



***Ocean City counts on the maelstrom that begins
Memorial Day weekend and rages until fall***

An intermittent breeze blew in from across the cool waters as the never-ending sounds of the waves relentlessly pounding the beach filled the air. Far out to sea, even beyond the white-capped breakers, lay the still darkened horizon. Ever so gently and with meticulous precision, the night had already begun its transition from dark unto light.

As if to announce this glorious event, the eastern skies slowly began to emit pastel like colors—ever so subtly at first but steadily growing with intensity as the new day approached. When the time was right, a small orange crescent appeared on the horizon and within a matter of moments, had grown into its fiery red fullness. Now and in all its glory, this new day had finally begun. There was, however, no sign that the coming storm was only hours away.

Beginning at the municipal parking lot on the southern-most part of community and continuing north through the famous amusement pier ran the area's renowned boardwalk. Sitting alone on one of the walk's wooden benches was an older woman in a bulky white sweater, a long time resident of this area. She watched with a learned eye as the sun's rays danced atop the ocean's swells, and saw stray clouds lazily drifting across the early morning sky as seagulls cried out overhead, pleading for any offered morsels.

As witness to so many early morning visits to this place over the years, she somehow knew that today would be different. She understood that so much depended on the imminent assault about to befall her town. She knew that within hours the storm would strike and by nightfall it would be raging. The only question whose answer would remain unknown for some time concerned the intensity of this coming storm and it's effect on her and her fellow townspeople.

Soon, however, the answer would be made known to all.

And when the fury finally does commence, the residents will lose their exclusive claim to the town—not regain sole possession again until the storm's ultimate demise. But, the excitement is contagious and they too, as always, will be eager participants in the inevitable festivities that are soon to follow. The salt-filled tang of the ocean breezes will intermingle with the smells of creosol-coated boards supporting much of the amusement pier as the mouth-watering aroma of Thrashers French fries fill the air. Children of all ages will risk their coins in the hopes of defying the boardwalk barkers' odds and win cuddly stuffed animals. The rides will again thrill their occupants. The crowds, friendly as always, will take to the beaches. Summer nights will be filled with fireworks, sundaes will be offered in the park and scheduled musical offerings will be performed on the beach.



Waiting on line for Thrasher fries

But, for now, the storm remains a few short hours away.

As the sun climbs higher into the morning sky, a flurry of activity begins on the beach. Surf conditions are measured and recorded as armies of red-jacketed bodies assemble for their final instructions. Telephones are checked as red signal flags snap crisply with practiced messages in the ocean breezes. Lifeboats are overturned as first aid kits and rescue buoys are positioned for quick emergency access. An air of expectant readiness engulfs the beach, as all is now ready.

As the bells in the small church a block away began to chime their nine o'clock announcement, the storm begins. Hordes of bodies take to the beaches with their balls and blankets, their coolers and chairs, with towels and Frisbees and children in tow. Memorial Day weekend is officially underway in Ocean City.

And, if everything goes as it should, this storm will rage on, hopefully well into the fall.

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the backstory:

I once wrote a book with a friend of mine, Wayne, and together, we each became one half of the fictitious writer, **Stephen Wayne**. (For a little more info on this, please read ***But you were just a cop*** on my "in books" page and "**about me**" on my home page, specifically, "**Who is Stephen Wayne?**").

But in regard to this particular piece, Wayne had written about a coming storm—a clever way of referring to the approach of the summer season along the Jersey shore. I rewrote his work a bit to reflect specifics around Ocean City, Maryland (where Karen and I had bought a second home). I submitted this edited version to a regional magazine and they published the piece that spring—shortly before "the coming storm!"

and a few more things about this piece

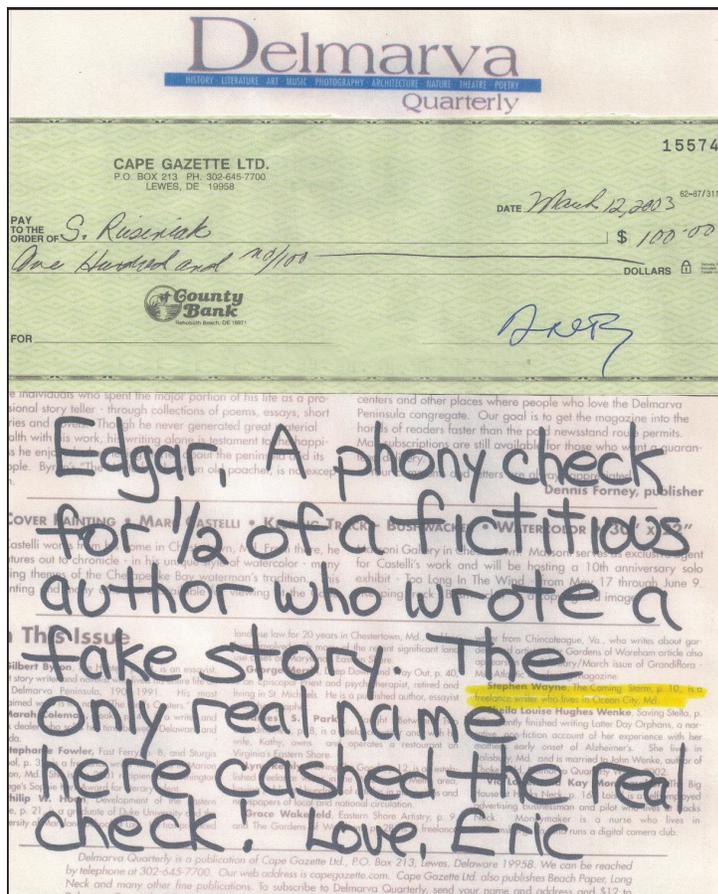
One of the references is Thrasher's french fries. When I first visited the Ocean City, MD boardwalk many years ago, I was intrigued by the long line—more than 75 that day—I know because I counted, waiting to order nothing more than a bucket of fries—seasoned with salt and apple vinegar (absolutely no catsup allowed). I didn't get it—I mean, lines for fries and no catsup—that is until the day the line was short and I bought my first bucket.



A love affair was born that afternoon and continues to this very day.

Did I mention that Stephen Wayne was paid for The Coming Storm piece?

We were, well, at least I was! Submitted under my real name but credited to a fake writer, the real check was made out to me. I copied and then cashed the check and then gave Wayne his half of the payment—along with a framed copy of the check atop the cover page from the magazine—and of course, with a few comments added!



And who's the "Edgar and Eric" mentioned below the framed check?

"Edgar" is Wayne and "Eric" is me. Why these names? It's a long story, but in short, all I'll say is that it's none of your business! Sorry.