, 1994.

Periodical	*Reviews*
Publishers Weekly	9
Kirkus Reviews	6
Booklist	6
New York Times Book Review	4
Library Journal	3

Publishers Weekly has tended to point out the individual essays of choice within each book, weighing each essay based on its individual merits and not as part of the book's whole: "Dealing primarily with growing up in rural Idaho, the pieces introduce boyhood friends such as Eddie Muldoon, with whom McManus dug a pit to catch wild animals that unfortunately caught Eddie's father and a skunk — simultaneously; the priest with a fear of birds who came to dinner before the McManuses had moved their spring crop of chicks to the henhouse; and Rancid Crabtree, who demolished a 400-pound pumbkin with the author's monster-sized slingshot. Stories abound about hunting, fishing and arduous treks, including a piece about hiking with George Bush during the 1992 presidential campaign."[41]

In general, Publishers Weekly has praised the universal entertainment value of McManus' humor. For example: "McManus has been making outdoorsmen laugh for some time now, but his new collection of writing passes a sterner test. Here he can amuse someone who's never even baited a hook."[42]

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41 "How I Got This Way," Publishers Weekly, July 4, 1994, p. 47.

42 "The Night the Bear Ate Goombaw," Publishers Weekly, April 7, 1989.

Another example: "Deliberately simple, the humor is always good-natured; the worst character is a prissy, visiting aunt — and she turns out to be a nice person in the end."[43]

Criticisms of McManus are rare in Publishers Weekly. When they are present, they focus on essays in which the reviewers believe McManus is trying too hard: "His comic voice, resonating with a surprising depth of wit, is expressed in a pleasant, quirky prose style — but shows a tendency to get cute. Characters cry 'Owww!' and 'Arrrhhhh' and 'Arp!' incessantly and excessively, and the author indulges a fondness for italic type: 'I ... *gasp* ... forgot my billfold. It's ... *pant* ... in my tackle box. Get it for me ... *choke* ... will you?' This talented writer doesn't need to poke readers in the ribs to let them in on the joke."[44]

Kirkus Reviews' six McManus critiques are overwhelmingly positive. The magazine's reviewers focus on the warm and fuzzy — in particular, it's his easygoing, down-home style that earns the praise: "Brave woodsman he may be, but McManus sticks, along with Rancid and Retch, to the old familiar path. Never mind; it's all artfully devised, in an excursion that is as plain as beans and slick as soap, but funnier than either."[45]

Another example: "A sure-handed collection of yarns, boyhood reminiscences, and essays. ... A very funny collection."[46]

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[43] "Rubber Legs and White Tail-Hairs," Publishers Weekly, July 31, 1987, p. 70.
[44] Publishers Weekly, April 7, 1989.
[45] "Real Ponies Don't Go Oink," Kirkus Reviews, April 15, 1991, p. 519.
[46] "Rubber Legs and White Tail-Hairs," Kirkus Reviews, July 15, 1987, p. 1049.

Booklist reviewers are no less enthusiastic about McManus. Not even so much as a hint of criticism appears. In particular, the praise focuses on McManus' ability to transcend his subject: "The author's fans will appreciate these comic escapades in the great outdoors for their humor and humanity and just because they feel they're probably not as klutzy as McManus always seems to be."[47]

Although the New York Times Book Review writers tended to be more critical than other reviewers, it should be noted that the reviewers chosen by that publication do not write in McManus' genre. An example of criticism: "There are several good laughs sprinkled through the 27 pieces in Rubber Legs and White Tail-Hairs, particularly in the title essay, about the nervous, upsetting lives led by fly fishermen who insist on tying their own flies, and in 'Outdoor Burnout,' about how irritating unbridled outdoor beauty can be. But since Mr. McManus isn't a terribly versatile storyteller, satirist or parodist, the rest is pretty much the same old predictable slapstick, farce and gags."[48] Reviewer Harry Middleton is a historian.

The opinion of cookbook author Margaret E. Guthrie was less than flattering, as well. (See pages 38 and 39 of this chapter.) However, the New York Times Book Review offers as much praise as it does criticism for McManus. For example: "Patrick F. McManus is a writer who makes people laugh out loud, hard. The first time I read his first collection of pieces, A Fine and Pleasant Misery, I was sitting

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[47] John Brosnahan, "Real Ponies Don't Go Oink," Booklist, May 1, 1991, p. 1674.
[48] Harry Middleton, "Rubber Legs and White Tail-Hairs," New York Times Book Review, November 29, 1987, p. 20.

by myself in a one-room house, and the experience gave me a chance to hear what my own laugh sounds like. I began to laugh on page 6, and as I went along I listened more closely. The sound was not 'ha ha ha'; I laughed with loud barks and high-pitched, wheezy runs and long, helpless relapses. I was like one of those Bag-o'-Laffs you buy in joke shops. ... [H]is best stories, especially the ones about growing up, are not only funny but clear and exact and unique."[49] Reviewer Ian Frazier, who wrote this review, is a nonfiction author of Americana.

The consistently down-to-earth, easygoing nature of McManus' essays seems redundant and slow-paced to some New York Times Book Review writers. The New York Times Book Review is the only publication that regularly criticizes McManus about his style. The publication's choices of reviewers may be at least part of the reason.

Library Journal is consistently complimentary of McManus' laid-back style and his ability to write stories that appeal to a much wider audience than the hunting-and-fishing set: "McManus ... has come out with a new collection of countrified, down-home stories that are sure to amuse more than just lovers of the great outdoors."[50]

Another example: "Dealing largely with incidents arising from camping, hunting and fishing situations, often in the company of

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[49] Frazier, p. 8.

[50] Carol Spielman Lezak, "The Night the Bear Ate Goombaw," Library Journal, June 15, 1989, p. 58.

buddy Rancid Crabtree, McManus gives us 31 essays that poke gentle (but not simple-minded) fun at human pretensions."[51]

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[51] David J. Panciera, "Never Sniff a Gift Fish," Library Journal, September 1, 1983, p. 1717.

Chapter Four
MCMANUS: THE LITERARY SETTING

Patrick F. McManus writes his monthly Outdoor Life column, "The Last Laugh," in a setting in which three monthly magazines dominate the outdoor periodical market. The Big Three — as they are called in the industry — are Field & Stream, with a paid distribution of 2,007,901; Outdoor Life, with a paid distribution of 1,502,676; and Sports Afield, with a paid distribution of 515,314.

With the March 23, 1994, death of Field & Stream columnist Ed Zern, McManus has become one of a kind. McManus is now the only Big Three monthly humor columnist. And if Field & Stream Executive Editor David Petzal and Outdoor Life Editor Vin Sparano are correct, McManus may be the last of his kind.

Zern's column, "Exit Laughing," premiered in 1958, and ran monthly in Field & Stream until his death. Zern is a pioneer in the outdoor humor column writing niche in that before the debut of his column and "The Lower Forty," a Field & Stream humor column by Corey Ford that ran in the 1950s and early 1960s, outdoor humor tended to be of a back-woods, dialect-comedy nature.[1] For example, "Unkel Dave," a Field & Stream column that ran in the 1920s and 1930s, would be controversial in the 1990s.

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[1]David Petzal, executive editor, Field & Stream, in personal telephone interview, June 19, 1995.

"If we even thought about running ["Unkel Dave"] today, we'd be sued," said Petzal. "If you reprinted it, you'd be thrown out of school for political incorrectness."[2]

Zern is the author of eight books that contain collections of his previously published humor pieces. Seven of the books were published before McManus' first Field & Stream article, "I'll Never Forget Old 5789-A," which appeared in August 1968. Zern's book titles include To Hell With Fishing [1945] and A Fine Kettle of Fish Stories [1964]. Field & Stream Managing Editor Maggie Nichols said Zern's book sales do not compare to McManus' sales — probably less than 10 percent of McManus' more than 3 million.[3]

Zern and McManus are similar in that they are the most popular outdoor humorists of the 20th century — if not of all time — but their methods are strikingly different.

"Pat McManus writes in an American tradition most associated with Mark Twain, and that's exaggeration. That's his shtick," said David Petzal, executive editor of Field & Stream. "Zern is an original. I don't think you can compare him to anyone I know of. Ed was more of an essayist than a humorist." Field & Stream has made no effort to replace Zern, Petzal said. "There will never be anyone else remotely approaching him," he said. "When Ed passed away, we closed the book."[4]

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Maggie Nichols, managing editor, Field & Stream, in personal telephone interview, May 31, 1995.

[4] David Petzal, executive editor, Field & Stream, in personal telephone interview, May 24, 1995.

Petzal said it won't be easy for his Outdoor Life competitors to replace McManus, either, when he decides to step down. "I don't see anybody writing in the outdoor field that's consistently funny," he said. "Any writer, if he tries hard enough, can produce something funny. It's about impossible to do it consistently."[5]

"[McManus] pretty much relies on his childhood and upbringing, those sorts of things," said Sparano. "[Zern] — when he was alive, anyway — brought more of a Madison Avenue, esoteric style to his work. McManus is more grass-roots."[6]

Sparano was pained by the mere mention of eventually dealing with the loss of McManus through retirement or death: "Right now, I don't even want to think about it. ... Pat has been a solid standby for outdoor humor writing for a long time," he said.[7]

When McManus left Field & Stream for Outdoor Life, Zern kept plodding along at Field & Stream. This created the first direct competition in the outdoor humor column field. Zern's death has left McManus alone in the niche Zern created.

McManus' first outdoor humor piece, "I'll Never Forget Old 5789-A," didn't include any of the recurring characters that readers now associate with McManus, but it did offer an example of the writing style to be used in his humorist endeavors. In "5789-A," a sendup of scientists' techniques in studying wild creatures, McManus

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5 Ibid.

6 Vin Sparano, editor, Outdoor Life, in personal telephone interview, May 24, 1995.

7 Ibid.

uses exaggeration as his primary humor device. In this piece, McManus sets the stage by asking a technologist about the possible availability of a suitable big-game trophy animal. The technologist types the request into a computer, which prophetically tells the hunter when his prey will appear at a certain location:

> At precisely 4:32 p.m., Buck Deer No. 5789-A steps into the clearing, heading due north at a speed of six miles per hour. He is wearing a bright red vinyl jacket set off by blue ear streamers and a collar of blinking lights. I bust him with a .30-.30 slug, which enters just slightly above his portable power pack and emerges to the left of his transistorized radio unit. As I rush up to the fallen No. 5789-A, a feminine voice squawks from his radio pack, "Nice shot!" The voice belongs to the lady technologist at the Electronic Game Control Center. "Thanks," I say. "I will now put on a recording of the proper method for dressing a big-game animal," she says. Another female voice comes on: "You have just shot what is known as your big-game animal. Here are the directions for dressing your big-game animal. First, carefully remove from the big-game animal all electronic devices, its vinyl jacket and ribbons and the plastic collar. If this is not done immediately, the meat may have a strong flavor. Step Number Two. ..." You can see the advantages.[8]

Zern differs significantly from McManus in that Zern's storytelling is more matter-of-fact, and far less prone to the exaggeration technique. The effect — humor — is the same. For example:

> I stole a trout one time — and I mean ripped it off, causing the rightful owner all sorts of anguish (but not as much anguish as if I had *not* stolen it). It was at the

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[8] "I'll Never Forget Old 5789-A," Field & Stream, August 1968, p. 43.

Antrim Lodge on the Beaverkill, still a favorite fishing inn for Catskill trout anglers, and I think the year was 1944. There was a kid there, home from basic training at an Army camp and using his few days of leave to do some serious trout fishing — probably the last he'd do for a long time, and possibly the last he'd ever do. He wasn't much of a trout fisherman, in years of experience or technique, but he made up for it in enthusiasm, and I offered to take him down the river one afternoon, as he had no wheels.

Driving down the old Route 17 beside the river, I learned his largest trout ever was barely ten inches, and how much he'd like to get a really good brown this trip, to think about while he was overseas or wherever he'd be going. So when we stopped at the long pool below Cook's Falls, and he hooked and netted a nice fish after it had put up a respectable tussle, I made quite a fuss about it. "How big would you say it is?" he asked, eagerly, and I stretched things a bit and said, "That's a real nice fish — I'd say maybe fifteen, sixteen inches." "Wow!" the kid said. "Sixteen inches!" "Maybe more," I said, figuring it wouldn't do any harm.

At the bar that evening I told the group about the youngster's fish, and somebody asked him how big it was. "I didn't have a chance to measure it before I stuck it in the freezer," the boy said, "but I'd say, oh, sixteen-seventeen inches." "I watched you net it from the road," someone said, "and it looked bigger than that." "Might have been," the soldier said, looking pleased, and an hour and several bourbon-and-waters later I heard him describe it as "about eighteen inches." "Hey, that's the top fish of the day!" someone said. "I'd like to see that baby!" "Okay," the boy said, happily. "Soon as I finish this drink."

I ducked out the back door beside the bar, went into the freezer room and found the kid's trout in a paper bag with his name on it. It measured fourteen and one-half inches on the ruler hung by the door. I threw the bag into the trash can, stuffed the trout in a bag with my three keepers and rejoined the group at the table in the bar. When the boy and three or four others went up to look at his prize trout, and couldn't find it, the kid was furious. "What kind of lowdown, rotten so-and-so would

> steal another man's trout?" he demanded, but finally he simmered down and said, "Well, hell, if somebody needs a nineteen-inch trout that bad, he's welcome to it." And later he told me he'd always have the memory of it, which was true — and in this instance, a big improvement on the reality.[9]

Zern's style is to weave a story in which the humor comes from the story as a whole. Individual passages may not invoke hilarity, but the entirety lends itself to a sustained humorous image. McManus, on the other hand, is a master at maximizing humor. He succeeds at inspiring a chuckle or a smile from virtually every sentence, and absolutely every thought. The humor is not dependent upon keeping the reader's attention throughout the whole story, but the effect of the compilation of the humor is tremendous.

In an Outdoor Life feature about McManus, writer Mitch Finley summed up the genre of outdoor writing — and McManus' place in it: "The magazine you hold in your hands is a serious publication. It has a sober aim: to bring you, the reader, up-to-date information about life in the great outdoors. Usually, this goal is fulfilled. But only usually. If you have read more than one issue of Outdoor Life, you know that when you open your copy of the magazine you can also count on more than a modicum of chuckles, chortles and guffaws, courtesy of Patrick F. McManus."[10]

The outdoor writing genre includes the approximately 1,800 members of the Outdoor Writers Association of America [OWAA].

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[9] "Are Fishermen Really Liars?" Ed Zern, Hunting and Fishing from A to Zern [1985], p. 113.

[10] Mitch Finley, "Inside Pat McManus," Outdoor Life, October 1989, p. 74.

Those writers produce work for 594 periodicals and 850 newspapers.[11] According to the 1994 edition of Writer's Market, 62 periodicals are devoted strictly to the subject of the sporting outdoors.[12] But Rainey said Writers Market contains a woefully incomplete listing of the publications that cater to the sporting outdoor market. Rainey also speculated that other than the Big Three, the combined circulation of the 59 outdoor periodicals listed in Writers Market would not top the circulation of Sports Afield, the smallest of the Big Three.[13]

Although McManus is an OWAA member, he has been known to rail against efforts to label his work. "In my case I'm put in the same category with newspaper columnists — also humorists — who are writing in another medium: the essay," McManus said. "Yet I've never viewed my pieces as *outdoors* stories, and I think that perception has limited my readership to some extent. They're funny stories, first of all, and I think more people are viewing them that way. They often comment: 'I don't fish or hunt, but I still read the stories.' Perhaps if they'd been published in the Atlantic they wouldn't be viewed as outdoors stories."[14]

Although McManus is often "put in the same category with newspaper columnists," story length sets McManus' work apart from

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[11] Jim Rainey, executive director, Outdoor Writers Association of America, personal interview, May 31, 1995.

[12] Writer's Market [1994], pp. 622-632.

[13] Rainey, personal interview.

[14] William C. Brisick, "Patrick F. McManus," Publishers Weekly, June 23, 1989, p. 42-3.

newspaper columns. A typical newspaper column might contain about 650 words. A typical McManus column in Outdoor Life, however, might contain 2,500 words. McManus has much more space, then, to develop his story line and to introduce new characters or to expand on old ones. Characterization is another aspect that sets McManus' work apart.

"Most of my stories are based on actual experiences, although some are purely imaginative," McManus said. "There are many standard devices humor writers can use to get laughs, but the best humor arises naturally out of the personalities of the characters in the stories and the comic situation in which they are placed. Although I may base a story on an actual experience I've had, I usually will use characters who will produce the best comic effect from that particular situation. I use many characters repeatedly, and regular readers become familiar with them. This helps the humor writer, because he doesn't have much space in which to develop characters fully in a 2,500-word story. Many of my characters have long histories, developed through dozens of stories."[15]

Four other devices used by McManus were outlined by writer Don Miles, who considers them secrets to McManus' success. The four techniques are exaggeration, understatement, dead-pan delivery, and juxtaposition of incongruous elements. "How do humor writers keep producing humor line after line, month after month? They learn

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15 "McManus, Patrick (Francis)," Something About the Author, 1986 ed., p. 156-57.

humor formulas and apply them in creative, innovative ways," Miles wrote.[16]

Miles is one of four outdoor writers who responded to a notice placed by the thesis author in Outdoors Unlimited, an OWAA publication. The notice requested insight from outdoor writers into the influence McManus has had on their careers. In his written response, Miles said he was 12 years old when he started reading stories by McManus in Field & Stream. "I watched the news stand every month for a new issue to see if he had a story. Soon he was publishing a story every month, so I subscribed. I read everything he wrote for years. I devoured his writing. Then he switched to Outdoor Life without leaving a forwarding address. I thought he had retired, and I was heartbroken. Finally, by accident, I saw a story by him in Outdoor Life, so I subscribed to that magazine. ...

"I read Pat all through my undergraduate career in English, and I liked him even though the professors told me he was not a great classic like Shakespeare. I don't think Shakespeare is the greatest anyway, so I didn't care what they said. I tried to publish during those years, but I didn't know much about how. It took me six years to publish the first time. ...

"I unquestionably owe a great debt to Pat McManus for helping me be happier growing up, influencing my writing style, influencing me to choose writing as a career, and publishing his humor so I can study his work and learn the craft of humor writing.[17]

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[16] Don Miles, "How to Write Humor," Outdoors Unlimited, March 1991, p. 22-3.
[17] Don Miles, personal letter, Aug. 16, 1993.

Writer Glynn Harris also responded to the notice in Outdoors Unlimited. Harris, who referred to McManus as "the guru of outdoor humor,"[18] illustrated the influence McManus has been in his career by enclosing a letter he received from McManus. In that letter, McManus, responding to a request from Harris for advice, compares effective humor writing to a magic act:

"There are a few tricks that I've learned over the years that might be useful to you. One is that you must rather early in the piece attempt to upset the reader's mental equilibrium — get him a little tipsy in the head so that he doesn't quite know what to expect. Then build to your main scene where everything suddenly goes to hell. To simplify, it is sort of like having one of your kids get the giggles; once he is in that state, you don't have to do much to send him into a fit of hysterical laughter. In short, preparing the proper emotional state in the reader is what makes some of the jokes work. Surprise is important also, and I go to great lengths to conceal punch lines from the reader. As you know, I'm sure, the best humor is derived from character, and so whenever possible I attempt to develop character. Naturally, the reader isn't going to sit still while you develop character, so you have to keep feeding him little one-liners while this process is under way and in general try to keep him distracted from what you are up to."[19]

McManus' writing style has evolved and has grown over the years. In "5789-A," for example, exaggeration is present but

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[18] Glynn Harris, personal letter, Aug. 5, 1993.

[19] Patrick McManus, personal letter to Glynn Harris, April 23, 1980.

recognizable characters are not. In his later works, McManus relies heavily on already-established characters such as Rancid Crabtree and Retch Sweeney to help him drive the story. Also missing from "5789-A" is the character mischief ubiquitous in McManus' later work. For example:

> The first experiment, in which my eyebrows were sacrificed to the cause of science, consisted of placing a small pile of black powder on a bicycle seat and touching a lighted match to it. I can no longer recall why a bicycle seat was employed as part of the apparatus, but I am sure my co-researcher and I had sound reasons for it at the time. In any case, we proved conclusively that a match flame serves as an excellent catalyst on gunpowder. I later concluded that the experiment might have been improved upon in only two ways: to have placed the powder on Retch's bicycle seat and to have let him hold the match. Instead, he chose to stand in awe of the experiment and about ten feet away, sucking absently on a bottle of Orange Crush. On the other hand, my sacrifice was not without its reward, since bald eyes and a hole burnt in my bicycle seat made great conversation openers with girls at school.
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> "Is anything the matter?" Mom asked during supper the evening after the bicycle-seat experiment.
>
> "No," I replied casually. "Why do you ask?"
>
> "Oh, nothing in particular," she said. "It just seems a little odd, your wearing sunglasses and a cap at the dinner table."
>
> She then expressed her desire that I remove both glasses and cap instantly, sooner if possible. After some debate over the finer points of dinner-table propriety, I complied.
>
> As expected, Mom responded with the classic question favored by the parents of young black powder experimenters everywhere: "WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR EYEBROWS?"
>
> Looking surprised and fingering the scorched area above my eyes, I tried to convey the impression that it

> was news to me that my eyebrows were missing, as if they might have dropped off unnoticed or been mislaid at school. The truth was soon extracted from me with an efficiency that would have been the envy of medieval counterintelligence agents. This was followed by a bit of parental advice.
>
> But scarcely had this parental advice ceased reverberating among the rafters than I was already plotting my next experiments for unlocking the mysteries of black powder. The discovery by Retch and me that we could purchase black powder in bulk from a local dealer was to have great impact on our lives, not to mention various parts of our anatomies.

Unchanged, however, is McManus' careful shunning of emotionally charged political issues. "Do I consciously avoid controversial topics? Yes," McManus wrote. "My audience consists of pretty much a cross-section of the American population — Republicans, Democrats, rich, poor, highly educated, barely educated, men, women, etc. I also have many children among my readers, and I take great care that they are able to understand what I write. That is one reason I avoid parody, which I love to do. Naturally, I am often tempted to write a satirical piece, particularly in regard to environmental issues. The primary purpose of my writing is to entertain the reader, not to foist off my views on him or her, although I do attempt to express certain attitudes about life and the human condition. I constantly receive letters from persons telling me how some member of their family had read my books during a terminal illness and was made to laugh even during this difficult time. So I am more concerned with improving the emotional state of my readers than I am in changing their views about a particular

subject. This is not something for which a writer will receive critical acclaim but it is something I can live with. I don't attribute my popularity to the avoidance of controversy but simply to amusing my readers."[20]

He's not controversial, so he's not a media magnet — yet he has attracted enough attention to reach the New York Times Bestseller List five times. He's opinionated about environmental and other societal issues, but he studiously keeps his thoughts on such controversial topics out of his work. Although he writes strictly humor about the outdoors, he is frustrated when critics label his writing. In light of these dichotomous traits, what is the role of McManus in the grand scheme of outdoor literature?

It might be best summarized by Jim Rainey, executive director of the Outdoor Writers Association of America:

"He's a great humorist on the outdoors," Rainey said. "Humor contributes to anything we do in life. He does keep people interested in the outdoors because he is so well-known, and his works are so well-read. Humor is the only way we can get some people interested in the outdoors, and in that respect, the work he does is very important."[21]

Important, yes. But despite McManus' protestations to the contrary [see pages 9 and 17 of this thesis], he must be classified as an outdoor humor writer. He writes his humor almost exclusively for outdoor publications. In fact, although his books are read by people

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20 Patrick F. McManus, personal letter, March 15, 1995.
21 Rainey, personal interview.

of a variety of backgrounds, he would not have gained the opportunity to reach those readers without the existence of the outdoor publications.

The comparisons to Mark Twain are relevant in that the two humorists excel at exposing human foibles through their characters. However, Twain was not an outdoor writer. He was a frontier writer. In McManus' lifetime, the frontier setting as Twain knew it did not exist, so comparing the writers in that respect is irrelevant. Their genres are not the same.

Nonetheless, through the commercial success of his humor, McManus — with more than three million books sold worldwide — is the foremost spokesman for the modern outdoor sportsman's way of life, and its foremost link to the rest of society.

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Appendices

Appendix A
"I'LL NEVER FORGET OLD 5789-A"
and
"WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO WORMS?"

"I'll Never Forget Old 5789-A" is the first outdoor humor piece sold by Patrick F. McManus to Field & Stream. "I'll Never Forget Old 5789-A," which ran in the August 1968 issue, is one of two pieces sent simultaneously to the magazine by Patrick F. McManus. After receiving positive feedback from "5789-A," Field & Stream bought the second piece — "What Ever Happened to Worms?" — in August 1968 for publication in the February 1969 issue.[1] *The following is the text of "I'll Never Forget Old 5789-A," which was reprinted in A Fine and Pleasant Misery. Copyright (c) 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978. Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Co. Inc.*

Let me admit it right off. There was a time not too long ago when I liked my wildlife unadorned. What I mean is, I liked it in the naked. Stark raving raw. In its birthday suit. Nude. Stripped. Bare. Some fur or hair and maybe a set of horns, but otherwise unadorned with so much as an aluminum fig leaf.

The wildlife situation, as I saw it, was becoming grim — sciencewise. The scientists were running all over the place decorating my wild animals with vinyl tags, collars, streamers, flags, patches and jackets. They were putting radio transmitters on grizzly bears and sage grouse and sea turtles. Deer in Idaho were running around in blinking lights, and some falcons of my acquaintance carried so

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[1] Maggie Nichols, managing editor, Field & Stream, personal telephone interview, June 1, 1995.

much electronic equipment they had to taxi for a takeoff. So help me, I even knew a mountain goat that ran around for a year with a piece of garden hose on his horns!

And that's not all. Plans were under way, the wildlife scientists told me, to start using telemetry, the system used by NASA doctors to keep tabs on the physiology of astronauts orbiting the globe. That way the zoologists and wildlife managers would know not only the location of a particular animal day and night but his temperature, rate of respiration, heart beat, and no doubt his politics.

All this I found depressing. Who ever expected wildlife managers to actually start managing the wildlife? I personally did not like scientists and the like fooling around with the fauna.

Then one day I said to myself, "You're a modern American male, aren't you? Yes. Therefore you are regimented, innoculated, tranquilized, numbered, recorded, transported, transplanted, poked, probed, polled, conditioned and computerized, aren't you? Yes. Then," I said to myself, "why should a bunch of damn animals be better off than you are?"

After that I decided to get into the spirit of the thing. The time would come, I saw, when people would think that anyone showing a preference for naked animals must be some kind of pervert. Mothers would call their children off the streets whenever "Fruity Fred" walked by. Toughs would beat him up in bars, and he would have to move to a city where the police protected people like him. He would have to get his kicks by watching clandestine showings of old Disney

nature films in motel rooms and maybe even by exchanging pictures of naked deer and bear with persons of similar inclinations. Maybe he would be forced to make his living by peddling picture post cards from an alley: "Wanta buy a dirty picture of a moose?"

None of that was for me. I got scared and started thinking of all the advantages this new scientific approach to game management would bring about. It took awhile, but I finally thought of some.

For example, I wouldn't have to slog around in the woods anymore hunting aimlessly for a deer. I would just stop by the local Electronic Game Control Center.

"What do you have in the way of a nice 125-pound whitetail buck at about 4:15 p.m. in the Haversteads' meadow" I would ask the technologist in charge.

"One moment, please." She would put the last touch to a phony eyelash and then program a card and run it through the computer. *Blink. Buzz. Hummm. Chink!* "You're in luck," she would say, looking at a piece of computer tape. "Buck Deer No. 5789-A will be crossing the Haversteads' meadow at exactly 4:32 p.m. He will be traveling due north at a speed of six miles per hour. His present weight is 135 pounds; pulse rate, 78; and temperature, 99.1. He has had all of his shots."

"Just what I'm looking for," I say, and rush out the door, heading for the Haversteads' meadow.

At precisely 4:32 p.m. Buck Deer No. 5789-A steps into the clearing, heading due north at a speed of six miles per hour. He is

wearing a bright red vinyl jacket set off by blue ear streamers and a collar of blinking lights. I bust him with a .30-.30 slug, which enters just slightly above his portable power pack and emerges to the left of his transistorized radio unit.

As I rush up to the fallen No. 5789-A, a feminine voice squawks from his radio pack, "Nice shot!" The voice belongs to the lady technologist at the Electronic Game Control Center.

"Thanks," I say.

"I will now put on a recording of the proper method for dressing a big-game animal," she says. Another female voice comes on:

"You have just shot what is known as your big-game animal. Here are the directions for dressing your big-game animal. First carefully remove from the big-game animal all electronic devices, its vinyl jacket and ribbons and the plastic collar. If this is not done immediately, the meat may have a strong flavor. Step Number Two..."

You can see the advantages.

The drawbacks, of course, would be minor. For one thing, we would have to add some new terminology. Hunting conversations then might go something like this:

"Heard you gotcher deer."

"Yeah, I busted old 5789-A."

"No kidding! How many transistors did the old boy have?"

"Four. And big! Why that devil was wearing a 38-inch collar, a size 64 jacket, and the biggest whip antenna I ever saw."

There might also be a few additional difficulties in the eating of game. Your wife might have to warn the children, "Be careful you don't crack you teeth on a piece of Daddy's buckshot and watch out for the little wires and electrodes; they might catch in your throat and choke you."

Nevertheless, any extra dental and doctor bills would be more than made up for by your savings on hunting clothes. Since all the animals will be wearing red, the hunters can wear any old thing they want — as long as it isn't red. Wearing red, in fact, might be disastrous. Hunters who mistake people for potential venison will plead, "I saw this flash of red and thought sure it was a deer. ..."

Now I'm not one to swim upstream in the river of progress. The old days are gone. But I know that sooner or later I'll have a relapse and be carted off to a psychiatrist to be set right.

"What seems to be your problem?" the psychiatrist will ask.

"Well, Doc," I'll say, "I keep thinking about these naked animals."

"Yes," he'll say, "that is rather serious. Such tendencies are doubtlessly the manifestation of some childhood experience."

And you know, he'll be right.

The following is the text of "What Ever Happened to Worms?" Reprinted by permission of Patrick F. McManus.

Worms are becoming obsolete. The signs are as plain as those of a moose with diarrhea, and as far as I'm concerned, scarcely more attractive.

What I'm talking about is the bait fisherman's switch from worms to corn and — ugh! — marshmallows. Near where I live a great fishing lake, West Medical, has been nicknamed "Marshmallow" because of all the thousands of tiny white blobs bobbing about in the water after opening day. Half the fish become diabetics from eating so much sugar.

The lake might be called "Corn Lake" except corn has the decency to sink to the bottom when it becomes dislodged from the hook. When the lake warms up the corn ferments, and all the fish that aren't diabetics become alcoholics; they can't bear the sight of the other fish eating marshmallows.

I estimate the whole of the lake in late August to be about 20 proof.

Corn and marshmallows for bait! Why not stuffed olives, pickled pigs' feet or even something more exotic? I wouldn't be a bit surprised some day to hear a conversation like this:

"Caught a four-pound cutthroat Sunday."

"No kiddin'. Whatcha take him on?"

"Anchovy."

"One of them little curled ones with the pickled onion in the center?"

"Naw, the paste kind. I squirted it out of the tube in a long stream and wound it around the hook. It looked kinda like one of them things people used to dig out of the ground for bait, uh ... whatdoyoucallems."

"Parsnips?"

One reason worms are on their way out as bait is that you can't buy them in supermarkets. If you've been wondering what the one thing is that supermarkets don't carry, it's worms.

No grocer in his right mind is going to stock worms, no matter what the demand or even if they came in flip-top cans and six-packs. Sooner or later a sweet little old nearsighted lady would go home with what she thought was a can of spaghetti and it wouldn't be. The supermarkets are making it fine with the fishermen on corn and marshmallows, so why expect them to take chances with worms?

It comes down to this: If you want worms you have to dig them out of the ground or sneak around the park with a flashlight in the middle of the night and pick them off the grass. This has several obvious drawbacks. Most of the ground has been paved over to make parking lots for supermarkets, made into lawns for riding mowers on, or roto-tilled into gardens so saturated with pesticides the worms have mutated into naked moles. As for sneaking around parks at night, who wants to get mugged looking for a bunch of nightcrawlers?

The imminent obsolescence of worms is not merely the end of a great and historic fishing bait, it is the passing of a way of life.

When I was a boy we had nearly as much fun finding the worms as we did catching the fish, and it was a helluva lot more challenging. Besides, some of the worms were bigger than most of the fish we caught in those days.

Worms were the only bait we even considered. We were purists. Even snobs. If we caught a kid fishing dry flies we ridiculed him right off the crick and up until Christmas. I hate to think of what might have happened to a kid caught fishing with marshmallows — pastel-colored marshmallows!

Our snobbery perhaps derived in part from the fact that none of us could afford flies, or for that matter, marshmallows. But that was by no means the whole of it. There were other things. There was, for one example, the matter of status. We had a precise hierarchy of worming.

Everyone knew who was top wormer, second best wormer, third best and so on. Top wormer was a kid called "Stupe," which was short for Stupid. Actually his name was Little Stupid, a title he had received through no merit of his own but as an inheritance from an older brother, Big Stupid, who had rightful and honest claim to it. No one who was top wormer could possibly have been stupid, but we were not bothered by fine distinctions when it came to names.

Stupe had an uncanny knack for turning a worm, even under the most adverse conditions. Say you were out fishing the crick and a

monstrous, fishlike shadow had just rolled out from under a submerged log and slurped off your hook the last of eight worms you had spent most of the day and moved four tons of dirt to find. If you were all alone, you would stand there and cry and flail the ground with your fishing pole; if you were with one of the other guys you would unlock your substantial hoard of cuss words; but if you were with Stupe you would sell yourself into servitude to him for the next five years, and he would go immediately to the very spot where half the worms in the country had gathered for a political convention and return with all the nominees and a handful of delegates.

Where we lived, August was a spare month for worms. We could always get them from Stupe, of course, but the terms of indenturement were usually such as to be endured only by the most compulsive fishermen of us or by someone who went berserk over a big brookie he had seen up in the beaver dam. Every August we flailed ourselves verbally for having frittered away all those easy worms of June and July, lavishing whole worms on one single baiting and squandering our leftovers on banquets for shiftless minnows. Why hadn't we been more frugal and banked a few hundred in an old bucket and fed them coffee grounds? "Next year ..." we would say. But we never did.

Thus arose among us the mystique of worming. It became a sport unto itself. We prided ourselves on our skill in tracking a worm to his lair. We drew fine distinctions and maintained high standards, dismissing manure-pile worms as unworthy and rejecting

nightcrawlers as too crude. We told tales about great worm digs we had been on and lied about the size and vigor of worms we had turned up in the most unlikely places. (Years later we would discuss our affairs with girls in almost exactly the same tones if not the same terms.) We presented lengthy oral dissertations to each other on the proper methods of threading a worm on a hook, on whether the partial worm compared favorably with the whole, or whether the tobacco can or the soup can made the best container, or whether they should be covered with dry dirt or wet and how much.

Those were days of truly great worming, back before they paved the dirt, but even then we were aware that worming was not destined to become one of the major sports. Stupe would never have his picture as a champion wormer on a box of breakfast cereal and kids would never trade top-wormer bubble gum cards. Field & Stream would never have a Worming Editor.

One of the assets of worming we discovered early was that it discouraged little girls from wanting to go fishing with you. When we were sixteen we learned that it also discouraged big girls, and from then on the move was toward flies. I hate to admit it, but it was more fun fishing with girls than with worms.

Now that I am old enough to prefer fishing with worms to fishing with girls, I still fish with flies. But I fondle in my mind all those ancient memories of worming, and when I think of those early fishing days I recall, rather happily, that I spent more time with a shovel in hand than fishing rod.

Pity the poor kid now who will have no memories of unearthing a squirming lode of pink earthworms but must be content with the image of himself sawing open a can of corn with his Boy Scout knife, or worse yet, ripping open a plastic bag of — ugh! — pastel-colored marshmallows.

Appendix B
THE WORKS OF MCMANUS

The following is a bibliography of the works of Patrick F. McManus, who provided the information. The bibliography is in alphabetical order by publication, and then in chronological order.

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Writer's Digest (Cincinnati: F&W Publications)

"100 Tips From Bestselling Writers," August 1994, p. 24.

BOOKS (AUDIO)

George S. Irving Reads Patrick F. McManus: The Night The Bear Ate Goombaw and Other Stories (1990) (Niagara Falls, N.Y.: Durkin Hayes Publishing)

George S. Irving Reads Patrick F. McManus: Never Sniff A Gift Fish and Other Stories (1990) (Niagara Falls, N.Y.: Durkin Hayes Publishing)

George S. Irving Reads Patrick F. McManus: Real Ponies Don't Go Oink and Other Stories (1991) (Niagara Falls, N.Y.: Durkin Hayes Publishing)

George S. Irving Reads Patrick F. McManus: They Shoot Canoes, Don't They? and Other Stories (1991) (Niagara Falls, N.Y.: Durkin Hayes Publishing)

George S. Irving Reads Patrick F. McManus: The Grasshopper Trap and Other Stories (1992) (Niagara Falls, N.Y.: Durkin Hayes Publishing)

George S. Irving Reads Patrick F. McManus: The Good Samaritan Strikes Again and Other Stories (1992) (Niagara Falls, N.Y.: Durkin Hayes Publishing)

George S. Irving Reads Patrick F. McManus: A Fine and Pleasant Misery and Other Stories (1993) (Niagara Falls, N.Y.: Durkin Hayes Publishing)

BOOKS (PRINT)

A Fine and Pleasant Misery (1978) (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.)

Kid Camping From AAAAIII! to Zip (1979) (New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, William Morrow & Company Inc.)

They Shoot Canoes, Don't They? (1981) (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.)

Never Sniff a Gift Fish (1983) (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.)

The Grasshopper Trap (1986) (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.)

Rubber Legs and White Tail-Hairs (1987) (New York: Henry Holt and Company)

Immer Heiter Und So Weiter (1989) (Germany: Scherz Verlag) (A German-language collection of stories from A Fine and Pleasant Misery, They Shoot Canoes, Don't They?, Never Sniff A Gift Fish, The Grasshopper Trap, and Rubber Legs and White Tail-Hairs.)

The Night the Bear Ate Goombaw (1989) (New York: Henry Holt and Company)

Whatchagot Stew (1989) (New York: Henry Holt and Company)

Real Ponies Don't Go Oink (1991) (New York: Henry Holt and Company)

The Good Samaritan Strikes Again (1992) (New York: Henry Holt and Company)

Rubber Legs and White Tail-Hairs (Japanese edition) (1993) (Tokyo: Hayakawa Publishing)

How I Got This Way (1994) (New York: Henry Holt and Company)

CALENDARS

"The Improbable World of Veteran Outdoorsman Patrick F. McManus, Esq., 1988 Calendar" (New York: Henry Holt and Company)

"The Patrick McManus 1993 Calendar" (New York: Henry Holt and Company)

"The 1994 Pat McManus Calendar" (New York: Henry Holt and Company)

FILM PROJECTS

KBOI-TV, Boise, Idaho

"Mountain Goat Trapping," July 28, 1964.
"Miniature Locomotives," Sept. 15, 1964.
"Climber of 60 Proves Years Are No Handicap," June 18, 1965.

KHQ-TV (Spokane, Washington)

"Rocky Mountain Surfboarding," July 18, 1960.
"Snake River Archaeological Excavations," Aug. 22, 1962.
"When the Grass is Short, You've Got to Rustle," Sept. 12, 1981, original teleplay.

KREM-TV (Spokane, Washington)

"Discovery of 8,000-Year-Old Skeletons," Sept. 6, 1960.
"Blind College Student," December 1960.
"Ice Fishing," February 1961.
"The Bluebackers," March 25, 1961.
Salvaging Ancient Auto From Lake Pend Oreille," March 27, 1961.
"Scuba Diving for Gold," July 1961.
"Amateur Gold Prospecting," June 28, 1962.
"Bear Trapping," July 1962.
"Honeymoon in Forest Service Lookout," July 21, 1962.
"Preservation of Trumpeter Swans," Oct. 8, 1963.
"Mountain Goat Trapping," July 24, 1964.
"Archaeological Excavation of Palouse River Caves," July 26, 1964.
"Dove Migration Study," Aug. 14, 1964.
"Miniature Trains," Oct. 26, 1964.

"Archaeologists Discover Lewis and Clark Peace Medal," Oct. 26, 1964.

"Hellgrammite Hunter," April 30, 1965.

"Mountain Climbing on Chimney Rock," June 14, 1965.

"Elk Tagging," July 7, 1965.

"Larch Casebearers Threaten Forests," July 20, 1965.

"Trumpeter Swan Makes Comeback," March 20, 1968. Also used by KING-TV stations in Seattle, Wash., and Portland, Ore.

KSPS-TV (Spokane, Wash.)

"The Turned On Crisis," Jan. 30, 1971, television script.

STAGE PROJECTS

"A Fine and Pleasant Misery" (1993, still on tour as of June 1995)

VITA

Tim Miller Strickland was born March 11, 1964, in Tallahassee, Fla. He attended North Florida Christian School from first through 12th grades. He was graduated in May 1982. He entered the University of Florida in Gainesville, Fla., during the summer of that year and he received the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, with a major in Marketing, in December 1986. After working in business for three years, he entered the master's program in communications at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in January 1990. After completing the coursework for the degree in May 1991, Strickland began working full-time for newspapers in Indiana and, later, in Ohio, while he gradually completed this thesis. He is presently working as a news editor and sports editor in Cincinnati for Press Community Newspapers, a company with 22 weekly suburban newspapers in the Greater Cincinnati area.