

The ASJA Monthly



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Market Reports:
Woman's Day and America West

Paul Theroux:
Relentlessly Curious, Astute, Glitz-free

Making More Sales with Spinoffs

Writers' and Agents' Bill of Rights

**Writing
Travel
Narratives**

**by Steve
Zikman**

"We Write What You Read"

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The Bottom Line of Good Journalism

Better quality writing produces profits

Call it a slump, a downturn, a recession. By any name, the end result is painfully obvious: the media business is hurting. And that means many of us are flinching as magazines and newspapers cut back space and slash pay for freelancers and book publishers reduce their offerings and cut advances.

But out of last month's annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) come several research reports that point out, once again, the value of investing in good journalism—and professional journalists.

While publishers see cutting staff and pay as a means to improve the bottom line and appeal to investors, decades of research show the opposite is true. "Thirty-five years of scholarly research confirms what many of you probably believed all along, that investment in quality content improves the bottom line," Esther Thorson, professor and associate dean for graduate studies of journalism at the University of Missouri at Columbia, told the editors.

Thorson and researchers from The University of North Carolina, The Poynter Institute and The Project for Excellence in Journalism noted that more money for reporters and editors, as well as more space for news and features, laid the foundation for a better quality publication.

To that, I'd add better pay for freelancers at newspapers and magazines. I've heard reports recently of at least one metropolitan newspaper slashing pay to nothing for items like book and music reviews. That's right—zero dollars. All the freelance reviewer gets is a copy of the book or the CD and byline "exposure." That's shameful. It's also extreme, but, more broadly, my point is that if publishers expect a quality product, they must be willing to pay more than enough for a free cup of water or a Happy Meal. I understand that times are tight and they can't afford filet mignon pay. But the pain is being felt too deeply by writers.

And, as Thorson and others point

out, ultimately sacrificing quality weakens a publisher's bottom line instead of improving it.

Rick Edmonds, a consultant at The Poynter Institute, pointed to findings that state newsrooms with higher ratios of staff to circulation produced better quality, and eventually higher profits. He cited the *Fort Worth* (Texas) *Star-Telegram*, which has the highest staff-circulation ratio of any large daily. "They added more than 100 full-time employees," he said. "However, financial performance did not suffer. Profits actually increased 45 percent in five years."

"It is a single example, though I think a powerful one, of how an investment in news capacity can pay off," he added, according to a report in *Editor & Publisher*.

The reports from the ASNE meeting follow recent research out of Northwestern University showing that readers favor journalism that tells stories. And that study pointed out that readers wanted more stories about health, home, travel and food. In short, just the kinds of stories freelancers often write for newspapers. But they're also the areas newspapers have cut drastically, often relying on stale, colorless wire stories as filler.

The issue, of course, is not one-sided. Publishers need to understand that paying for quality is an investment in their bottom line that will be returned many times. But, as freelancers, we need to remember that investing in creating a professional quality story each time, no matter what the publication or pay, is a good investment in our bottom line.

That is a theme I've returned to often in nearly two years as president of ASJA. Being successful is not just about knowing our markets and finding the right ones. It also requires stepping back, critically eyeing our work, and improving it, rather than being satisfied.

To that end, I'll close with a reminder about ASJA's conference May 2-4 at the Grand Hyatt in New York. Conference-goers often check to see

which editors will appear and, indeed, that weekend is a great chance to hear top editors and get inside information about what they need. But, the conference is about more than markets and marketing. It's about becoming better, whether by listening to The Poynter Institute's Roy Peter Clark sing about rhythm in your writing or by attending one of the specialized seminars on Sunday. Airfares are ridiculously cheap. And, thanks to Priceline.com, I know many writers who have reserved rooms at the Hyatt for as low as \$75 a night. In short, it's a bargain investment in your future. I hope we see you there. [ASJA](#)

Jim Morrison, of Norfolk, Virginia, is president of ASJA.



by JIM MORRISON

SHOULD YOU BECOME AN ASJA MEMBER?

"This morning, I got a WMFH contract. I checked out the PayCheck report and saw others had negotiated and got the FNASR contract. I asked for it and ten minutes later it appeared in my mailbox. Between this and the great magazine subscription offers, my ASJA membership fee has paid for itself."

—Karen Bannan

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QUALIFICATIONS OR FOR
MORE INFORMATION, E-MAIL
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The Society Page

Member happenings

For a presentation sponsored by the Hudson Valley Technology & Commerce Group, a region-wide nonprofit group that meets in her hometown of Woodstock, N.Y., **Minda Zetlin** donned a silk robe and pajamas to give a presentation on her book *Telecommuting for Dummies*. “The idea of the sleepwear was that so many of our meetings involve someone standing at a podium and just talking to the audience,” Minda says. “I wanted to liven it up a little. Since we were talking about working at home, I thought people should be able to ‘dress down.’” **Dianne Partie Lange’s** third book, a collaboration with Los Angeles dermatologist Howard Murad, MD, entitled *The Murad Method: Wrinkle-Proof, Repair, and Renew Your Skin with the Proven 5-Week Program* was published in April by St. Martin’s Press ... **David Drucker** announces



Minda Zetlin



Dianne Partie Lange

the publication of his newsletter, *Virtual Office News*, a spinoff of his 2002 book, *Virtual Office Tools for a High-Margin Practice* (Bloomberg Press). His February 2003 issue can be sampled at www.daviddrucker.com ... **Carole Terwilliger Meyers’s** new book, *FamilyFun Vacation Guide: California & Hawaii* (Disney Editions, 2003), was just released. Her first annotated map, *Bay Area Family Fun* (Via, 2003), has also just been published ... **A.B. “Bud” Feuer** was awarded the club’s Special Achievement Award by The Virginia Writers Club for his 11 books and hundreds of articles that chronicle the U.S.’s military history ... Published in December, **Wilbur Cross’s** epic, *Encyclopedia of American Submarines* (Facts on File, 2002), covers the entire history of Navy submarines since the first one in 1900 ... **Linda Lawrence Hunt’s** book *Bold Spirit: Helga Estby’s Forgotten Walk across Victorian America* (University of Idaho Press, 2003) recreates the 1896 true adventures of a spirited immigrant mother and daughter lured by a \$10,000 wager needed to save their homestead. See www.boldspirit.acrossamerica.com ... **Gene and Katie Hamilton’s** latest book, *Internet Connections for Marketing Success* was released in January (BuilderBooks) ... **Alan Caruba**, the author of *Warning Signs* (Merril Press, 2003), a collection of his weekly



Linda Lawrence Hunt

columns, was profiled in *Insight on the News* magazine (www.insightmag.com), in late March. The founder of The National Anxiety Center, Caruba’s column is posted weekly on www.anxietycenter.com and widely excerpted on more than thirty other Internet news and opinion sites ...

Susan Newman, Ph.D. looks at the relationship most adult children take for granted in *Nobody’s Baby Now: Reinventing Your Adult Relationship with Your Mother and Father*, published in hardcover this month by Walker & Company ... In February, John Wiley & Sons issued the 2nd edition of **Kurt Repanshek’s** book, *America’s National Parks for Dummies*. Also, Ulysses Press is scheduled to release the 2nd edition of his book, *Hidden Utah*, this month ... **Tom Price** is the author of the Frommer’s tourist guide, *Washington, D.C. for Dummies* (2nd Edition, Wiley, 2003) ... *The New York Times* praised the 2003 edition of **Julian Block’s** *Year Round Savings* as “readable...a good



Susan Newman, Ph.D.



Michael Sedge

choice...and a thorough and clear explanation of how the tax law affects individuals in seemingly every facet of financial life.” ... An international publisher has pulled *Death Watch*, a 400-page novel by authors **Michael Sedge** and Joel Jacobs, from its release schedule because, as one pre-publication reviewer put it, “The work reads like a manual for a terrorist.” Sedge, author of 20 books says, “We worked on this project for 10 years. Our research and military consultants—including some also used by novelist Tom Clancy—is impeccable. We even went as far as consulting the Department of the Navy and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to ensure every aspect was correct.” *Death Watch* was scheduled to be released simultaneously in the United States and Europe, however, because of a rise in terrorist activities, the publisher decided not to launch the military thriller ... **Susan K. Perry** will appear on dozens of radio stations to discuss *Loving In Flow*, and was quoted last month in *US Weekly* on celebrity marital breakups. **ASJA**



Susan K. Perry

Send your member happenings to newsletter@asja.org. Please keep your entries to 50 words or less.

Paul Theroux

Relentlessly curious, astute, glitz-free

by BARBARA DEMARCO-BARRETT

Going into the interview with Paul Theroux, I knew he didn't particularly enjoy interviews but acquiesces usually when he has a new book out and figures he must succumb, for his publisher.

So, at the end of our talk, I made a whopper of a mistake. Tongue in cheek, I asked him if the interview had been acceptable. He said that it was and then politely harangued me for not preparing by reading most of his books. We're talking 14 works of nonfiction and 24 novels, but hey, who's counting?

Perhaps he has reason to gripe: he's been interviewed by journalists who've called him prickly and cynical and mad. He may not be the most charming interview around; he is honest—to a fault, perhaps, in our current climate where charm and the gleam of surfaces serves to attract—but his insights and powerful writing make up for it.

There is nothing glitzy about Theroux. What you see is what you get, and what you get is a ton. As well as more than three dozen books, there are hordes of articles, awards, honorary doctorates in literature, and novels made into movies.

His first travel novel—and the first one to put him on the literary map—was *The Great Railway Bazaar: By Train Through Asia*. *Picture Palace* won him the Whitbread Award, *The Mosquito Coast* garnered the James Tait Black Award and the Yorkshire Post Best Novel of the Year Award and was made into a movie directed by Australian director Peter Weir.

Theroux has spent 40 years roaming the planet and now spends most of his time in Hawaii, his main home, where

he has taken up what he calls his second profession: beekeeping. He sells honey under the brand name Oceania Ranch Pure Hawaiian Honey.

I recently spoke with him over the phone while he was preparing to go on tour to promote his most recent book, *Dark Star Safari: Overland From Cairo to Cape Town*, published by Houghton Mifflin.



BDB: You originally intended not to be a writer but to pursue a career in medicine.

PT: I was a pre-med student, headed for medical school. I found the sciences fascinating, much more so than studying literature. I thought, I can always write, no problem about that. But you do have to study if you want to be a doctor. I thought I could do both. Chekhov was the greatest one who was a doctor/writer. Voltaire, too. Joyce was a med student. But then I discovered you can't do both, that writing requires total concentration and it's impossible to divide your attention that way.

BDB: It's been said that you reinvented the genre of travel writing. What do you think about this?

PT: I'm the last person on earth able to discuss what I may have done with travel writing. When I started writing travel books, the ones I saw were awful. I regarded myself as a novelist and thought I'd never write a travel book because the conventional travel book

writer was someone who went on a sightseeing trip.

In *The Railway Bazaar*, I went to India and never went to the Taj Majal—I should have; perhaps it was arrogant that I didn't—and never went into museums. I never went sightseeing. When it came out in '75, it was about people, oddballs. I went to Iran, Vietnam, Afghanistan—far flung places not associated with tourism. I suppose what I left out set it apart. I was following my own interests and also trying to do something different. But mainly I did what interested me, which is the only reason to write. It takes effort to travel and write on your own time so it had better be something that absorbs you, or else you're doing it for the money and there are better paying jobs elsewhere. I really did regard myself as a novelist, as a fiction writer.

BDB: Which may be why your travel narratives are so popular.

PT: I hope they have elements of the novel in them—real people who lived, fully drawn, not “an Arab,” “an Indian,” but a person with a past, future. That was my purpose, to give some life to the narrative. When people write novels, that's what they try to do; they try to make a novel as persuasive as possible, so it looks like life itself. A big job.

BDB: You go back and forth between travel writing and fiction. Does one form have more a hold on you than the other?

PT: I sometimes think everything is fiction. So much is left out by accident or design, so many alterations, it's impossible to say where fiction leaves off and truth begins. Even journalism is like that. You can't say this is the unvarnished truth; it's the way someone's writing it. I don't invent, when I write travel, but inevitably it's written by a human being who is leaving things out. There's a lot of fiction in nonfiction and in what passes for reporting, as there is nonfiction in fiction.

BDB: How do you decide, or know, Theroux continued on next page



BARBARA DEMARCO-BARRETT, editor of *The ASJA Monthly*, is Southern California chapter president. Her show, “Writers on Writing,” airs on KUCI-FM in Southern California and on the Web at www.writersonwriting.com.

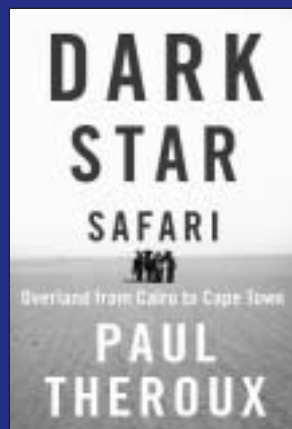
Theroux continued

whether an idea is the seed for a travel narrative or a novel?

PT: I am, by instinct, a fiction writer. I see fiction as a way of giving order to the world I know and my life. If someone tells me a story or I think about the past, my instinct is to make it fictional.

in America that I'd worked for—*The New Yorker*, *T&L*, reporting magazines, travel magazines—whether they were interested in my writing about Africa, a hotel, a problem, etcetera, and every one turned me down. That's important to point out because here I am, going on a trip that no one is interested in, and

were a lot of problems. I was shot at, I was bullied. I hoped for the best but I knew, since I'd been to Africa before, that if you're on your own, you get picked on.



The worst thing you can do as a travel writer is ask permission to write the kind of thing you want to write.

It's an interior journey. Writing is done indoors; unfortunately, you work at your desk. I find that very, very tedious. I hate working indoors. I have a very restless temperament, so as long as I've been aware, I've been trying to get out of the house. As a little kid, even. I became a Boy Scout so I could get out of the house. A week after I graduated from college in '63, I joined the Peace Corps and was in Italy when I learned I was selected to go to Africa. As soon as I could leave, I left, and I've been more or less on the move ever since. There are aspects of my temper at odds: to sit down in a quiet room and sit and write a story and the other is to leave, go away. What they have in common are they are processes of discovery.

BDB: Why did you write your new book, *Dark Star Safari*, as a travel narrative rather than a novel?

PT: This book grew out of a desire to return to a school in central Africa where I taught. After 40 years, I wanted to see how it was doing. No way could it be a novel. If it were a novel, it wouldn't be as good because I would be inventing. I didn't have to invent anything.

BDB: Did you have a contract before the trip?

PT: Before I set off two years ago, I asked eight or ten of the best magazines

it's daunting, setting off, knowing no one has given you a penny, that it's your nickel. So I went overland. I had no backing. The Guggenheim Foundation didn't give me money, *Time* magazine wouldn't give me money. Zilch. Young people tend to go anyway; people my age won't. But I wanted to. I wasn't going to let a magazine influence what I'm going to do. I thought, if later a magazine is interested in excerpting it, they'll have to pay a lot of money.

Or you might go where the editor wants you to go. The worst thing you can do as a travel writer is ask permission to write the kind of thing you want to write. Then they say, don't do this, do that. It's bad for your morale, for your life. In my life, I've made it a point to not ask for permission, and if it's a success or a failure, it'll be my success or my failure.

BDB: At what point did you know *Dark Star Safari* would become a book?

PT: I set off with the intention of writing a book. You have to, or you're just looking around and not taking notes.

BDB: Did you know overall how it would go? Did you have a structure?

PT: With a travel book, all you have is an itinerary: go down the Nile, go to the Sudan, to Ethiopia. I knew in a general sense the direction, but I didn't know the problems. As it turned out there

BDB: How does terrorism affect your work?

PT: I would like to think it wouldn't affect me at all, and shouldn't affect anyone. The reason terrorists appoint themselves terrorists is to make people afraid. If you're afraid, they win. I've lived places where there were terrorists and outrages and I tried to live my life normally.

From '71 to just a few years ago, England, Britain, Northern Ireland were full of terrorists and lots of civilians were killed. I deliberately went to Northern Ireland and in *The Kingdom by the Sea*, I traveled around the coast of Britain and Northern Ireland. In the middle of the bombings in Londonderry, there was a bicycle race for charity on a Sunday morning. It was a time of trouble, but they were doing that. I was impressed: *Life goes on*.

In *Dark Star Safari*, I went to Sudan and I talked to sympathizers of Al-Qaida, bin Laden's house. I talked to people happy about the World Trade Center. I went out of my way to talk to these people. Terrorism should not make you not do things. If you're traveling in the Third World, you begin to understand the roots of terrorism.

BDB: What do you think of the current state of journalism?

PT: Anyone who looks at journalism is keenly aware that most of it is trash, it's as down market as you can get. How I get my information is I travel. I go to a place and find out. And it's usually quite different from how it's reported. Travel is about people and a landscape, not a catastrophe.

BDB: Is there anything you'd like to add?

PT: I regard myself as a journalist. I do journalism. But the most satisfying thing that I do is travel and work on my own without sponsorship, without anyone telling me what to do. When journalists do that, the results are usually much better. A journalist usually knows more about a situation than the editor does and should be given freedom to write what they want to write. **ASJA**

Karen Berger

Addicted to travel and travel writing

Number of years an ASJA member Three.

Home base Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

Focus of writing Travel, hiking, outdoor adventure. Also arts, music, history, ecotourism, culture, environment.

Education B.A. Music, Northwestern University.

Credits Nine books (350,000 copies in print). Magazine credits: *National Geographic Traveler*, *Islands*, *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel*, *T+L*, *The New York Times*, *Backpacker*, *Child*, *Family Circle*, *Men's Fitness*. More credits and all book titles are on my Web site: www.hikerwriter.com.

Awards EdPress Distinguished Achievement Award; Finalist, Banff International Mountain Books Competition. But I actually don't believe in awards, even if they're nice to have. They are, at best, subjective, and they usually compare apples to oranges. Or apple pie to orange juice.

Turning point I'm not sure if I've had a turning point yet. In my early 20s, I had some immediate successes with placing stories (even in *The New York Times*). Poor me—I thought that all freelance writing would be as easy as those early sales! I also spent a few years as an editor, which helped me learn the business. My first book contract gave me the impetus to start a freelance writing career. Recently, I've started thinking that I should trust myself to write more articles on subjects that catch my fancy regardless of whether I have an assignment, and worry about selling them after I've written them. This thwarts conventional wisdom, but I've had some luck doing this throughout my career, and the articles I've done that way are my favorite clips. I've also recently started teaching piano, which gives me the cash flow I need to feel comfortable turning down assignments that come with abusive contracts. The upshot of these decisions has maybe been a turning point: to more balance, less stress, more of the kind of work I most like doing.

What I love best about what I do

The freedom ... to work my own hours (I'd rather stay up till three than get up at nine, and I'm happy to work weekends), to profit from my work, to chase ideas that interest me, and to give myself really cool vacations. The variety ... I



never ever get bored. The input from readers ... I love getting e-mails and letters from readers telling how I helped or encouraged them in some way.

Ironically, I also like the job security: Unlike people who work traditional jobs, freelance writers are not vulnerable to the fortunes of one single employer. Yes, the last couple of years have been tough, but I've had work throughout. I smile when I think of how many people said I'd never be able to make a living being a writer. Perhaps writers don't commonly earn the tip-top salaries of high-end lawyers and the like, but hey, we don't have to spend our days doing what they have to do, either. To me, time is life, and is more valuable than money.

What's the worst thing The current climate regarding contract negotiations: All-rights clauses, increasing use of work-for-hire, abusive kill fee policies. I really think writers need to work collectively on contract issues, or there can be no change. But I'm not optimistic that it will happen.

The general and increasing rudeness of the business. Editors are more and more pressed, and too many of them consider basic politeness a luxury

they can't afford. For me, the biggest frustration is when an editor I've worked with successfully, and with whom I thought I had a strong relationship, becomes uncommunicative and unresponsive. Or when I meet editors and they are complimentary about my writing and ask for queries, but then don't respond for months on end.

The lack of access to affordable health care, which is a nationwide travesty affecting all small business people (and just about everyone else, too, except for politicians and professional athletes).

Why I wanted to be a travel writer It was a logical combination of a love of travel with a love of writing. I've been a *National Geographic* junkie from way back, with a voracious interest in other cultures (the more exotic, the better) and the natural world. And I was addicted to reading.

What I love about travel writing Where else can you sit on a sailboat, watch a group of 1,000 dolphins cavorting off Hawaii's Na Pali Coast, go scuba diving, write about it, and call it "work"? Plus, I love to write.

At the right place at the right time Years ago, I had written a (still unpublished) novel and secured an agent for it. Shortly thereafter, I took a sabbatical from my editorial job and hiked the Continental Divide, a six-month, 3,000-mile journey from Mexico to Canada. The agent asked if I planned to write a book on the trip, and I said I thought I might. She said "send me something I can show an editor." So, in a dusty Wyoming town, I scribbled some notes on a piece of paper. She typed them up, and on the basis of that, I got an appointment with an editor at Crown who bought my first book: *Where the Waters Divide* (now in paperback, Countryman Press; it's been in print for 10 years).

In another instance, I was hiking the Pacific Crest Trail, about 2,700 miles through California, Oregon, and Washington. I called my voice mail and found a message from a publisher. They want-

Berger continued on next page

ed to do a book on the Trail, and had heard that I was out there hiking it; was I interested? That book turned out to be *Along the Pacific Crest Trail* (Westcliffe).

Regarding timing and publishing I've wanted to do a big book on the Appalachian Trail for years. Before Bill Bryson wrote *A Walk in the Woods*, editors said a book on the Appalachian Trail would never sell. Now, they say, "Bill Bryson's already done it." I wish editors could be held accountable not just for their acquisitions that turn into bestsellers, but also for their rejections that turn into someone else's bestsellers!

Personal No pets, no kids, no TV.

Hobbies Playing jazz and classical piano, hiking, reading, photography, my nieces and nephews.

How I hope to affect others with my work In my narrative nonfiction, I want to tell stories that put my readers in the place I experienced and make them want to explore their own dreams. In my how-to books, I want to provide the tools to do that. I've received letters

from readers who have said things like, "Your book on the Divide made me take a six-month sabbatical and it was the best thing I ever did." I got one letter from a young woman whose hike had literally changed her life: she moved to a different state and became involved in environmental issues. Letters like those are worth 100 rejections. I want my readers to care about the places they travel to, maybe understand a little more about the people they'll meet if they step off the tour bus.

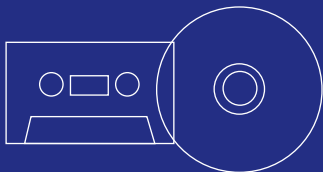
One story I want to write is about spending a day with a conservative Swahili Muslim family in Kenya, learning to cook Swahili food, and chatting about things like child raising (the little girl was trying on her mom's veil, much like my little niece tries on her mom's high-heeled shoes). Take off the veils and put a couple of women together in the kitchen, and it's astonishing how alike we are. Unfortunately, in the current travel market I haven't been able to sell this story.

A few words on literary agents

You need them for big books and New York publishers, not for niche publishers. Niche publishers will read your proposal without an agent, and they don't have much room to negotiate, so an agent is a waste of a commission. But if you don't know what should and shouldn't be in a standard contract, you should take a class or have your contract reviewed by a writers' organization.

Niche publishers are notorious for lowballing, so try to contact other authors to find out the going rates for advances and royalties. I've found that while agents are very selective and take a long time (something inexcusably long – I mean seven *months*???) to get back to you, most agents do try to read their queries. If your query is serious and thoughtful, you will usually get a serious, personal, and thoughtful (if short) response. I'm sure I'd never have been able to sell my first book to Crown without an agent. **ASJA**

Writers Conference Tapes/CDs Available



If you missed the 2002 or 2003 conference, or were there and missed panels you wanted to attend, don't despair. You can still order recordings on audio cassette tape or CD (yes!) by calling (888) 522-5023 or log onto www.nrstaping.com/asja/asja2002.htm. ASJA members, log onto www.asja.org/members/wc/wcaudio.php.

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Getting Publicity for Your Book

Plant one seed, get back hundreds

by JOAN PRICE



Book marketing guru John Kremer, publicist Jill Lublin, and radio talk-show expert Joe Sabah were presenters in March at a full-day seminar from the Bay Area Independent Publishers Association (www.baipa.net) in San Rafael, California. Although targeted at self-published authors, most of their tips applied equally to conventionally published authors—especially because the number one complaint of authors is that most publishers do little to publicize their books.

Book publishers want all the publicity in place when a book hits the stores and won't put any more money behind a book that doesn't start making money in six weeks, says John Kremer (www.bookmarket.com), author of *1001 Ways to Market Your Book*.

However, you have no such limitation. Kremer's point is that we should see marketing our book as a long-term time investment, not being so dependent on the publisher's timetable. "Keep knocking on doors and persisting until people hear you," he says. Think of marketing your book as at least a three-year project.

Create a database of 100 key media contacts for your book and persistently contact them with new ideas. "80 percent of all news is planted news," says Kremer. "The media needs you. If one message doesn't click, come back to them with another angle, and another angle." Business, sports, features, surveys, and statistics, for example, are all publicity driven. Most writers quit trying in four months, Kremer points out, which is just about the time the media will start getting interested.

The Interview

Publicist Jill Lublin, co-author of *Guerilla Publicity* (with Jay Levinson) and CEO of Promising Promotion (www.promisingpromotion.com), gave a lively presentation about how to present your message when interviewed. For example:

Don't talk about your book or yourself—instead, give the audience take-home, action tips.

Practice telling in 30 seconds the problem you solve and your solution, preferably in three quick tips that relate to the listener's life.

Don't over-promote. Speak as a resource to the audience and give information, rather than trying to mention the book title as often as possible.

Understand that your role is to make the interviewer look good and stop people from changing the station.

"Rule of 7": Contact your media with at least 7 different releases, announcements, e-mails, story angles, etc. "It's about creating your message persistently and consistently," says Lublin.

Put your message in a press release. When you follow up—and you must follow up—ask, "Did you get the information?" not "Did you get my press release?" You want to be seen as an expert resource with a powerful media message.

Marketing to Radio

Joe Sabah (www.JoeSabah.com) loves to brag that he does all his book promotion in his bathrobe—via radio phone interviews. When marketing to radio stations, call rather than e-mail, because radio stations want to hear your voice. He recommends this protocol:

1. Call first. You probably won't connect with the person you seek (the producer, who also may be the host), so ask about the best time to call again to catch the person.

2. Write: Send whatever they want, whether it's an overnight shipment of your book or 12 interview questions by fax.

3. Call again to follow up.

Then when you're interviewed on the air, realize that your job is to educate, entertain, inspire, and get the phones ringing, not to promote your book.

Fine Points

The presenters disagreed about small points, but they agreed about these larger issues:

Don't ask what the media can do for you—tell them what you can do for them.

Be readily available. If your book or topic is in the news, they want to be able to get you at a minute's notice.

When you're asked a question in an interview, answer it—never just say, "That's in the book," which does the audience a disservice and guarantees that the interviewer won't want to hear from you again.

Don't talk on and on when the interviewer asks you a question—answer briefly (preferably in sound bites) so the interviewer can ask another question.

Networking

Marketing is creating relationships. "Eighty percent of books are sold through word-of-mouth," says Kremer, who suggests creating a "word-of-mouth army," people who will become advocates for you. Networking with the media and your readers, especially using the Internet—"the most incredible network ever created"—is vital.

"Every Iowa farmer knows that you plant one seed, and you get back a return-on-investment of 600 seeds," says Kremer (who lives in Iowa). "When you put your heart and mind and passion into a book and you put that into the world, it comes back multi-fold." **ASJA**

ASJA member Joan Price (www.joanprice.com) is the author of five books and hundreds of articles. She is also a speaker, fitness consultant, and line-dance instructor. Her new book, *The Anytime, Anywhere Exercise Book* (Adams Media), includes more than 300 exercises that fit into your day, wherever you are.

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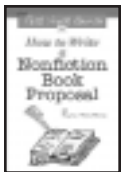
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Learning Curve

Lifelong learning in the literary arts

A writer's learning curve is certainly steepest at the start. But if we're to keep developing our skills and selling our work, we have to continue learning indefinitely. This month's selections cover both commerce and craft, and the line between the two can be nebulous.



The Fast-Track Course on How to Write a Nonfiction Book Proposal by Stephen Blake Mettee (Quill Driver Books (www.quilldriverbooks.com, 800-497-4909),

2002. 121 pages, \$12.95.

I rewrite my book proposals as often as some novelists revise their artistic efforts. Stephen Blake Mettee, a California-based publisher of nonfiction books, seeks to squeeze the topic of writing effective book proposals into a tight package. In fact, the proposal section itself is only 23 pages long, with the rest of the book taken up with assorted samples, checklists, and basic questions and answers. It fills the bill as a quick overview for first-timers, a fine book to recommend to those asking how to get published. Because this is a book by a publisher, though, the sample book contract doesn't provide the sort of warnings writers might benefit from. But, again, because it's by a publisher, it's fascinating to read that you should "always send your full book proposal with your query letter" as a way of getting the editorial fence-sitter to at least take a look at the first page of your proposal without having to go to the trouble of requesting it.



The Journalist's Craft: A Guide to Writing Better Stories edited by Dennis Jackson & John Sweeney, Allworth Press (www.allworth.com), 2002. 228 pages, \$19.95.

This collection of essays by some excellent journalists takes on such topics

as "What Makes a Story a *Story*?", "Business Writing That Screams 'Read Me!,'" and "The Zen of Newswriting." All the selections are highly readable and inspiring. Some are quite practical, as well, such as J. Taylor Buckley's three pages of "Very Predictable Expressions" used by reporters. Power lines are always downed, fires always rage, battle lines are always drawn, and investigators are always sifting through wreckage. Books of this type are like inexpensive tune-ups for the experienced writer.



The Creative Writer's Style Guide: Rules and Advice for Writing Fiction and Creative Nonfiction by Christopher T. Leland, Story Press (www.writersdigestbooks.com), 2002. 248 pages, \$22.99.

This new type of style guide can be read straight through or used as a reference (or, ideally, I should think, the latter following the former). Bland chapter titles ("Plurals and Possessives," "Setting Dialogue and Thoughts," "Offensive Words," "Allusions") don't even hint at the useful anecdotal information within. Numerous alternatives to "said" are suggested, as well as why some choices look pathetic on the page ("But what if I didn't...", "Greta trailed..."). Phrasal verbs and their overuse are discussed ("Matilda sat down on the chair" would be better as "Matilda sat on the chair," as I have to tell every batch of my online writing students). What's different about this book is that it includes sections on subjects rarely covered in old-fashioned style guides, such as pacing, working with descriptions, and ensuring that your allusions are clear.



The Dictionary of Concise Writing: 10,000 Alternatives to Wordy Phrases and ***The Dimwit's Dictionary: 5,000 Overused Words and Phrases and Alternatives to Them*** both by Robert Hartwell Fiske, Marion

Street

Press (www.marionstreetpress.com), 2002. 412 pages and 400 pages respectively, \$19.95 each.

There's only space to mention these two dictionaries briefly, but they're both worth their weight in delete keys. When I was doing the final polish on my new book, I found many dozens of what Fiske calls wordy phrases. Why say "is evidence that" when you might instead write proves, evinces, indicates, reveals, shows, or signifies? Other examples: call into question, call an end to, give rise to, given the fact that, in view of the fact that, it should be noted. The Dimwit's Dictionary contains "moribund metaphors," plebeian sentiments, and torpid terms. You may not always agree with Fiske, but you'll write with increased freshness after reading his analysis. **ASJA**

Susan K. Perry is a longtime member of ASJA and the author of the just-published *Loving in Flow*, as well as five other books and hundreds of articles. She teaches writing online. Contact her at www.BunnyApe.com.



In Memoriam

***Atlantic Monthly* editor at large and *Washington Post* columnist Michael Kelly, son of longtime ASJA member Marguerite Kelly, died on April 4 in a Humvee accident while traveling with the Army's 3rd Infantry Division.**

He was the first American journalist to be killed in the war with Iraq.

Publishing with iUniverse

Print-on-demand offers options

by SALLY WENDKOS OLDS



After publishing nine books with traditional publishers, I published my newest book, *A Balcony in Nepal: Glimpses of a Himalayan Village*, with iUniverse in October 2002, under ASJA's arrangement with this print-on-demand (POD) publisher. The ASJA agreement with iUniverse is at www.iuniverse.com/publish/asja/asjaagr.asp. The book looks beautiful and, most important, it is available. However, it took much time and effort both before and after publication.

Usually, authors submit manuscripts electronically, a simple procedure for text. However, since this book contains 50 black-and-white drawings, extra work was required to clean them up, scan them and place them in the book. My daughter, a professional graphics designer, handled the artwork, designed the cover, found fonts for headings, and burned text and art onto a CD.

The main disadvantage of POD is in marketing, which is all up to the author. Furthermore, although I felt comfortable

copy-editing the manuscript, at times I missed having an editor. But there are real plusses: I had total control over how I organized the book, what I said and how I said it. I also had more say over how the book looks than a traditional publisher allows. Furthermore, this way goes much faster. Two and a half months after iUniverse received the manuscript, I had a finished book in my hand.

Some things were similar: iUniverse obtained copyright and handled production, while I sought out pre-publication blurbs and contacted organizations and newsletters with an interest in the topic, plus local media, for publicity.

I feel the drawbacks of this new kind of publishing are balanced by its advantages in certain situations. You don't have to pay anything under the ASJA imprint, and the publisher handles some of the work that self-publishers have to do themselves. In today's dismal publishing climate, this offers another option.

For suggestions based on my experience, members may read my post in the Books section of the ASJA Forum and may e-mail me at SallyWendkosOlds@compuserve.com. For more information, contact the ASJA-iUniverse liaison, Kerry Mickle (800-376-1736, x.290 or Kerry.Mickle@iuniverse.com). Also, go to www.iUniverse.com.

To browse my book about the people and way of life in a remote village in Nepal, and about the impact four visits had upon me, go to www.iuniverse.com and enter "*A Balcony In Nepal*" in the search box. Like other iUniverse books, mine can be ordered from any bookstore (ISBN 0-595-24027-5; \$22.95); service is faster from online booksellers. [ASJA](#)

Sally Wendkos Olds, a past president of ASJA, is the author of nine other books, all issued by mainstream publishers. Her first book, *The Complete Book of Breastfeeding* (Workman & Bantam), has become a classic, and her three college textbooks (all McGraw-Hill) have gone into 20 editions and been translated into several languages.

Literary Quiz by Harvey Widell

The Pulitzer: A Quiz

This month marks the 86th awarding of annual prizes by Columbia University for achievement in American journalism, letters, and music. Endowed by a gift from newspaper magnate Joseph Pulitzer, these fellowships are among the most highly esteemed awards for writers. Here, then, are a baker's dozen of Pulitzer winners for general nonfiction. See if you can match the writer to the title.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. Tracy Kidder | A. <i>The Guns of August</i> |
| ___ 2. Barbara W. Tuchman | B. <i>O Strange New World</i> |
| ___ 3. Carl Sagan | C. <i>The Making of the Atomic Bomb</i> |
| ___ 4. John Toland | D. <i>Pilgrim at Tinker Creek</i> |
| ___ 5. Richard Rhodes | E. <i>Common Ground</i> |
| ___ 6. Studs Terkel | F. <i>Ghandi's Truth</i> |
| ___ 7. Howard Mumford Jones | G. <i>The Armies of the Night</i> |
| ___ 8. Eric Erikson | H. <i>The Dragons of Eden</i> |
| ___ 9. David K. Shipler | I. <i>The Rising Sun</i> |
| ___ 10. Edward O. Wilson | J. <i>The Good War</i> |
| ___ 11. Annie Dillard | K. <i>On Human Nature</i> |
| ___ 12. Norman Mailer | L. <i>The Soul of a New Machine</i> |
| ___ 13. J. Anthony Lukas | M. <i>Arab and Jew</i> |

ANSWERS:

- | | | | |
|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. L | 4. I | 7. B | 10. K |
| 2. A | 5. C | 8. F | 11. D |
| 3. H | 6. J | 9. M | 12. G |
| | | 13. E | |



Harvey Widell, a stage director in regional theaters, has written for *Bostonia*, *The New York Times*, *Newsday*, *The Plain Dealer Magazine* and dozens of other periodicals.

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2003 ASJA Writers Conference

Keynote Speaker :

Barbara Ehrenreich



Author of
Nickel and Dimed:
On (Not) Getting By In America

Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed* was named a *New York Times Book Review* "Notable Book, 2001"; a *Los Angeles Times* "Best Book, 2001"; and a *Business Week* "Best Business Book, 2001." Her experience as a journalist is also stellar: since 1990 she has been a contributing writer for *Time Magazine*, is contributing editor for *Harper's Magazine*, and has written for *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Washington Post Magazine*, *Ms.*, *Esquire*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Social Policy* and *Mirabella*. For a conference preview and to receive e-mail updates, visit www.asja.org/wc/2003/2003prev.php.

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