

Novelists' Ink

The official newsletter of Novelists, Inc. — a professional organization for writers of popular fiction

Volume 7, Number 11

November 1996

How Novelizing Changed my Life

by

EVAN L. MAXWELL, Hack

I learned to put words on paper in the news business, where they don't necessarily want it good, they want it in ten minutes. Fiction, done at my own pace, was always a luxury.

But after I left the news business, I found that my writing pace had begun to slow. No more 2,500-word days. Half that, if I was working hard. Write and rewrite and polish takes time, don't you know.

Then Dominick Abel, our agent, ran across a novelization project that changed the way I looked at words. It was a piece of action called "Thunderheart," a homecoming story starring Val Kilmer as an FBI agent of Indian lineage sent back to the reservation in South Dakota to investigate a strange string of murders.

I was born and raised in the Upper Midwest, I had covered the FBI and its agents for a decade, I had written mysteries and thrillers. Voilà! A perfect fit.

Sure, I'll take the job. I'm between books. I need the money to pay for a new computer system for my wife and me. Why not?

That's when I learned what novelizations are really all about. It's called speed. The film wrapped in South Dakota and went into post-production.

Then and only then did the production company decide to do a novelization.

(continued on page 10)

Your Bat, Their Ball A Writer's Look at Tie-Ins and Novelizations ...Whose Backyard?

Question:
"When fiction writers begin a new project, they must create a convincing and involving cast of characters and move them through an original plot." True or false?

Answer: Usually true...but not always.

In a serialization or "tie-in," for example, the main characters have already been created by someone else; the writer's main task is to dream up new challenges for them to face. Whether it's a voyage of the Starship Enterprise or a murky investigation for Mulder and Scully to untangle, these books show us characters we know and love, embarking on fresh adventures.

More extreme still is the case of a novelization, where the characters and the plot preexist in some other medium (most often as a movie), and the writer's task is to flesh out that tale for the written page. Look at the top ten box-office hits on any given weekend, and the chances are that several of them are represented at

By
JUDY MYERS

your local bookstore by a novel based on the screenplay, timed to hit the shelves along with

the newly released film.

Lately, serializations and novelizations are cropping up everywhere—including the *New York Times* list. But who are the authors who write them? How did they get into that line of work? What expectations did they harbor when committing to their first such project, and were those expectations met?

To find out, I tracked down eight authors, one author/packager and an editor/author, all of whom deal with tie-ins and novelizations. I asked them questions about their work, and some of the answers they gave surprised me.

In a few cases, by their own admission, they even surprised themselves.

What tie-ins and/or novelizations have you published?

Kevin J. Anderson: Numerous STAR WARS and X-FILES novels, and one for STAR TREK.

(continued on page 5)

Inside: President's Column 2 / Letters 3 / Wake Up to Spreadsheets 11 / Fast Track 12 / East of the Hudson 13 / Online 16

Novelists, Inc.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Election Results:

We are pleased to announce the results of the elections of the 1997 officers and Nominating Committee members. Those who will be serving Novelists, Inc. in 1997 are:

President: Victoria Thompson
Vice President: Steve Womack
Secretary: Candace Schuler
Treasurer: Phyllis DiFrancesco

Nominating Committee: Vicki Lewis Thompson, Julie Kistler, Robyn Carr, Carole Nelson Douglas, Emilie Richards McGee, Margaret Evans Proter and Lillian Stewart Carl.

We are also pleased to announce the appointment of two key people to the NINC board. One of these is the Advisory Council Representative who serves as the organization's memory and advisor. The other is the *Novelists' Ink* editor-in-chief which is an appointed position for the first time this year. We have also created the position of assistant editor for *NINK* and appointed two people to serve in that capacity next year.

Advisory Council Representative: Janice Young Brooks
NINK Editor-in-Chief: Anne Holmberg
Assistant Editors: Kathy Lynn Emerson and Marj Kruger

New York, New York

As you most certainly know by now, the 1997 conference will be held in New York City at the Marriott East Side, which is located right in the heart of downtown Manhattan. Laura Resnick has already agreed to serve as our Conference Coordinator.

We know the schedule of the New York conference will have to be different to accommodate the publishers' work week, but we are also looking forward to having access to industry folks who don't normally travel to conferences, like art directors and marketing people. If we haven't thought of someone you'd like to see there or if you have any ideas or suggestions, send your wish list to Laura at 11216 Gideon Lane, Cincinnati OH 45249, phone 513-489-2959, e-mail l.resnick2@genie.geis.com. Contrary to the roster listing, she has no fax yet.

And That Other Place We're Having a Conference

As I write this (early October) we are preparing to select a site for the 1998 conference which I think I can promise you will be completely different from any other site we've ever had. Watch for a full report in the December *NINK* from our intrepid Site Committee Chair, Julie Kistler.

Dues Renewals?

Usually we send out our dues renewal forms in November, so you may

This Month from the President:

- 1997 officers redux
- Polishing the "Big Apple"
- Dues delayed
- Webpage wonders
- Ideas, or, okay, we're creative...let's create an even better NINC

New York...access to industry folks who don't normally travel to conferences, like art directors and marketing people.

be expecting to receive one any day. You won't. For reasons that have to do with bookkeeping and cash accounting and other financial stuff, we have changed the renewal date to December 1. Watch for your renewal notice next month.

NINC Webpage

Check out the additions to the NINC Webpage which include a monthly listing of our members' latest releases and a link to the Amazon Bookstore page where you can order those books online! See all this at:

<http://www.ninc.com>

Ideas Needed:

As we prepare to begin a new year in NINC, we're looking toward the future and thinking of what we want to accomplish by this time in 1997. If you've got a pet peeve or a burning question or a controversial issue you'd like us to consider tackling, please contact me. As both outgoing and incoming president, I'm in the unique position of frantically trying to finish up this year's projects while also looking forward and trying to think of new ones. I need all the help I can get, so don't be shy. Write me, call me, fax me or e-mail me.

My addresses are on the masthead to the left of this column.

— **Victoria Thompson**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Letters to the Editor is the most important column in our newsletter, since it is the monthly forum in which we can all share our views and express our opinions. Anonymous letters will never be published in NINK. Upon the author's request, signed letters may be published as "Name Withheld." In the interest of fairness and in the belief that more can be accomplished by writers and publishers talking with one another rather than about each other, when a letter addresses the policies of a particular publisher, the house in question may be invited to respond in the same issue. Letters may be edited for length or NINK style. Letters may be sent to the NINK editor via mail, fax or e-mail. See masthead for addresses.

Let 'em Laugh

Re: Victoria Thompson's letter to the editor in the October issue — I thought I'd escaped the rampant "cliquism" of trying to be like the "in" crowd when I left high school. If I have to go to a professional conference and fear being laughed at because I don't think like the "in crowd" thinks, then maybe I'm going to the wrong conference. I rather thought we were not only mature, intelligent adults in this

organization, but also independent-minded, creative and capable of accepting the differences between our individual characters. Pettiness does not become us, and if some of us are laughing at those who choose to show their covers at the conference, then we are just as unattractive as those high school kids.

I've dealt with people laughing behind my back all my life, as most of us probably have at some time or another, simply because we march to different drummers. It never occurred to me that some mysterious "they" at our conferences would laugh at me if I show my latest cover or book to friends. (Actually, it probably never occurred to me to show my covers to anyone unless I was particularly outraged about some idiocy, but that's another point entirely.) And now that I've been fairly warned, perhaps I'll behave just as childish and do precisely what I've been told not to do. I'll wear the blamed cover around my neck.

Vicki, don't fall for that old gang rule concept. Let them laugh. You know who you are and you're damned good at it. If others laugh, who's the real fool? When in the name of heaven are we going to learn to be proud of who we are without need of the approbation of others?

— **Patricia Rice**

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(Continued from page 3)

We Subsidize Every Cog

In September's East of the Hudson, Evan described Esther Dyson's cybervision of the new business model for the publishing industry as "chilling" and lamented the passing of a golden era for writers. Judging by October's Letters to the Editor and Barbara Keiler's POINT, Dyson's vision seems to be perceived by many writers as a grave threat in an industry that already threatens writers in a variety of ways. I certainly agree that there are many threats out there for writers these days, but I am evidently in a radical minority to believe that Dyson's vision isn't one of them.

In October's EOH, Evan gives us a glimpse of the *current* state of the publishing industry by way of Ingram's superwarehouse in LaVergne, TN — and this vision, I must say, is truly chilling. After telling us that writers still have the most fun of anyone in the book business, Evan notes: "there are thousands upon thousands of clerks and stockers and order-checkers, along with thousands of nebbishes in publishing offices, who do our brownie work for us, putting our books out where readers can find them. And just remember those poor folks in the service center whose every transaction is measured and timed, whose every phone call may be monitored for accuracy and efficiency." And I'm supposed to feel *good* about this?

Shed the late-capitalist, exploitative scare tactics, Evan, by telling us that "every time we feel sorry for the sad plight of writers, we ought to remember that we could be order-takers in an Ingram's phone bank." Remind us instead that every cog you mentioned — those thousands upon thousands of clerks and publishing office nebbishes and service center employees — all make a living off a percentage of the cover price of our books. No wonder we only get 2.5% book club, 6 – 9% standard retail, 10% and up for the higher-profile retail sales. There are many, many middlemen and women out there who get their cut. In Dyson's model, those cogs aren't there any more, and all that's left is the writer and the reader. I'm feeling better already.

To respond to Keiler's POINT question: How do I fight the good fight without losing my ability to write the good write? The answer is? Take control. Hang on to your copyrights. (Dyson is morally in favor of them and does everything she can to protect hers.) Establish a) the dollar amount you believe each of your books is worth and b) how much you're willing to work for that dollar amount. Next — since we are in the transitional economy where the hard copy of a book is still a sellable commodity — discover ways to produce and sell your product so that you cut out as many "middles" as possible between you and your

readers in order to achieve that dollar amount. Notice that you need sell dramatically fewer copies of a book if you are making dramatically more profit. Then get ready for whatever phase is coming next, because it's already on its way.

— Julie Tetel Andresen

Copyright Office Bill May Resurface

In recent issues of *NINK*, both Evan Maxwell and Cheryl Zach have brought the proposed change in the U.S. Copyright Office to our attention, with Cheryl suggesting we start manning the ramparts immediately. According to a U.S. Copyright Office spokesman, the legislation that would have moved the U.S. Copyright Office from the jurisdiction of the Library of Congress to the Patents and Trademarks Office has been postponed. You may think the entire issue is nothing to worry about, but I believe it is very much something to worry about. And while we may not need to fully man the ramparts at the moment, we need to post sentries immediately.

Last year Bruce Lehman, who has the mind-numbing title of Asst. Secretary of Commerce and Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, prepared a White Paper on the National Information Infrastructure (the "information superhighway"). White Papers are usually written to support legislation the Executive Branch wants, and, in this instance, it was the massive telecommunications bill that Vice President Gore shepherded successfully through Congress. In the White Paper, Mr. Lehman wrote language in such a way that legislation could be drafted to guarantee corporate intellectual property rights, at the expense of the creators.

It is not surprising that Mr. Lehman is the author of this Paper, since he is nicknamed the "czar of the information superhighway." The Paper's main objective seemed to be to create government policy that would grant even broader copyright protection to corporate interests for so-called electronic rights. The Paper did not address whether "all rights contracts" were in fact transferring all copyright to a corporation—although many feel that is the intention—nor did the Paper say anything about whether the creators of works going on the electronic information highway would get any share of the profits—which many also suspect is not an intention. As of now, no such bill has been introduced, but that doesn't mean no attack on our right to copyright our work and profit from it in whatever format it appears is imminent. The first salvo has already been fired.

Mr. Lehman and his staff had legislation introduced that would move the Copyright Office from the Library of Congress to the Patents and Trademarks Office (PTO). The Library of Congress, as all libraries do, preserves our cultural heritage by preserving the works of individual creators, regardless of the size of the print run, the size of the

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



publisher or the commercial value of the book, music, art, etc. The PTO's mission is to promote commerce, which means its main support comes from the corporate community, not the creative community. Since the past and current record of the corporate community shows a propensity to take as much copyright as possible from the creative community, writers can deduce for themselves that moving the Copyright Office to the PTO is not going to help them retain rights—hence income from those rights—or fight the growing pervasion of work-for-hire contracts.

Despite the strong championing of both Republicans and Democrats—this is not a “party” issue—the bill did not pass so no writer blood was spilled—yet. The bill isn't dead, only in Congressional suspended animation, and while doctors have yet to be successful with suspended animation, much less reanimation, Congress mastered it a couple of centuries ago. The bill will be back, like

Frankenstein's monster, and we must have our pitchforks and torches ready.

In the meantime, we can keep watch and gather intelligence. (Next month I'll further bore you with an interview with the Copyright Office's general counsel.) On a positive note, the rumors of nasty copyright fee hikes are not true. According to the same spokesman for the Copyright Office, there have been no recent changes: a copyright filing fee is still \$10. Should you wish forms, you can call 202-707-3000. Should you wish information, call 202-707-5959 to speak to a live human.

— **Patty Gardner Evans**

P.S.: In last month's EOH, Evan wanted to exhort the \$7 an hour Ingram clerks to “go home...You don't have to spend your lives this way.” Evan, did you perhaps forget that many writers would consider \$7 an hour a nice raise?

Your Bat, Their Ball...Whose Backyard?

(Continued from page 1)

John Gregory Betancourt: STAR TREK novels, short stories for SPIDERMAN and STAR WARS, and a novelization for the movie *Cutthroat Island*.

A.C. Crispin: Four STAR TREK novels, the combined novelization of *V* and *V: The Final Battle* and two subsequent tie-in novels, the novelization for the movie *Sylvester* and two STAR WARS short stories. I'm currently under contract for a STAR WARS trilogy about Han Solo's early years, from his late teens through his acquisition of the Millennium Falcon and beyond, ending as he approaches the cantina where he will first encounter Obi Wan and Luke Skywalker.

Christie Golden: A STAR TREK: VOYAGER novel, *The Murdered Sun*, and three TSR RAVENLOFT novels that are tie-ins with role-playing games.

Ashley McConnell: Five tie-in novels for QUANTUM LEAP and one for HIGHLANDER.

Jerry Olton: I've written for ISAAC ASIMOV's ROBOT CITY (a shared universe series), TSR's DARK SUN series (based on the Dark Sun role-playing game), and STAR TREK.

John Ordovery (editor): I've edited dozens of STAR TREK books for Pocket in all Trek forms.

Jennifer Roberson: An original novel based on HIGHLANDER and two anthologized STAR WARS stories.

What are your other publishing credentials?

Anderson: I've published 20 other novels in science fiction, fantasy and thrillers, and I've sold one to Universal Studios.

Betancourt: I've spent 17 years as a professional writer and editor, and have edited lots of media tie-in books, including the recent Marvel Comics novels. I also own Wildside Press and alternate between writing novels and packaging books for other publishers.

Crispin: The WITCH WORLD novels in collaboration with Andre Norton, STAR BRIDGE (an ongoing science fiction series, the later books of which have been collaborations), and an upcoming original fantasy trilogy with Avon.

Golden: Two original novels, with a third—*King's Man, Thief*—due out in May 1997 from Ace Books. Also 10 short stories with various anthologies.

McConnell: I've published two horror novels and a fantasy trilogy which concludes with *The Courts of Sorcery* (Ace Books, January 1997).

Olton: I've published about 60 short stories in *Analog*, *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and other magazines and anthologies, and I've published one solo novel, *Frame of Reference*, with Questar.

Ordovery (ed.): I've sold a lot of short stories and have co-written an episode of DEEP SPACE NINE.

Roberson: Fantasy genre: 12 novels, one collaboration, and more than 25 short stories; have also edited two

**turned out
10,000
words in
a single
18-hour
sitting.**

**John Gregory
Betancourt**

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Your Bat, Their Ball...Whose Backyard?

(Continued from page 5)

fantasy anthologies. Historical genre: two hardcover novels. Romance genre: one historical romance and one contemporary romantic suspense. Also one genre western.

Did you seek tie-ins/novelizations or were you approached?

McConnell: The QUANTUM LEAP books came about because my name was one of several submitted by Ace Books to MCA/Universal, and I called the President of MCA Publishing Rights to let her know my former agent was no longer representing me. By the end of the discussion, I had my first contract; they later approached me about subsequent contracts. For the HIGHLANDER book, I heard that a licensing agreement was in place and contacted the editor to express interest.

Crispin: I wrote my first STAR TREK novel on spec, but all my other projects have come from approaches by the publisher.

Golden: I'd heard about the tie-in options, but I wasn't able to connect with the editor until my agent stepped in. She approached me with the idea of doing a VOYAGER novel and I was delighted.

Olton: The publisher approached me on the Robot books and the TSR book; I sought out the STAR TREK books.

Ordovery (ed.): It can happen either way. Sometimes an author hits me with a good idea; sometimes I hit one of our regular authors with an idea.

Roberson: The deal came together because I approached the editor about writing a novel for the series, once I heard HIGHLANDER had been licensed for books. Because of my successful track record in fantasy, I was promised the next slot.

What were the deal parameters on your projects?

Betancourt: All my projects have been single-book contracts, but my later STAR TREK contracts paid more than my early ones. Only my *Superman* novel was for a flat fee. Since it was short, with the plot supplied, I didn't mind. All my other books were written for an advance against royalties, with advances ranging from \$6,500 to \$17,500, and royalties from 2% to 6%.

Crispin: I've worked mostly with single-book contracts, but I signed for a trilogy with my current project of three STAR WARS books. I've never signed a contract for a flat fee project, and probably wouldn't since I think they're really rip-offs. Most of my projects have brought an

advance and a 2% royalty, but I've never been in a deal that included foreign royalties. I rather deplore that, and at this point I would encourage my agent to try for the inclusion of foreign royalties.

Golden: This was a one-book deal. Pocket pays a good advance and a small royalty, but with the sales they have, even a small royalty is a good deal for an author.

McConnell: My QUANTUM LEAP contracts consisted of three single-book contracts and a two-book deal for the fourth and fifth. They were all for a flat fee, with royalties on foreign sales only. (Each time, I asked for royalties on domestic sales and was refused.) The HIGHLANDER book had a 2% royalty against an advance.

Ordovery (ed.): STAR TREK books are handled one book at a time, with an advance against limited royalty.

Roberson: This was a single-book, work-for-hire contract. The going rate was a \$6K advance, plus 2% royalties, plus 20% of subrights. My agent negotiated an additional \$1,500 for the advance because of my name recognition within the genre.

You can't really "bone up" on STAR TREK. You have to know it already.

John Ordovery

It's absolutely essential to be familiar with the characters beforehand.

Kevin J. Anderson

What kind of deadlines have you faced on these projects?

Betancourt: My shortest deadline ever was one day for a Batman short story. (I turned out 10,000 words in a single 18-hour sitting.) The shortest deadline for a novel was three weeks; the longest has been six months.

Crispin: I usually hold out for a minimum of six weeks. I did *Sylvester* in six weeks. I wrote *V* in ten weeks, and that was a 130,000-150,000-word book. Novelizations happen on a much tighter time frame than tie-ins, as a rule.

Olton: My deadlines have ranged from six weeks to eight months, but the six-week one was to pick up on a contract someone else had failed to deliver on, so I went into that knowingly.

Ordovery (ed.): The shortest deadline was probably six weeks. The longest was just over a year. The norm is three to six months, depending on the author's schedule. I'm flexible.

Roberson: I had a four-month deadline, which including synopsis, outline, meeting, draft, revisions, draft, revisions and corrected page proofs.

Do you need to go into it already familiar with the "universe"?

Anderson: Yes. It's absolutely essential to be familiar with the characters beforehand in order to get the job done right. The fans will catch you in any minor mistake.

Crispin: It lets you give the reader what they want,

instead of filling in with peripheral plots and subplots. The readers come to these books because they want a concentration of their favorite characters.

Golden: I've always enjoyed watching STAR TREK, and when VOYAGER came out I was diligently videotaping the shows in the hope that I would get a tie-in. My genuine fondness for the show comes through and the readers picked up on that immediately.

Oltion: I knew the Star Trek universe like it was my own, but I had to learn the background on the Robot books and the TSR book. Already knowing the background allowed me to play with the characters and setting to even better effect than I might have otherwise.

Ordovery (ed.): After 30 years of STAR TREK and more than 150 STAR TREK novels, you can't really "bone up" on STAR TREK. You have to know it already.

Roberson: I was very much a fan of the HIGHLANDER TV series to begin with, which is why I wanted to write a novel when I heard the show had been licensed, and why I personally contacted the editor. This familiarity definitely aided me in developing an idea, meeting and corresponding with the producers, and writing the actual book.

With a novelization, what is it like to work from a script?

Betancourt: Working from a movie script was both harder and easier than I expected. I didn't know who had been cast in all the supporting roles, or the color of the props, costumes, horses, etc. On the other hand, the script provided all the dialogue, and the action was already in place.

Crispin: V was somewhere between 10 and 14 hours of film, and it included quick montages of resistance troops and other important incidents that I then had to describe. I discovered that the old cliché is right: one picture is worth about a thousand words!

How about tie-ins? How strict are the guidelines there?

Ordovery (ed.): We have extensive guidelines that all come down to "Don't change anything, and put all the pieces back together at the end." Paramount Pictures approves outlines and final manuscripts.

I'm always looking for new writers. The best thing to send me is a novel you've published, but you have to submit an outline that I like and that Paramount will approve before we can go to contract. I edited 30 STAR TREK novels (at least) in the last year, and I see that number growing, not shrinking.

McConnell: I was given absolute freedom to work with the existing characters and my own stories on the QUANTUM LEAP books. I wasn't even given a series bible to work from. I understand that guidelines now exist, but nothing I wrote would have conflicted with them.

With the HIGHLANDER book, I received extensive, detailed notes (17 pages on a 280-page ms.) on word choice, characterization, style, plot and incident. The vast major-

ity of these notes were from the production staff, not the editorial staff at Warner Aspect, but the production staff was unable to supply information about essential details (such as, where exactly does he keep that damned sword?). After revising the book twice, I turned it in and found later that members of the production staff had revised it yet again, rewriting essential scenes. I do not regard this book as mine.

Betancourt: Marvel Comics is a nightmare to work for. Intrusive. They change their minds about approved outlines. Amateurish all the way around. For novels for most publishers, I work from very detailed (often 30 pages or more) outlines. The publisher signs off on my vision of the story/characters/plot well before I begin writing, so I have never had any problems. The STAR TREK editors (particularly John Ordovery) are terrific to deal with. Non-intrusive, actively helpful and very knowledgeable.

Roberson: For HIGHLANDER, I was supplied with the series "bible," past and future scripts and a timeline. All material was helpful in that certain aspects of my idea and plot were affected by previous episodes as well as upcoming scripts. Because HIGHLANDER canon changes from (literally!) show to show, I had to remain flexible and in close contact with the producers. We exchanged a lot of faxes. I found this "liquid canon" difficult to deal with to some degree because I'm so accustomed to doing my own thing without having to get okays every step of the way, but not to the point I regretted undertaking the project.

Jerry Oltion I worked with a two-stage editorial process: the publishing house editor and her assistant, plus the producer and his assistant. I worked more closely with the HIGHLANDER production office while writing the book; it saved time to go straight to the Powers That Be with specific questions, although I faxed copies of all correspondence to my editor.

The feedback from the production office was extremely helpful, as it kept me current on aspects I could or could not do, and the time frame of certain things. Replies to my questions were often delayed by the shooting schedule—HIGHLANDER is shot in Vancouver and Paris, and the producer was often out of the office—but for the most part I did receive answers in a fairly timely manner. As a highly organic writer, I never stick to an outline, so I had to make certain that significant changes and new developments were okay with the production office as I wrote the book.

Crispin: Guidelines have been all over the map. With the V tie-ins, there was all the leeway in the world. When I did my first two STAR TREK novels, I basically had to do only normal editorial revisions. Apparently I didn't push any of Paramount's "hot buttons" with those first two projects, whether by luck or because the rules were less strict in those days. Since then, as STAR TREK has expanded into this huge thing with multiple book lines, the Paramount rules have gotten more strict and it's > > >

he basic rule with all the books was, "Don't kill anyone we'll need later."

Your Bat, Their Ball...Whose Backyard?

(Continued from page 7)

harder now to be creative and still fall within the boundaries of those rules.

STAR WARS, so far, has aimed most of their involvement at the upfront part of the project. I had to do a lot of outline approval, but I'd *much* rather do that than deal with changes later on. They've been nice to work for and very cooperative in terms of supplying me with every kind of reference material I could wish.

Oltion: I was given quite a bit of leeway with the characters in all cases. The basic rule with all the books was, "Don't kill anyone we'll need later." With the TSR game novel, the characters were pretty much my own, and I had complete control.

What was the best thing about working on the project(s)?

Anderson: Well, the huge royalty checks were nice....

Betancourt: Money and exposure to a large audience are the biggest advantages.

Crispin: The money for this kind of project is usually pretty good. I also believe it's given something of a boost to my career. I've been on the *New York Times* list five or six times now, and that lets me demand more money on my other projects. Of course, I live for the day when my own original books will get there, too.

In addition, I'm a frequent guest at STAR TREK conventions, and I've been on two free cruises. I'd say those are pluses. And the STAR TREK conventions—as opposed to the usual sort of science fiction conventions—actually pay money.

But nobody should do this expecting to get rich or famous, because frequently there is a sense on the part of the fans that the writers are interchangeable. The name recognition thing is a very iffy proposition.

McConnell: The best thing about working on the QUANTUM LEAP novels was the complete freedom to tell stories about characters and a premise I really like. The best thing about working on the HIGHLANDER novel was the first draft.

Oltion: The best thing about these projects was the chance I had to play in an interesting universe while still telling my own story. Telling in-jokes for STAR TREK fans, putting virtual reality into a D&D novel, that sort of thing. And the pay wasn't bad, either.

What was the worst thing about the project(s)?

Anderson: Rewriting to change something because of some upcoming episode I knew nothing about when I began my draft.

Betancourt: The worst is wrist/back/neck pains from

writing too much in too short a period of time. Part of that is tension from trying to meet difficult deadlines.

Crispin: Some other writers look down their noses at authors who do this kind of work. They think it makes me a hack, or something. But if they're that snobbish, I figure they're not the kind of people I need for friends.

McConnell: The worst thing about working on the QUANTUM LEAP novels is that there are a half-million books out there with my name on them on which I earn not one penny of royalties. The worst thing about working on the HIGHLANDER novel was everything *after* the first draft.

Oltion: The worst thing was probably the multi-layered bureaucracy I had to wade through for approval on both the outlines and the final book. Sometimes it seems like everybody wants their fingers in the pie, and they'll make changes just for the sake of making changes. I learned to ignore those people, because their job is done after speaking up; they don't care if I actually do what they ask. Only the editor really counts.

Ordoover (ed.): There's nothing about the job I don't like. It may be the best job in town, at least for me.

Roberson: The worst thing was Hollywood's conviction that viewers and readers are completely stooooopid and must have everything beaten into their brains. Subtlety was not permitted, and vocabulary had to be "dumbed down" in many cases.

What was the most unexpected thing about the project(s)?

Anderson: The incredible outpouring of fan mail—over 800 pieces so far.

Betancourt: ROYALTIES!! I never expect them, so it's a joy when they show up.

Crispin: For about three years, I stepped away from novelizations and concentrated on original fiction, although I was getting offers all the time and some of them were quite lucrative. At that point in my life, I felt I had to make a conscious decision not to go down that path to the exclusion of all else. It's flattering to be wanted, but I had to draw the line at a point where I realized that if that wasn't all I wanted to be, it was time to do some other stuff, even if it wasn't quite as lucrative. Since then, I've accomplished a number of those personal goals, including my original trilogy, and when the STAR WARS opportunity fell into my lap, the time was right, and I'd have had to be certifiably nuts to turn that down.

I'd also strongly urge writers not to get involved in a novelization or tie-in deal without an agent.

Golden: The most unexpected thing was how hard the

he worst thing was Hollywood's conviction that viewers and readers are completely stooooopid.

Jennifer Roberson

I'd also strongly urge writers not to get involved in a novelization or tie-in deal without an agent.

A. C. Crispin

science research was. This was my first foray into science fiction and I was determined that I was going to make my science believable, as one of the accusations leveled against STAR TREK is that it's full of "technobabble." I think I succeeded, but I have a renewed respect for SF writers.

Olton: The most unexpected thing was how much I enjoyed writing the books and how proud I am of them after publication. And how much more respect the general public gives me for writing STAR TREK, as opposed to my own work, which they've never heard of. Suddenly I'm a "real writer" in their eyes, because my books are in Safeway.

Roberson: The most unexpected thing was being allowed to do some things I thought would be denied. When I received a 10 page fax from the production office requesting specific changes in the completed ms, I replied with a multi-page fax addressing each point to explain why I'd done it, why it needed to be there, and what it would do to the plot if I changed it. This exchange resulted in a withdrawal of many requested changes, and the freedom to leave in certain scenes and elements with only minor modifications. There was a lot of give-and-take on both sides, and each side won and lost certain "battles." The compromise resulted in what I and the producers believe to be a very successful HIGHLANDER novel.

In closing, would you take on such a project again?

Anderson: Thanks to media tie-in books, I have had 13 national bestsellers in the last two years. It's how I make my living, and a very nice one at that—and it gives me the freedom to write my own fiction without catering to market demands, since it isn't so crucial that my own novels sell as well.

I think a very crucial battle to fight is to try to get authors royalties on many of the exploitations of their work —i.e., book club and audio, etc. Oftentimes, the licensor and not the publisher retains the foreign rights, so getting a piece of foreign royalties may be difficult. But the publisher can give a percentage of audio and book club money, and they almost always refuse. This is unconscionable.

Betancourt: I will never work with Marvel Comics again. Everyone else, yes. I enjoy working in these worlds.

Golden: In a heartbeat. The worlds are built, the characters are established—if you have the "ear" then this is, if not easy money, at least not difficult money. And it's fun!

On the other hand, I don't think I'd tackle a TSR Ravenloft novel again. They are kind of the worst of both worlds—established enough to be rigid, but not established enough (like VOYAGEUR) so that you don't spend

a lot of time and effort creating characters, villages, and so on.

McConnell: I will not, ever, take on another novel project which doesn't pay royalties on both domestic and foreign sales. I *might* be willing to do another QUANTUM LEAP novel if I had an idea I liked and they changed their contract. I won't do another HIGHLANDER book because, although there are stories I would like to tell, the set-up doesn't allow the freedom to tell them the way I want to.

Olton: I'd definitely do it again, and in fact I'm actively seeking another STAR TREK book. I'd be a bit more reluctant to do something like the ROBOT CITY books or the TSR book again, mostly because of the lower pay. My experience has been overwhelmingly positive...except for this nagging voice that asks me in the middle of the night, "When are you going to write your own bestseller?" I do wonder what this is doing to my long-term career, but for

now I've got a decent house and I can afford to travel, which I wasn't able to do before I started writing tie-ins. It certainly beats getting a full-time non-writing job, which is the only other option I have until my own novels start selling better than they are now.

Roberson: I went into this project solely because I loved the HIGHLANDER series. I will only ever write for a TV series/movie I personally like. The money and grief simply are *not* worth it; I took a 90% pay cut to write the HIGHLANDER novel, and although the compromises proved successful, I confess the idea of doing another under the same circumstances (and same money) doesn't appeal. By the same token, getting through it once suggests the next HIGHLANDER experience would not be as demanding, because we've learned one another's

working styles.

Although I have been asked by the producers and the editor to write another, I'm not certain this will come to be. Doing it out of love was fun, but I have many other projects that are wholly mine, and for which I am paid considerably more money.

Still, if I came up with an intriguing plot and my schedule permitted a "lark" book...I'd consider it. **NINK**

This is, if not easy money, then at least not difficult money.

Christie Golden

It certainly beats getting a full-time non-writing job.

Jerry Olton

Harlequin to Be Own Sales Agent

Toronto-based Harlequin Enterprises, Ltd. has announced that Simon & Schuster is no longer the sales agent for Harlequin, Silhouette and MIRA books as of October 1, 1996. An in-house sales force will take on the task, according to Katherine Orr, Vice President of Public Relations. She said that Alex Osuszek, Vice President of Retail Sales, will coordinate the new effort. Simon & Schuster will continue to be in charge of billing, collecting and order processing, Orr added.

Novelizing

(Continued from page 1)

That meant I had to produce an editable manuscript in three weeks, if the book was to come out at the same time the movie did.

And I had to get my new computer system up and running before I could write the book.

In addition, I had to learn a whole new system, since I was moving from DOS to Macintosh.

Crazy!

A copy of the shooting script arrived the day the new computers did. I read it, swallowed hard at some of the plot holes and character gaps, then enlisted my son to help bring the new computer on line.

Saturday, the first day, I was in deep trouble, learning about pull-down menus and saving to the disk at the same time I was trying to put the first words on paper.

Ten hours, 1,500 usable words.

Sunday, break-through. I typed a paragraph without thinking about the machine. Wow! This isn't so hard. Let's do this some more.

Twelve hours, 5,000 words, all usable. I was launched. Not only that, I was liberated.

Novelizing is an odd experience. The plot, all the action, even the dialogue is there. What's missing is the camera. You, the novelizer, become the camera. You describe the actions that the reader can't see, the facial expressions, the little tics, the pictures on the wall of the FBI director's office. It's sort of like coloring-book fiction. Just remember to stay between the lines.

But there's something else you must do for the reader, and when I understood what it was, I learned why I am thankful to be a novelist and not a screenwriter.

As a novelist, you have this little narrative tool called "interior monologue." That's the stuff your characters think, feel, remember and deduce but do not say. We novelists can get inside our characters' heads, into their consciousness. The camera must content itself with what is seen and what is said.

Interior monologue is the greatest literary invention since the comma and the period were thrown out of the Garden of Eden. It is what makes novels work; it is what makes characters come alive on the paper in ways that they seldom do on stage or in front of the camera. It is intimate and detailed and absolutely wonderful. Without it, we would all be writing for *Days of Our Lives*.

But back to the main moral. After that second day, novelization became easy, even liberating. I had forgotten how much fun it could be to write without thinking about it. Part of the freedom was the detailed storyline laid out in the script, but another part, for me, was the damned deadline. I couldn't labor over words and sentences—there wasn't time. They didn't want it perfect; they wanted it in 21 days.

Actually, they got my input in 14 days. Sixty-six thousand and some odd words, 265 manuscript pages, in 14 days. On a new computer. That left three days for Ann to polish, two more days for me to repolish and one day for Federal Express to get the package to New York.

The nice thing about deadlines in novelization is that the publisher feels them too. I put the manuscript in the FedEx box at 3:30 p.m. PDT on a Wednesday. The following day, our phone rang at 2 p.m. PDT. It was the editor, giddy with relief, accepting the manuscript as it was.

Without question, the fastest work I've ever seen out of a New York publishing house.

There were a couple of strange footnotes. The editor didn't change a word, but the film company's lawyer did. In one place I had made reference to a child's doll by a brand-name. That had to be excised.

But even stranger, the script had called for the old-salt FBI agent, played by Sam Shepard, to smoke cigarettes several times. I believe the script had even called out a

specific brand, Lucky Strikes. At one point, when the Young Turk and the Old Salt meet for the first time, O.S. offers Y.T. a smoke. The script had the actor refuse the cigarette, but I added a bit of dialogue in which the Turk looked scornfully at the Lucky Strikes and said:

"I didn't know they still made those things."

You guessed it. The line had to come out. I was never told why, although I suspect it was because the tobacco company had paid a promotion fee. But whatever the reason, I was told in no uncertain terms, the line had to go.

Strange but true.

Did I enjoy novelizing? Hell, yes. It reminded me that I should quit looking over my shoulder. Just say it, Dude. That sign went up over my computer and it's never come down.

Would I do it again? Not unless I really liked the project or really needed the money. The paycheck covered the cost of our computers, and the twice-a-week massage therapist I needed to work the knots out of my shoulders. It was fun and it worked to free me from a few accumulated bad habits. But I'd hate to make a living like that. *NINK*

You describe
the actions
that the reader
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facial expres-
sions, the little
tics, the pictures
on the wall...like
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Wake Up to Spreadsheets

I've been tracking royalties by spreadsheet for several years now, but the original idea came from two wonderful writers who shared their knowledge with me. Catherine Coulter told me a writer should check every royalty statement, adding and multiplying each column to make sure it was right. Dixie Browning, when I talked to her one day, said, "I'm updating my spreadsheets." I decided it made sense to track my own royalty statements. After all, this was my income.

I've evolved through a series of programs and am now using Quattro-Pro. With my new computer, I'm in the process of changing to Microsoft Excel. In Excel, I'm setting up three spreadsheets in one file named Royalty Statements.

Sheet One is for the current statement. In the first column, I have a list of all my book titles. After that, I list the book price, advance and publishing date. Writing for Silhouette, with regular sales around the world, I have many column headings across the top of the spreadsheet labeled America-Book Club, America Retail,

Canada Book Club, Canada Retail, France Book Club, France Retail, Germany Book Club, detailing every country I've sold to and each kind of sale, whether retail, direct or special. In most countries, Harlequin has subsidiary companies, so I can track numbers of units sold; but for others, I get a percentage of the money received by Harlequin and don't have units.

Each book has two lines of information. The first line is units sold. The second line is money earned. The last column contains the totals so that I can see at a glance total money that book has earned on this royalty statement and total units sold. These should add up to the amounts on the statement. I check these numbers with my contract in hand so I know exactly what the royalty is supposed to be and what the royalty statement is referring to. If I don't understand, I call and ask. Thanks to workshops with Paul Rosenzweig, I also check the currency conversion for foreign royalty payments.

Sheet Two is the cumulative for the year. Each January, I zero out all the columns on it, then transport information from Sheet One onto Sheet Two as I receive and check my royalty statements. This gives me my income and totals for the year.

Sheet Three is the lifetime cumulative. It adds in the information from Sheet One all the way back to the first royalty statement on the book. From this I can see total earn-out of every book I've ever had published during the past 13 years. The very bottom line in the totals column is the grand total of the columns above it and represents the money I've earned for my writing and the grand total of all the books I've sold, which is around 5,000,000 at present. Needless to say, I'm behind (aren't we all?) and haven't entered my April statements yet. I'd planned to get everything converted to my new spreadsheets before I wrote this article, but that might be next year. Below is a sample, but without the foreign sales listed since the spreadsheet is 29 columns wide.

— Libby Hall

	PRICE/ BOOK	ADVANCE	PUB DATE	AMERICA BOOK CLUB	AMERICA RETAIL	TOTAL UNITS SOLD	TOTAL MONEY
Book A	\$3.50	\$10,000	Jan '95	38,049 \$3,395.88	52,075 \$10,935.75	207,780	\$18,209.65
Book B	\$3.50	\$10,000	Apr '95	33,944 \$3,029.50	57,960 \$12,171.60	198,976	\$18,560.38
Book C	\$3.50	\$10,000	May '95	90,332 \$8,062.14	60,896 \$12,788.16	176,373	\$22,065.65



NINC Members on the USA Today List

The Fast Track is a monthly report on Novelists, Inc. members on the *USA Today* top 150 bestseller list. (A letter "n" after the position indicates that the

title is new on the list that week.) Members should send **Marilyn Pappano*** a postcard alerting her to upcoming books, especially those in multi-author anthologies, which are often listed by last names only. Alternately, Marilyn's phone/fax number is 918-227-1608, fax 918-227-1601 or online: **pappanor@gorilla.net**. Internet surfers can read and retrieve the list with this magic formula: 1. Enter the World Wide Web via this address: <http://www.usatoday.com> 2. At *USA Today's* homepage, click on the purple "Life" button in the *USA Today* masthead. Once in the Life section, click on the purple "Books" button in that masthead to go to the bookpage. Click, in turn, on two blue entry lines to see the top 1-50 list and the next 51-150 titles. You can also access year-to-date bestsellers by category. Save or print out the file. Look for your name or those of your friends, and track the stars!

* Marilyn Pappano has taken over *The Fast Track* from Carole Nelson Douglas.

Member	Title	Sept 8	Sept 16	Sept 23	Sept 30
Jill Barnett	<i>Carried Away</i>	122			
Jo Beverley (et al.)	<i>Married at Midnight anth.</i>	32	47	84	141
Stella Cameron	<i>Beloved</i>	72n	91		
Jayne Castle	<i>Amaryllis</i>	39n	39	53	111
Catherine Coulter	<i>The Heir</i>	11	15	30	46
Beverly Beaver, Ruth Jean Dale (et al.)	<i>Flower Girls anth.</i>	131			
Diane Mott Davidson	<i>Killer Pancake</i>	51	65	90	100
Diane Mott Davidson	<i>The Main Corpse</i>	195n	101		
Jude Deveraux	<i>Legend</i>		53n	59	75
Carolyn G. Hart	<i>Mint Julep Murder</i>	234	107	134	
Tami Hoag	<i>Cry Wolf</i>	56	89	116	69
Cathie Linz	<i>Seducing Hunter</i>			131n	
Elizabeth Lowell	<i>Desert Rain</i>	111			
Elizabeth Lowell	<i>Tell Me No Lies</i>	79n	86	136	
Debbie Macomber	<i>Mrs. Miracle</i>		126n	61	85
Victoria Pade	<i>Mom for Hire</i>	129n			
Karen Robards	<i>Hunter's Moon</i>		71	31	47
J.D. Robb	<i>Rapture in Death</i>		112n	68	112
Nora Roberts	<i>Daring to Dream</i>	149			
Lass Small	<i>The Texas Blue Norther</i>			125n	
Pat Warren	<i>Keeping Kate</i>	107n			



EAST OF THE HUDSON

I Told You So

A few installments ago, I suggested in this space that the ABA was in trouble. I didn't know how right I was.

The ABA is the annual convention of the American Booksellers Association, which represents the independent booksellers for the good old U.S. of A.

The convention is also the publishing industry's largest trade show, a grand traveling circus that attracts thousands of booksellers, authors, publishers, agents and free-loaders like myself. It's a great place to stock up on advance reader's copies, lapel buttons, pom-poms and bookmarks. Hell, I even got my picture taken with the Topaz Man one year.

But now the ABA is no more. It is a dead duck, deceased, extinct. And therein, dear friends, lies the lesson for today.

The ABA trade show was once the property of the association by the same name. Several years ago, the booksellers' group sold 49 percent of the show to Association Expositions & Services, which runs such events for a living. That sale came at the same time the show itself was becoming increasingly disputatious, thanks to the barrage of lawsuits filed by small booksellers against publishers over discount practices that ostensibly favor chain stores over independents.

In other words, the publishers were getting hammered with ABA lawsuits at the same time they were being asked to rent expensive booth space and set up vast displays at the ABA trade show. Not surprisingly, the publishers began to balk.

Random House and St. Martin's have been absent from the ABA for some time. This year, Simon & Schuster announced it would not attend. Kensington followed, saying it could better reach booksellers through regional shows.

That wasn't the end of the mutiny. Several major publishers quietly decided not to attend the big show, now held every year in Chicago. One, Putnam Berkley Publishing Group was preparing to make a public announcement to that effect when a very strange event took place.

The American Booksellers Assn. trade show died.

Well, maybe that's too strong a term, but the effect is almost the same. What happened was that the association sold its remaining 51 percent interest in the show to the professional show organizer, Association Expositions & Services.

In its first official action, AES announced that it was renaming the trade show. The new title, BookExpo America, is designed to reflect the new reality of the book business, in which traditional booksellers are being supplanted

by so-called "nontraditional channels of distribution."

The new owners of the trade show put the matter remarkably bluntly.

"Given the market changes affecting the bookselling and publishing industries, it makes sense to create a distinction between the event, which encompasses many interrelated industries, and the Association, whose mission is to serve the bookseller portion of the market," said Pat Dolson, president of Reed Exhibition Companies, North America, which controls AES.

Even Bernie Rath, executive director of the association, noted that the show and the organization needed to separate. The sale, he said, would allow the association to focus on "educating and supporting the bookseller community."

He said the organization would use the \$20 million from the sale to start its own insurance company for booksellers.

AES officials say that their first order of business will be to increase participation in the show by the "nontraditional" booksellers. That term was left undefined, but I think it refers to everything from discount clubs and superstores to garden stores and cooking equipment shops, all those places that are eating into the independent bookseller portion of the market.

Which leads me to two other observations.

Bob Dylan Was Right

NINC member Sue Guntrum passed on a clipping from *USA Today* that spelled out the extent and rate of change in our business.

According to the paper that is written for folks too busy to watch television news, the biggest growth in the book business is being recorded in membership discount stores, better known as warehouse clubs, which recorded a growth rate of 208 percent between 1991 and 1995.

I'm not surprised. For several years now I've watched the cream of the hardback market show up at my local Costco, on sale at about 60 cents on the dollar. There is something humbling about a retailer who purchases books by the pallet load.

But I was surprised by *USA Today's* news that the second fastest rate of growth is being recorded in used book stores.

That's right. Our friends in the "used" sector grew at the rate of 96 percent.

That's hefty growth for what used to be a distinctly marginal part of the business. It's also irritating news for writers, who make not a sou from sales in such stores.

Mail order book clubs grew at the rate of 49 percent, while grocery and drug store sales were nearly

> > >



EAST OF THE HUDSON

(Continued from page 13)

flat at 14 percent and bookstore sales even flatter at 11 percent.

USA Today reported that bookstores still account for 45 percent of all new books sold in the country, but that market portion will continue to shrink as new bookselling venues open up.

The Microscope

Publishers Weekly, which has always maintained a strong bias toward independent booksellers (the so-called traditional wing of the book business), did an interesting examination of the "nontraditional" book sales trend by examining merchandising practices in what used to be my hometown mall, South Coast Plaza in Orange County, California.

Noting that 54 percent of all book sales in the U.S. are not in bookstores, *PW* examined the megamall in Costa Mesa and found substantial book sections in shops ranging from Williams-Sonoma, the pot and pan specialist, to the Nature Company.

There was competition for the book-buyer's dollar in art stores, the Disney Co. and Warner Bros. Studio store, the Rand McNally travel store and the nearly two dozen other retail outlets in the plaza which sell books.

In fact, *PW* only found two traditional bookstores—a Brentano's and a Rizzoli Bookstore, among the 200 outlets in South Coast Plaza.

Interesting, but also a bit troubling, too. The plaza seems to have little room for fiction, particularly for commercial fiction of the sort most of us in NINC write.

Granted, there are a half-dozen superstores and several small specialty bookstores, like my favorite mystery store in the world, within a few miles of South Coast Plaza. There are dozens of supermarkets, drug stores and convenience stores, too, all of which stock the kinds of books we write.

But the fact remains that our kind of books are not as well represented in the "nontraditional" market as they might be.

That part of the trend bothers me a bit.

How to Succeed

I've finally figured out how to write a bestseller. I'm going to catch Oprah Winfrey in some excruciatingly compromising position. Eating a panful of Fudgy-Wudgy Brownies, for instance. Then I'm going to take a bunch of pictures of the sucked-in, buffed-up goddess of daytime television and use them to blackmail her into adopting my book for her new readers' club.

Hey, it worked for an uplifting little tome on child abuse called *The Deep End of the Ocean*.

The book, by a newspaper columnist named Jacqueline Mitchard, has been out for a couple of months. It managed to attract a fair amount of attention.

For instance, the Penguin publication managed to get to the top of the Ingram's restock demand list, a sign of growing reader interest, particularly from customers of independent bookstores. That interest is probably what got it onto the *NYT*'s bestseller hardback list for one week at #14. It didn't appear the following week.

Then Oprah made *Ocean* the first selection of her new monthly book club, plugging it in front of 15 or 20 million viewers.

I don't know what she said about the book. It probably doesn't matter. The important thing is that after her words were broadcast, Penguin went back to press repeatedly. The television plug boosted the in-print numbers from 90,000 to 500,000 copies, according to CNN.

Within a couple of weeks, *Ocean* vaulted from obscurity to the Number One position on virtually every bestseller list in the country, including the *New York Times*.

In case you think we are not in a mass culture, just reflect on the fact that Oprah was also responsible for generating the success of Robert Waller's *Bridges of Madison County*. The way I heard the story, independent booksellers had hand-sold Waller's book for several months to no astonishing success. Then Oprah held it up in front of the camera and sobbed, "This is the best book I ever read."

The rest, as they say, is cultural history.

So, I figure I just have to find a camera and catch Oprah in a compromising position. My career will be assured.

Unfortunately I can't imagine a position that would embarrass Oprah enough. After all, she does make her living on daytime television.

To Market, To Market

Stephen King is a genius. In the short span of six months, he has managed to entirely discredit the concept of "bestseller."

First there was his sortie into Charles DickensLand with the so-called installment novel, *The Green Mile*.

The Green Mile, which is really more a string of linked short stories than it is a singular novel, managed to soak up two, three or even five spots on most bestseller lists all summer long.

The exercise made a lot of money for King, who scarcely needs more, and a great deal more for his publisher, Viking/Dutton, who always needs more, since needing more is the nature of any corporation.

It probably also managed to feed King's ego, which apparently had become anorexic in recent years.

But apparently, multiple bestsellerdom was not enough. This fall, King and his publishers fired off another salvo—two novels, one by King and one by his pseudonymous cohort, Richard Bachman.

The two novels are so closely linked that you can lay them side-by-side and turn the two covers into a single panel of ghoulish art.

NINK's deadlines being what they are, I can't report the final outcome of the experiment. I can only report the results of the first week, in which King/Bachman managed to occupy three positions in the top eight slots on the *USA Today* bestseller list.

Not bad, considering he/they only wrote two books. He/they managed to accomplish this feat by a merchandising gimmick in which the King book and the Bachman book were marketed individually *and* as a two-novel package that also included a reading light, in case you are afraid of the dark.

King was #2 on the *USA* list, the King/Bachman package was #4 and Bachman, clearly the weaker writer of the trio, came in at #8.

I don't know what that arbiter of literary taste, the *New York Times*, will do with the King/Bachman package, but considering they treated the *Green Mile* installments as individual books, I would imagine the odd triple will chew up 20 percent of the *NYT* hardback bestseller list. That would make the publications into the merchandising gimmick of the decade.

All of this illustrates the real danger of lists and numbers, as opposed to actual, over-the-counter sales numbers. King's linked novellas so dominated the lists all summer long that other books that would normally have made the *Times* did not. One or two brave publishers commented

publicly on that fact. The private comments were more numerous and more scathing. Sour grapes do not make tasty wine.

As a commercial wordsmith, King has a genius touch. That's true of several other perennially bestselling authors, as well. I don't begrudge any of them the success they enjoy, even if I sometimes wonder what kind of ambition is required to stay out there on the tightrope they all walk.

However, I think it behooves us all, as wordsmiths ourselves, to bear one true fact in our minds: The King books, all three or eight or nine of them, are a marketplace phenomena, a product of shrewd publishing, as well as entertaining scribbling.

The situation brings me back to one of the themes I've hammered at since I started this exercise called *East of the Hudson*.

We have all undertaken an endeavor that is both artistic and commercial. A good book is an author's triumph and a bestseller is a publisher's triumph. The two are very different things.

We have to pay attention to the business end of writing, but we have to remember that ultimately we don't control it. All we control is the typing. The rest of it is in the hands of the publishers and the marketers and the critics and the booksellers, traditional or otherwise.

By the way, the book that was #1 on the *USA Today* list when the King/Bachman package hit?

It was a brilliant artistic triumph called *Make the Connection*. Its authors? A personal trainer named Bob Greene and his svelte client, a Chicago media personality named...

Oprah Winfrey.

(And that is what another Chicago media personality, Paul Harvey, calls *THE REST OF THE STORY*.)

— *Evan Maxwell*

INTRODUCING...

The following authors have made application for membership in NINC and are now presented by the Membership Committee to the members. If no legitimate objections are lodged with the Membership Committee within 30 days of this NINK issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of NINC:

New Applicants

Rita Boucher, Cockeysville MD
Carla Fredd, Stone Mountain GA
Barbara Freethy (*Kristina Logan*), Burlingame CA
Grace Green, West Vancouver BC (Canada)
Laura Hayden (*Laura Kenner*), Burke VA

Karen A. Katz (*Jillian Karr*), West Bloomfield MI
Susan King, Gaithersburg MD
Amy Lanz (*Amy Frazier*), Acworth GA
Sandra Myles (*Sandra Marton*), Storrs CT
Dawn Reno (*Diana Lord*), Deltona FL

New Members

Mary D. Curtis (*Mary Haskell*), Annisquam, MA
Alexis Harrington, Portland OR
Gwendolyn Johnson-Acsadi (*Gwynne Forster*), New York NY
Elizabeth Tunis (*Elizabeth DeLancey*), Rockville MD



tinctly bimodal distribution. The majority responding began reading category either before age 20 or after age 30 (we had a great time discussing why). LaVyrle Spencer's retirement—and retirement in general—were discussed at length, as was our favorite reading material during our “formative years” (the *Black Stallion* books were mentioned a lot). Those in the know shared the pros, cons and latest advances in laser eye surgery and other knowledgeable folks shared Torstar/Harlequin's latest profit statement. Everyone had fun sharing the quotes they keep posted above their computers (I hope a list will show up in *NINK* one of these days!) and more recently we've chuckled over members' personalized license plates.

I have a whole lot to cram into my column this month, so I'll try to type fast.... First, I've been conducting a very unofficial survey on the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) our members use. If you're happy with your own ISP, particularly if they offer service nationally, I'd very much appreciate information on them, so I can share. E-mail me at BrendaHB@aol.com (I'm assuming that if you have an ISP you have e-mail). From my own snooping around, I've discovered that \$20/month for unlimited Internet access is fairly standard for both local and national ISPs, though a few are as low as \$15/month for unlimited access.

http://www.cnam.fr/Network/Internet-access/how_to_select.html and <http://www.aidat.org/aidat/ispguide.html> offer lists of criteria to use when evaluating various ISPs. If you don't have an ISP and are only interested in e-mail at this point (so you can subscribe to Ninclink, for example), check out Juno. They offer a FREE e-mail-only service which is supported by advertisers. For information or to get their free software, you can e-mail sign-up@juno.com or call 1-800-654-JUNO. (It's not available for Macintosh yet, alas.)

Author Web Pages: More and more people have them, and an increasing number of authors are swearing they're seeing an increase in sales and name recognition as a result (not to mention that fan e-mail is a lot easier to answer than snail-mail fan letters!). *NINC* is offering a pretty good deal for the page-less, detailed in last month's column. For those of you who already have Web sites elsewhere, please be aware that you can link them to *NINC*'s homepage (in both directions) absolutely free of charge! Is that a deal or what? Speaking of links, you might want to consider linking your page to the online bookstore at <http://www.amazon.com> as well. Not only will they sell your books (they even carry category backlist!), they'll pay a small “finder's fee” if someone links in from your site and orders right then. Plus you get full retail royalties on those sales (as opposed to the reduced direct mail royalties some publishers pay for sales through their own home pages). Not bad, eh?

Finally, a quick rundown on just a few of the fabulous discussions we've been having on the Ninclink listserv over the past couple of months: An informal poll on when people read their first category romance yielded a dis-

tingly bimodal distribution. The majority responding began reading category either before age 20 or after age 30 (we had a great time discussing why). LaVyrle Spencer's retirement—and retirement in general—were discussed at length, as was our favorite reading material during our “formative years” (the *Black Stallion* books were mentioned a lot). Those in the know shared the pros, cons and latest advances in laser eye surgery and other knowledgeable folks shared Torstar/Harlequin's latest profit statement. Everyone had fun sharing the quotes they keep posted above their computers (I hope a list will show up in *NINK* one of these days!) and more recently we've chuckled over members' personalized license plates.

More serious discussions have included the feasibility of a writer's union and the potential for receiving royalties from used book sales. An informative post by Randy Russell on copyright law as it applies to used books deserves to be a complete article in *NINK*, in my opinion—just as Steve Womack's (on the history and benefits of the Writer's Guild) became an article in the October *NINK*. Health insurance for writers, the “imposter syndrome,” finding info on the 'Net, male romance readers, favorite “how to write” books, electronic books (check out <http://www.av.qnet.com/~frank/wishsyn.html> and <http://www.erinnet.com/renlow/respects.html>), 15 classic romance plots, intellectual snobbery and the Doubleday Book Club are examples of other topics we've discussed. There was also a wonderful, thought-provoking debate on inspiration vs. perspiration (vs. talent), which led to an exploration of the causes and cures for burnout. And of course we've had the usual announcements of late-breaking industry news.

I'm afraid there's no way I can list in this space all of the interesting websites people have shared on Ninclink. If you want to stay up to date on those, and get regular advice on using the Web, Internet, etc., you really need to subscribe! As of October 1, we're up to a whopping 131 subscribers, which is making for more and more stimulating discussions. Remember, to subscribe, just send an e-mail to: ninclink-d-request@cue.com with nothing (or a period) in the subject box and the word **subscribe** in the message box, with your name (as it appears in the roster) and your e-mail address below that. Hey, if *everyone* subscribes, I won't need to write this column anymore! So, in the interest of laziness (mine), See You Online!

— **Brenda Hiatt Barber :**)

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