

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

**Our  
10th  
Anniversary  
Year**

# Novelists' Ink

Volume 10

Number 9

September 1999

## *The Ink-stained Brother—er, Sister—er, Writerhood*



**BREAKING  
NEWS**

**"H**ello?"  
Pause. "Vella."  
"What is it?"

"Vella, Lance is dead."

"God. Oh God. Oh my God, no."

With that, everything changes. Tallie and I have been through a lot together and know as much about each other as we do about ourselves, but that phone call a week before Thanksgiving takes our friendship where neither of us wants it to go.

Lance is, was, Tallie's only child. On the day he died, he was to have received his Army discharge papers. Instead, his life ends in North Korea. The cause of death for the six-foot six-inch, 22-year-old is unimportant except that his life had been headed in that direction for years, and we'd been wrong to believe the worst was behind him.

How do I know so much about a boy who lived more than 70 miles from me, and why did Tallie, who is eight years my junior, make her first call to me?

We met through a mutual friend who is also a writer. At that point, I'd been writing and selling for years while Tallie was struggling through her first attempt at a romance—not a good fit for her. Because we live in different counties, we had to drive through the mountains (when winter

By VELLA MUNN

storms didn't get in the way) for our critique meetings that have averaged four to six members.

Tallie has grown tremendously as a writer and now writes thrillers, some with paranormal elements, which have been published on tape, e-publishing, and most recently with a small book publisher.

At first I had serious doubts about our ability to find a common ground and didn't want to be a mentor, but she has been the one to teach me, not how to put words on paper, but to listen to what my heart needs to write. Going from being strangers to soul sisters has been a slow process and one I hadn't expected to be a by-product of the experience.

I'd been doing some thinking about the nature of relationships between writers before Lance's death, in part because the friendships I've developed with the three core members of our critique group are the strongest I've ever know and in part because being on the NINCLINK has afforded me instant access to the only other people in the world who understand what this insane business is about.

Back in February, there'd been discussion about what various NINC members get or don't get out of the organization

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In the "Big news about the NINC Conference" Department...Retired FBI Profiler Ken Baker has been added to our list of special speakers. Baker will give us the benefit of his considerable expertise (and I do mean considerable!) and invaluable insights into the criminal mind (and how to expose it) in a two-hour presentation on Saturday. Get your conference registration in now, because there's no way even the most intrepid of my reporters will be able to offer you the full benefit of Baker's talk (or any of the others!) in *NINK*.

Also from the conference...THE PHONE NUMBER FOR THE HOTEL IS INCORRECT IN THE CONFERENCE BROCHURE (thanks to Eve Gaddy for pointing this out). The correct number is: 912-238-1234.

Market news...Malle Vallik is leaving Harlequin Duets/Temptation to head up the editorial side of Harlequin's burgeoning Internet presence. This will apparently tie in with Harlequin's women.com deal as HQ looks for new ways to promote and distribute its product. Sounds like they're also planning tie-ins and serializations and who knows what in future. Sounds like big things are happening there.

Kensington/Zebra has announced plans for a new historical imprint to be called "Ballads." The books will be miniseries-style stories written by one or more authors, approximately three to six

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

As September dawns, we're all thinking about one thing around here—Savannah!

A cool drink, a balmy breeze, a leisurely walk around a leafy green square... I don't know about the rest of you, but I've had a busy year on career, NINC, and personal fronts, so I'm ready for some R&R. As I talk to friends after other meetings and conferences, I get the idea that the crowds and the adrenaline and those outsider-looking-in feelings have left them a little frantic. I guess that's why the NINC annual conference is so appealing. It offers a chance to reflect, relax, chat with friends and colleagues, look back, look ahead, and basically let your hair down. The business we're all in may be crazy, but the NINC conference isn't. Thank goodness.

Victoria Thompson and her intrepid conference committee have done (and are doing) fabulous work putting together a program to excite and entice you, to keep you up to date with the latest info and stimulate your mind and your career. I hope you've all registered, called for a hotel room, and reserved your seat on a plane by now. If you haven't—don't waste another minute. Just do it! There's still time. (And we're all used to squeezing things in under the deadline, right?) Because this is NINC's 10th anniversary, Vicki has some special surprises planned, and I know you won't want to miss those. (And yes, for all those who've asked—there will be cake. There's nothing more disappointing than a birthday without cake.)

In Savannah this year (which should have a lot better weather than my home in Illinois in October) you can look forward to Clive Cussler, one of NINC's most fascinating members, who brings his eclectic, intriguing résumé (including underwater treasure hunting, a slew of bestsellers, and the most dangerous of all—advertising) to the banquet.

Plus you'll benefit from the insight and wisdom of one of my favorite speakers, Ann Maxwell, aka Elizabeth Lowell, who will enliven our luncheon by speaking on "Popular Fiction: Why we read it and why we write it." Since I sometimes lose sight of the reasons myself, I can't wait to hear what Ann has to say.

If you look at your conference brochure, you'll also see Virginia McLaughlin, who plans to help us define what we want and get what we need, and Meena Cheng, a financial planner with a watchful eye out for self-employed people like us. Creativity, e-commerce, hot button issues, pop culture, surviving tough times, shocks & surprises, what's happening with editors and agents... It's all on the program. All it needs is your input and contributions.

Just added—Ken Baker, former chief of the FBI's Behavioral Science Division, who has also worked for the CIA on the Assassination Assessment Team. Early plans are for him to speak about some combination of profiling, sexually deviant behavior, serial killers, or assassinations. I don't know what it says about me, but I love the sound of that. Special thanks to Sandi Kitt for tracking down and securing Mr. Baker.

Victoria's conference update this month gives you a preliminary list of editors and agents planning to attend, so you'll want to glance at that, too

This Month  
from the  
President:

*Savannah...  
opportunities  
not to be  
missed!*

[see page 15]. Vicki tells me that several of them will be hosting “tables” on Sunday morning—new this year—where they can chat informally, answer questions, and give you some one-on-one time.

You’ll come, you’ll look around, and you’ll breathe a sigh of relief when you realize everyone else is in the same boat you are. We’re all paddling as fast as we can, and if we start to sink, well, we’ll be waiting to hear what Clive Cussler has to say about underwater rescue!

See you in Savannah!

— Julie Kistler



## ASK THE LAWYER

**Question: How has publishing been affected by digital technology? What changes should be made in my agreements with my publisher as a result?**

**Answer:** Contrary to predictions, the most important impact of the new digital technologies on trade book publishing has been the ability to distribute books via the Internet and the potential market for the electronic book (E-book). In the early 1990s, common wisdom held that the market for books would be seriously eroded by new product formats for information and entertainment in computer software form, such as CD ROMS. Publishing companies and literary agents engaged in a fierce battle to determine who—publishers or authors—would control electronic rights.

What was agreed was that authors would grant publishers what is known as “display rights” (i.e. the right to the verbatim reproduction of the book in digital form, without any “bells and whistles”). Authors would retain multi-media interactive rights (i.e. the right to add the bells and whistles, such as film clips, music, voice-overs, etc. to new technological products derived from the book). Literary agents felt that they had scored a great victory on behalf of authors. But to date, it is the publishers that won that battle. The reason is because what is really of value remains the book itself in digital form and not new technological products replacing the book.

The pundits are now saying that with the growing popularity of the Internet, trade book publishers may become a relic from the pre-digital print age, because authors have the ability to market and distribute their own stories, poems, novels, and nonfiction works via their own Web sites on the Internet. Others are saying that at some point the viability of bookstores will also be threatened.

To a large extent, I disagree. I know that many authors would like to view the Internet as a new democratic world in which they can market and distribute their own works without publishers on parity with any other author and without publishers’ intervention. As I see it, trade book publishers are necessary to exercise editorial judgment both in the selection of what is viable for publication/distribution, and in the preparation of a book for public consumption. By publishing books, trade book publishers are in effect pre-selecting the material that the consumer will most likely be interested in reading.

By spending the money to acquire, produce, and market a book, the publisher is endorsing that book for the consumer. Anyone who surfs the Net knows how badly pre-selection is needed. However, I also believe it will be possible for Internet-based publishers to compete with traditional trade publishers by hiring the editorial talent to perform these



## BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 1*

books per series that will be connected by some quest or other (such as three heroes or four heroines searching for the same treasure.) Check out Kensington.com for more information.

**HarperCollins made its first major move** this week to integrate Morrow/Avon into its fold: it announced that it will close the Morrow/Avon distribution center in Dresden, Tenn., and a back-office operation in Fairfield, NJ, by the end of the year. Approximately 100 employees will be affected by the closure.

**Crossing Borders:** Rick Vanzura, president of Borders Online, is resigning to join Dell Computer Corp., the company announced. Vanzura led the team that developed the Borders Web site over the past year and a half. One of Vanzura’s pet projects at the company was “convergence,” whereby the Web is used to bring customers into stores and the stores are used as a lure for the Web. It’s precisely the kind of approach that indies, concerned that Book Sense may bifurcate their market, are searching for. It’s also the kind of strategy that analysts say is likely to catch on when investors grow bored with straight-up e-commerce and want more sophisticated ways to bring in money and revenue. With Vanzura’s departure, and DiRomualdo already reluctantly wearing the hats of president and CEO, it’s unclear how fast Borders will converge into one indistinguishable sales presence.

**WRITING IS EASY!:** Humor by Steve Martin...For those of you who didn’t realize this, one short excerpt tells the tale: “Writing is one of the most easy, pain-free, and happy ways to pass the time in all the arts. For example, right now I am sitting in my rose garden and typing on my new computer. Each rose represents a story, so I’m never at a loss for what to write. I just look



## BREAKING NEWS

deep into the heart of the rose and read its story and write it down through typing, which I enjoy anyway. I could be typing "kjfiu joewmv jiw" and would enjoy it as much as typing words that actually make sense. I simply relish the movement of my fingers on the keys. Sometimes, it is true, agony visits the head of a writer. At these moments, I stop writing and relax with a coffee at my favorite restaurant, knowing that words can be changed, rethought, fiddled with, and, of course, ultimately denied. Painters don't have that luxury. If they go to a coffee shop, their paint dries into a hard mass." For Steve Martin's complete writing tutorial (including ideas for those of us who live in the dark states and occasionally suffer writer's block in the winter) go to: <http://www.wga.org/WrittenBy/0699/stevemartin2.html> (Ed.'s note: Treat yourself! It's a stitch.)

**Picked up from Holt Uncensored....** John Baker of *Publishers Weekly* writes a seemingly routine book about the way things work in publishing. In fact, Baker's new book, *Literary Agents: A Writer's Introduction* (Macmillan; 256 pages; \$14.95 paperback); offers an inside look at the way things work in publishing that readers won't find anywhere else.

**Authors looking for a new use for on-demand printing** may want to check out *A Cooler Climate* by Zena Collier. PW's Steven M. Zeitchik reports that while most on-demand books are out-of-print titles that don't justify a high print run, Collier's book is an out-of-print movie tie-in that was printed via on-demand because no publisher could have gotten the book out quickly enough by traditional means. *A Cooler Climate* serves as the basis

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functions, thus creating some much needed competition to traditional trade publishers in licensing your books for publication.

However, the most immediate change in trade book publishing wrought by digital technology is the ability of consumers throughout the world to order books through the Internet, whether from mega Web sites such as Amazon.com and Barnes&Noble.com or through other more specialized Web sites. It means that rather than being merely in competition with books for the dissemination of information and for leisure time entertainment, new technology also has developed the means for consumers to order books on a global basis.

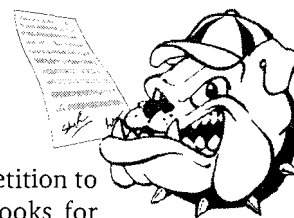
Perhaps at least as important in the long term is the development of the E-book, which is the delivery of the book to the consumer in digital form to be read either by a special device (e.g. Rocket Book) or through existing electronic devices such as a personal computer. As electronic devices become lighter, more portable, and more user-friendly, and generations of readers become more accustomed to reading on these devices, the E-book has the potential to become an important means of book distribution. This fact has been recognized by publishers, agents, publishing attorneys, and authors. Again this subject has become the most newsworthy, controversial, and most hotly debated contractual term in a fierce battle reminiscent of the one I alluded to earlier. In my view, there is very little doubt that publishers will obtain exclusive E-book rights, and the only issue to be determined is how and to what extent the author will be compensated.

Finally, I believe there will be an after-market for books reverted from traditional publishers after the books are out-of-print, and a new market created for original books not acquired by traditional publishers via Internet-based publishers who will market E-Books and books on demand via the Internet.

So how should all of this affect the author's agreement with a traditional trade publisher? I would suggest that an author consider the following issues in the negotiation of his or her agreement with a trade publisher:

**Grant of Rights:** Because an author grants rights to a trade publisher for the term of copyright (but only so long as the publisher keeps work in print), the rights granted are for a very long time. We have seen how quickly things change especially in the area of new technology. That's why publishers' author agreements attempt to secure a long list of electronic rights and state that all electronic rights whether now known or developed in the future are granted to the publisher. Therefore, it is especially important to clearly specify what rights are being granted and what rights are being reserved by the author. A clause should also be included, which states that all rights not specifically granted to the publisher are reserved to the author.

**Territory:** For the purposes of English language rights, the world is divided in three: (i) exclusive U.S. territories and possessions, (ii) exclusive British Commonwealth, and (iii) non-exclusive open market rights (i.e. countries where the American and British editions compete). This traditional division of English language rights will break down because an individual anywhere in the world has the ability to order either the American or the British edition of a book via the Internet and because of the portability of the E-book. The impact of the Internet and



the E-book will become increasingly apparent and so will the need for a contractual solution. The solution that works for both author and publisher is that exclusive world English language rights will be granted to one publisher (for a larger royalty advance). This is feasible because most major trade publishers own affiliated companies in the UK, Canada, and Australia, which are the major English language speaking markets outside of the United States.

**The Out-of-Print Clause:** Because new technology will enable book publishers to print books on demand, theoretically a book will never go out of print. That is either good or bad for the author depending on how much money is generated. The out-of-print clause of a publishing agreement traditionally states that a book will be deemed in print so long as the publisher has quantities of the book in inventory available for sale or its licensees do. When a book is no longer in demand, the publisher stops reprinting the book and the inventory gradually dissipates or the publisher exercises its right to remainder the inventory (i.e., sell off the inventory at or less than the cost of manufacture). The author is then able to get his rights reverted from the publisher if the publisher does not reprint the book or has not licensed editions to other publishers. However, this will change if a publisher is able to print books on demand. The solution is that the out-of-print clause should be modified to state that certain levels of income should be generated on an annual basis in order for a book to be considered in print.

**Royalties:** Publishers are attempting to negotiate contractual clauses to pay reduced royalties on copies of books sold in electronic format. On the other hand, agents and author groups and publishing attorneys are making the case for authors receiving a larger share of the income derived from E-book sales. I predict that copies of books will earn at least standard (unreduced) royalties because publishers will not be able to cost-justify giving authors reduced royalties on sales of copies of the electronic format book. If agents are able to change the model from royalties based on the sale of E-books to that of licensing E-book rights as a subsidiary right, which many agents are trying to do, then we will see the author receiving at least fifty percent (50%) of the income derived. As to traditional books sold through the Internet by Internet booksellers such as Amazon.com, the royalties paid will depend on the amount of discount the publisher is granting to the Internet bookseller. Most books sold to the major Internet booksellers earn full (unreduced) royalties because the discounts granted are not greater than discounts granted to bookstores. Sales of books through the publishers' own Web sites should also earn full (unreduced) royalties.

— **Alan J. Kaufman**

*Alan J. Kaufman has over 25 years of publishing legal expertise, including 19 years as senior vice president and general counsel for Penguin Books. He currently practices law with the New York-based intellectual property law firm of Frankfurt, Garbus, Klein & Selz, where he specializes in publishing and media. For private, for-hire consultations, phone 212-826-5579 or fax 212-593-9175.*

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## INTRODUCING...

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*The following authors have applied 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

Ken Casper (K.N. Casper),  
San Angelo TX  
Ruth Owen, Winter Park FL

### New Members

Jean Brashear, Georgetown TX  
Francis Ray, Dallas TX  
Linda Zimmerhanel (*Laura Bradley*),  
San Antonio, TX

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## BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ for an eponymous  
S h o w t i m e

Original, starring Sally Field. Independent publicist Nelson Taylor said that various publishers had shown interest in bringing back the title, first pubbed by British American in the early 1990s. But the movie was due to air several weeks after the pitch, so Collier signed up with on-demand outfit toExcel. In a footnote that proves the old trope about not needing to understand technology to benefit from it, the 70-something Collier doesn't even own a computer.

### Authors Guild Adds On-Demand to Backinprint.com...

The Authors Guild has added an on-demand component to its out-of-print online selling service, backinprint.com, which the organization began developing last fall. On-demand publisher toExcel will handle all printing responsibilities, and contracts will be negotiated directly between toExcel and authors. Customers can buy books via the backinprint.com site, through a toll-free number and directly from New York City independent Shakespeare & Co. The books will also be listed in such antiquarian databases as Advanced Book Exchange and Bibliofind. About 900 authors have already signed up, among them Roger Angell, Judy Blume, and Jean Strouse. These authors will set their own prices for their own books. Because toExcel is picking up printing costs, the service will be free for authors until the end of the year. By the beginning of 2000, however, authors will be charged a fee for both printing and selling books through the site. Guild members can also make use of the organization's

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## BREAKING NEWS

▶▶▶▶ eligibility staff, which will ensure that rights have reverted to the author. The new program comes in response to a substantial amount of author interest. The site will be marketed through print ads, possibly in the *New Yorker*. Guild director Paul Aiken played down the Guild's role in backinprint.com, noting, "We're just acting as enablers. All we're doing is negotiating a good deal for our members."

**This is an addendum to the above... Authors who have obtained** a reversion of rights to their out-of-print works may take advantage of our On-Demand Books Service. Books made available to readers through this service will be listed at Backinprint.com and at Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com and, through in-store databases, at virtually every traditional bookstore, both chains and independents. Books will be quality trade paperbacks published using print-on-demand technology made available through the Guild's agreement with toExcel. ToExcel will design new covers and acquire new ISBNs for the books, which will sell for about \$12 to \$20. Authors are paid 25% of net income (about 15% to 25% of retail list price) for sales of on-demand books. When sales are made through the Backinprint.com Web site, the Authors Guild will receive 10% of net income, which it will devote solely to defraying the costs of providing this service, including hosting the Web site. Authors who enroll before December 31, 1999, will pay no sign-up costs, if the book does not have to be re-typeset. In cases where the publisher claims rights to the layout, a typesetting fee of \$200 will be charged. ▶▶▶

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with a number saying the relationships they form with other writers is as important to them as professional articles and conferences. I e-mailed Terey daly Ramin something about wanting to explore friendships between writers because I had no comprehension that another person could reach those deep places inside me until I began to share myself with other writers and believed my experience wasn't unique. Terey encouraged me to put my computer where my mouth was, adding her own observations. She works with correspondence students whose first critique letters often come from her, and they say they've never before felt anyone has understood them, writer-to-writer.

My research took several tacks. I headed to the library for books on the nature of friendship, contacted fellow writers for their take on the subject, and asked for input on the LINK. Mary Jo Putney must assume a lot of responsibility for broadening my take on the subject by pointing out that, "cops, firefighters, schoolteachers—just about any groups—tend to form strong friendships among their own kind because of mutual understanding of the challenges and experiences they share. This bonding process may be particularly strong among writers, partly because, as you say, 'we lay our hearts and souls on the line in ways only other writers comprehend.' This is true not only on a creative level, but also as we are pounded by the vagaries of this strange business."

I would only add that we aren't cops, firefighters, or teachers who work daily with our colleagues. Instead, we do our jobs in isolation and everything comes out of our heads and onto the computer so, in fact, not even our nearby dozing dog or cat can truly see us at work. Only another writer experiences the same "employment" conditions.

Other NINC members agree. Carmen Green e-mailed that in her five

## INK-STAINED

years of writing, she has made some of the best friends she's ever had. "Quite simply," she wrote, "They understand me and I understand them. We talk about things my other friends have no interest in. Like editors, agents, the state of the business, conflict, action, love scenes, etc. We've bonded deeper than the traditional roles of peers in an office...I've found that although we come from all different walks of life, ethnicities, parts of the world, we're smart people who have a lot to share and give. From writers, as much as I give, I get double in return."

Lillian Carl said much the same thing. "So many of my friends are writers—in the same way everyone has friends who are in the same profession, that's simply who you meet along the road. But yet, another writer does understand the psychological ramifications of the job...My very best friend has been my best friend since we were in junior high school. One of the reasons we became so close is because even then we were both writers. When I turned pro she was inspired to do likewise. And, the way these things go, she's now exponentially more successful than I am. When I was visiting her recently she said something about 'drilling a hole in your head to let the voices out' which was, I thought, a perception the lay person isn't necessarily going to have."

Jodie Larson put her own spin on the same reality. "Writers are a different breed," she e-mailed. "Living within the confines of the publishing world sets us apart from those lucky souls who have at least some degree of control of their careers. Outsiders try to understand, but they'll never truly know the depth or the impact a simple two-paragraph rejection letter can have on our creativity...The old childhood taunt, 'It takes one to know one' fits writers quite well."

I'd posed my topic by commenting on how we lay our hearts and souls on the line in ways only other writers comprehend and that hit cords with several

# WRITERHOOD

writers. "All my friends are writers now," Lori Handeland wrote. "Actually not *all*, but most. And to be honest, they are what has kept me from bailing out when this business kicks me one too many times. Not only because of their support—but because if I wasn't writing, then I wouldn't be one of them anymore. And those friendships are the best part of writing. I think you are right when you say that we lay ourselves open in such ways that no one else can understand but writers when things hurt, or when things are joyful.

When you try to tell someone who is not a writer something writing-related, they don't get it. How can they? There are so many nuances to what we do—and so many opportunities for opinion to sway the outcome of our careers. Having another writer to lean on, whine to, etc. is too precious to explain."

Mary Jo apparently agrees. "Writers as a group tend to be really smart, interesting people, always a good foundation for friendship. My writer friends have not only been a godsend in bad times, but are a continuous, day in and day out, source of one of life's great pleasures—the sense of connection...I tend to think of friendships as rather like the layers of an onion. The small number of friends on the inner layers are the ones I can tell my darkest secrets and failures to, and trust that they will be as discreet and sympathetic as required. There are other layers of friendship, where there might not be as much contact, but there is still a warm relationship. And there are people I might only see once every couple of years at a conference, but we can still sit down and have a great conversation, and care about each other's lives."

As Ruth Schmidt puts it, "most writers open themselves up in the rawest way to fellow writers. It's a huge chunk of who we are as people—the need to communicate our own version of the human experience,

the drive to write about it one way or another, the hope and dream of having that work received with accolades, or at least with understanding and recognition of the efforts that went into it. No matter how commercial it may be, how good or mediocre it may be, most of our work comes from our gut.

"To this end, writer friendships can be a curse and blessing. In my own experience, I began some years back with a critique group that became a ragged-edged support group and sifted down, like panning for gold, to the nugget friendships that remain as gold nuggets. A few of these bonds formed at that time are my most treasured friends today. And I wouldn't trade those first years of critique experience with that whole group of writers, ten of them, for all the tea in China. But not all of it, or them, were pure gold. Some, both the critiques and friendships, turned out to be fool's gold and went the way of the slag heap."

Ruth wasn't the only one to bring up failed friendships. Despite a great deal of talk about the 'sisterhood' (or 'peoplehood' if we're being socially correct here) of writers, as an organization made up of published writers, the fact is, we're often in competition with each other. There are only so many slots and many more writers than that vying for those slots. We need each other, at the same time we must compete in order to remain in the career that has chosen us.

For one NINC member, that reality hit at a personally vulnerable time in her life. She admits she's always had difficulty with friendships but since publishing regularly, she gained the courage to present herself to other writers as a writer. For awhile her critique group saved her life while she was going through an emotionally draining crisis.

"Recently, however," she wrote, "I've been discovering the down side. There's jealousy as one



## BREAKING NEWS

After December 31, the Guild will charge a \$175 enrollment fee.

### Win a Year of Indulgences!...

Imagine winning a prize that pampers you for a full year! Enter the Godiva Heavenly Indulgence Contest and you could win one of three Grand Prizes, each of which includes all of the following indulgences:

- \* One year of luscious Godiva Ice Cream to fulfill your cravings
- \* Chauffeured car service at your convenience
- \* Massage treatments to soothe and relax you
- \* Fine dining catered to your home every month

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**Actor battles editor over comma...** Salon.com reports that Johnny Depp (*Edward Scissorhands*, *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, *Sleepy Hollow*) has an essay called "Kerouac, Ginsberg, the Beats and Other Bastards Who Ruined My Life" in *The Rolling Stone Book of the Beats* (Hyperion). When Depp was asked to write the piece he reportedly seemed reluctant. "He was like, I'm just a dumb actor, but if you want, I could." A few months later, the book's editor received word from Depp's assistant that she would get the piece within two weeks. According to the article, Depp appears to have



## BREAKING NEWS

quickly “absorbed the professional writer’s attitude toward deadlines”: It took him three weeks. “He didn’t give me any excuse like ‘my computer broke down,’” his editor said. “It was more like Tim Burton made him do a bunch of retakes.” But once Depp turned in his piece, he took the editorial process seriously: “Lo and behold, it was damn good. And he really dug into the issues.” For example, in one paragraph Depp took exception to a serial comma. “I have been a construction laborer, a gas station attendant, a bad mechanic, a screen printer, a musician, a telemarketing phone salesman, an actor, and a tabloid target,” he wrote, and he had to fight for that final comma. The two had a 20-minute exchange about it. Depp prevailed. (“In the end I believe he was right,” the editor conceded.) They also locked horns over his use of Kerouacian ellipses. (Ed’s note: So that’s where my sense of ellipses comes from...;-)

**In the “AAUUUGGHHH!” Department...** Salon.com was just full of interesting tidbits this month. Here’s one that sent my 16-year-old straight to the bookstore to find out what her competition will be when she sells her first book: Amelia Atwater-Rhodes is a 14-year-old novelist whose book, an atmospheric and elegantly written vampire fantasy called *In the Forests of the Night*, has just been published by Delacorte. When she was finishing *In the Forests of the Night*, Atwater-Rhodes went to her local bookstore and bought everything she could find on how to get published. She ran into a bit of luck when a friend was bragging about her writing to an English teacher who also happened to be a literary agent. He asked to see *In the Forests of the* ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

## INK-STAINED WRITERHOOD

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ has success and another, equally deserving, writing just as well—because in many respects we’re each the same writer after so many critique sessions—doesn’t. Personal styles begin to grate.” She admitted that the complexity of friendships, especially if they no longer work, “can be very exhausting, much more so than relationships outside the business.” She still turns to writers for kindred souls capable of rejoicing and commiserating over the same things. However, “—just because the person is a writer doesn’t mean there’s not going to be dreadful emotion baggage to slog through. And having always had my nose in a book, I don’t have the best skills at handling these things. The witty yet consoling dialogue that finds its way to the page does not come readily to me in real life—not until a night up fretting about what I said wrong, with the friend long gone.”

In an attempt to learn more about relationships defined by the dual aspects of support and competition, personal while at the same time professional, I lugged home the aforementioned texts. Within them were a few gems such as what I found in Lillian B. Rubin’s *Just Friends, The Role of Friendship in our Lives*. Ms. Rubin’s observation that friends accept each other as long as they both remain essentially the same or change in similar directions helped bring things into focus. She warns her readers that if people change or grow in different or incompatible ways, the friendship most likely will be lost. Being human, we don’t all see the change at the same time or in the same way. Sometimes the break is unilateral but often one member decides there isn’t enough common ground left to sustain the relationship while the other doesn’t understand what happened.

In *Women and Friendship*, Dr. Joel D. Block and Diane Greenberg make the observation that women are more likely than men to confuse the line be-

tween business and friendship or have problems separating their feelings from their intellect. They warn that, “...the intimacy that women friends often share is born of intense caring, enormous expectations, but also disappointment, conflict, and contempt...a woman who is extremely close to her friend will risk being totally herself with her; this means she will show her weaknesses and irritating qualities as well as her strengths and likeable traits. The friend is expected to accept both the negative and the positive side of the individual.”

Add to that the fact that writers are trying to succeed in the same competitive career, and it’s no wonder that friendships are put to the test. Block and Greenberg point out that when women (and most NINC members are women) climb to a high-level professional position (i.e., publishing success) instead of having their successes applauded, they may be ostracized and penalized. “It is one of the ironies of our times that women of accomplishment, pioneers who need supportive friendship, experience a good deal of rejection from other women...If one friend leaps ahead while another gets stuck in the status quo, the less fortunate friend may feel threatened and jealous.”

Much of what we do in NINC is in the form of networking. Mary Scott Welch, author of *Networking: The Great New Way for Women to Get Ahead*, supports networking for its professional usefulness to women while admitting that its main purpose goes against the feminine consciousness. “Networks are set up so that women can use each other,” she concludes and goes on to caution women to see networking as a business rather than friendship function.

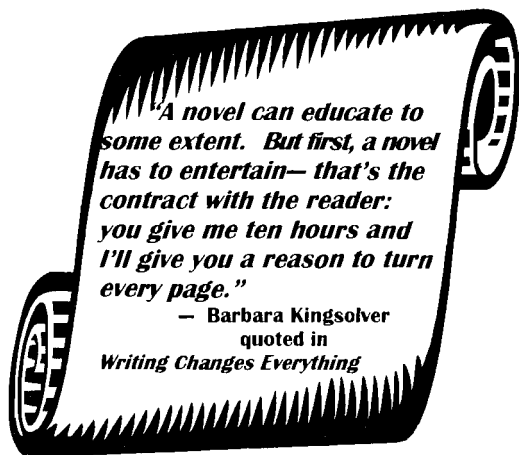
To that I respond, “Hm.” I belong to a couple of links whose membership is limited to writers who have all sold to a specific publisher and in classic networking fashion, the links’ specific purpose was to share and disseminate

information about our mutual "employer." However, both links (like NINC) have quickly, and naturally it appears, evolved into support systems. While working on this article, a member of one of those links received a particularly devastating rejection from a line's senior editor who'd concluded that the writer was incapable of writing anything acceptable for that publisher again. As soon as she'd posted, she was "surrounded" by fellow writers all offering, not just sympathy, but a kick in the seat, a reminder that there are other fish to fry, plus the addendum that we've all seen, experienced, and survived rejection. That was hardly a business reaction or function.

In conclusion, I believe psychologists and psychiatrists would benefit by looking at the unique community of writers before expounding on the nature of relationships. Ours is neither purely a business or personal society but a blend of both made even more complex because we work isolated from our employers and co-workers, and because our work evolves from our imaginations and emotions. We may be in competition with each other, but we're hardly trying to fill sales quotas; we're peddling our hearts and souls. As a result, we need the support of the only other people in the world who share that unique experience.

Knowing that, and knowing Tallie, I will do all I can to help her survive.

*Vella Munn has been writing forever and is much too old to learn anything else, even if she wanted to. She's coming up on 40 published books, currently Black-foot Season and Wind Warrior, both Native American historicals from Tor.*



*Night*. Impressed, he shopped the manuscript around and found a taker at Random House. "It's such a well-realized fantasy world that she's created," says Lauri Hornik, senior editor at Random House. "She has been writing about this one society for several years and has a number of manuscripts on her shelf. It's remarkable for any author to have such a well-realized and believable other world that they've created, but she wrote these before she was a teenager. We wouldn't have published the book just because of her age. It delivers in terms of characterization and plotting and setting." Hornik is now editing Atwater-Rhodes's second novel, due next summer. (*Ed's note:* For those who are counting, Amelia Atwater-Rhodes will be 15 when she's eligible for NINC membership. And Hollywood thinks its writers are getting younger all the time...)

**A couple of items in the "just thought you'd like to know department"...** According to the *Independent* of London, science has revealed that women are more likely than men to turn their left cheeks to a camera or a portrait artist because this is the half of the face that shows a person's emotional side. Researchers from the University of Melbourne in Victoria, Australia, reviewed nearly 1,500 painted portraits in addition to scores of facial photographs and found that female portraits show a significant bias toward the left side of the face, which they believe is evidence of an expressive divide between the sexes, whereas men turned their right or impassive cheeks. The team, led by a psychologist, concluded that the explanation lies with the fact that

the right, "emotive" part of the brain controls the left side of the face. It is well established that self-portraits show a bias in the opposite direction, but the researchers believe that this is because the artist is looking in a mirror, which reverses right and left. (Okay, gang, so now you know. Impassivity to the right in those promo photos, emotion to the left. Sheesh. Who gives out these grants anyway?)

**Also according to the *LA Times*,** the California woman who sued Borders after she was told not to breastfeed her child in a Glendale Borders store earlier this year has settled the suit. Borders had apologized for the matter and said women could breastfeed in its stores, but the woman sued anyway, saying she wanted to be sure a state law permitting breastfeeding be "protected and enforced." After the settlement, Kerry Madden-Lunsford issued a statement saying, "It was a very unsettling experience. But I was heartened that Borders was so quick to recognize their mistake and work to rectify the situation."

**And this from *PW Daily's* Steven M. Zeitchik:** In the "can-I-order-a-vegetarian-meal-with-that-Proust" department.... The *New York Times* reported today that British Airways would soon begin a month-long promotion distributing E-book readers. The paper didn't specify which device would be used but did say that first-class fliers from Chicago's O'Hare will be the test market. It added that customers ultimately might be able to make advance requests for certain titles, which can be downloaded at lounge kiosks. Refrigerator magnet vendors were not immediately available for comment.

**For more "Breaking News," turn to page 15....**

Remember those days in high school when you weren't part of the "in" crowd or you weren't voted most likely to succeed? Well, now The High School Alumni Web site gives you the opportunity to catch up with the ghosts from your past and let them know you are a big-time author (even if you're only big-time in your own mind). The site is very easy to use. The states are listed, followed by the names of the high schools. You enter the year you graduated and register yourself. The only concern that I did have was that you register with your current name and if you've changed names since high school, your maiden name is in parentheses which makes it a little harder for people to find you if they don't know you've married. Of course, for graduating classes as small as mine was, it's not much of a problem. Might be fun to surf through the other schools and just see who is who. Visit: [www.highschoolalumni.com/](http://www.highschoolalumni.com/).

Last month, I mentioned the Association of Authors' Representatives, Inc. (AAR) Web site. This month Tina Wainscott shares with us The Agent Research and Evaluation site at [www.agentresearch.com](http://www.agentresearch.com). She found it extremely helpful "while doing the agent hunt thing. They list agents and how many clients they have, will do a free check on any agent name you send them, as well as offering services such as finding out which agents would best suit you and a newsletter on agents. They encourage writers to find a good agent and to never pay fees. The site had a lot of good information."

Elaine Coffman's favorite site is Language Helper. "It's a great resource and research site because of the vast number of resource materials it has access to, such as: ENCYCLOPEDIAS, THE INTERNET PUBLIC LIBRARY, REFERENCE CENTERS, CIA PUBLICATIONS AND HANDBOOK—a great source of information about all countries, ACRONYMS, SYNONYMS ANTONYMS, WORD NET—a tool for looking up synonyms, antonyms and more." It's a wonderful site that includes translations and slang and too many wonderful resources to mention them. Of particular interest, though, is THE PERRY-CASNEDA LIBRARY MAP COLLECTION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS.

Jo Beverley provided us with "a couple of unusual Web sites." At [www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej/](http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej/), you'll find the Internet Library of Early Journals which is a joint project by the Universities of Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, and Oxford, conducted under the auspices of the eLib (Electronic Libraries) Programme. It aims to digitize substantial runs of 18th and 19th century journals, and make these images available on the Internet, together with their associated bibliographic data.

"The core collection for the project are runs of at least 20 consecutive years of: three 18th-century journals, three 19th-century journals, *Gentleman's Magazine*, The Annual Register," and more. It also "has links to online maps" at

[rsl.ox.ac.uk/nnj/maplinks.htm](http://rsl.ox.ac.uk/nnj/maplinks.htm). A history and explanation of calendars can be found at [astro.nmsu.edu/~lhuber/leaphist.html](http://astro.nmsu.edu/~lhuber/leaphist.html). And for those of us who are always wondering where money goes, Jo has provided us with a link to the history of money at [www.ex.ac.uk/~RDavies/arian/llyfr.html](http://www.ex.ac.uk/~RDavies/arian/llyfr.html).

Terey provided Punch Networks at [www.punchnetworks.com](http://www.punchnetworks.com), which has limitless possibilities for critiquing or collaboration of projects. The software program was reviewed by Robert J. Elisberg for WGA online. Software Punch is "an intriguing, free service" that will soon be online, although you can sign up as a beta tester at the Web site. "Punch facilitates collaboration between users by" providing an easy and secure uploading of files which "are automatically synchronized, so you always know what the most-current version is, and a backlog of previous versions are archived, as well. Though mainly intended for networks, it would work for writing partners, as well. Passwords are required for access, SSL encryption is applied, and by using a special 'binary differencing' technology, only changes to the file are up-and-downloaded." You can store and share your files with anyone on the Internet—and it's secure. A free demo is available at the site.

The History Buff's Web site at [www.historybuff.com/](http://www.historybuff.com/) is devoted to press coverage of events in American history. It includes an extensive library with the categories Civil War, Baseball, Journalism Hoaxes, Old West, and over a dozen others. The Presidential Library includes the inaugural addresses of all U.S. presidents. It also has a primer and price guide for historic newspapers.

Terey also shares with us a new listserve, which replaces an old one. Scribelink is "for anyone who wants to get in on the discussion of screen writing, books to film, etc. Some great information is disseminated here." To subscribe, go to [www.onelist.com/subscribe/scribelink](http://www.onelist.com/subscribe/scribelink).

Wondering how much your previous books are going for these days? Jo tells us that "you can check out what price is being asked for your old books on line through a few places that search a lot of online stores: [www.bibliofind.com](http://www.bibliofind.com) or [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or [www.mxbooks.com](http://www.mxbooks.com)."

Another e-mail newsletter that addresses all genres is *The Houston Writer's Newsletter*. It comes to your e-mailbox twice a month. To subscribe, contact Rita Mills at [rmills@ghgcorp.com](mailto:rmills@ghgcorp.com). Don't let the name mislead you. Although most of the events occur in Houston, they do announce events such as the "Author or Publisher Book Promotion Boot Camp" which is being held in New York this month. For more information on the Association of Authors and Publishers, check out their Web site at [www.authorsandpublishers.org](http://www.authorsandpublishers.org).

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I want to thank the authors who so generously shared their unique finds with me.

— Lorraine Heath





# EAST OF THE HUDSON

## DOWN MEMORY LANE

I have promised myself that last month's performance will NOT be repeated. I went on at too great a length. I am not even sure any of it made sense because I don't ever reread my work. (Saves embarrassment, don't you know.) But regardless, I promise not to get carried away this time. Brevity. Succinctness. Keep It Short. Just Say It!!!

Besides, I don't have much time. I'm heading off to do battle with the killer salmon again.

Speaking of Brevity, that reminds me to mention Michael Korda. No, that's not a cheap shot about his physical stature. He'll never be a linebacker, but he is a big guy in our business, has been ever since he joined forces with Richard Snyder (sometimes known in rhyming slang among authors as "Dick the -----") to run Simon & Schuster.

Now Korda has written *Another Life: A Memoir of Other People*. It is not short, by any means. Korda loves the sound of his own typing even more than I do. But it is a lot of fun.

Where else could one find lines about Snyder's cardinal rule of publishing: "If we own it, we love it."

And who else but someone who has been there could tell such delightful, affectionate stories about writers, editors, and publishers. I'll never forget Korda's portraits of Harold Robbins, for instance. Robbins hated writing, undertaking it only when he needed money. But he detested rewriting.

"Once he had finished a novel, he was ready to play and it was possible to make quite substantial changes without consulting him, once he trusted you—indeed, he got testy when he was consulted," Korda writes. "His job was to write the details of fucking, he would say, not to worry about the fucking details."

I mean, what writer hasn't wanted to tell his editor just that?

I'm only halfway through the book as I write this, but I can tell you I will finish it, even though I know how it comes out.

Which is another part of the fascination of *Another Life*. It is an insider's story of a process that many of us know all too well. The book possesses a kind of melancholy that I wasn't entirely prepared to find.

Korda began his career in New York publishing in the early 1960s. When he became editor in chief at S&S, the company had a market value of less than \$10 million. He has continued to edit and publish right up to the turn of the century. He has overseen some of the biggest successes, and humiliating failures, of our age. He has watched as the company grew like the Internet, doubling and redoubling until it was worth \$5 billion the last time it changed hands, in 1994.

Korda has seen a great deal of cultural history in his decades and he reports what he has witnessed with more candor than one usually gets from book executives. He

remains an optimist. The bean-counters and high-powered MBAs may be in control of the mega-conglomerated publishing houses, but the creative spark is still necessary to ignite the process.

And there is still no substitute for instinct and enthusiasm. There is no leather-bound or loose-leaf business plan capable of generating good books or bestsellers. As he puts it, "the only way to tell if a book is going to sell is to publish it."

That's the publisher speaking. As a writer, I'd paraphrase the adage, probably addressing it to myself:

"The only way to tell if a book is going to sell is to write it."

## IS ANYONE IN CHARGE OF THE ASYLUM?

The *New York Times* reported last month that virtually every successful 1960s television series has now been optioned for motion picture treatment.

That's right. We had *Wild, Wild West* along with *The Mod Squad*, *My Favorite Martian*, *the Avengers*, and *Lost in Space* in the past year. Now Hollywood is preparing another whole flock of gobblers for release: *Get Smart*, *Hogan's Heroes*, *Charlie's Angels*, *the Six Million Dollar Man*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *Battle Star Galactica*, *Family Affair*, and even *Rocky and Bullwinkle*.

Now, who will get to play the role of Rocket J. Squirrel? That's what I want to know.

The NYT piece says that this new genre of films exists because of something called "premarketability." The producers and studio chiefs are so frightened of making a wrong decision that they cleave to what seem like automatics, sure-things, ideas that walk in the door presold.

The trend has made pitching ideas a lot simpler. David Permut, creator (if that term is correct) of several successful adaptations, says the easiest sale he ever made involved the remake of "Dragnet" for the silver screen.

"I walked in and said, 'Dumda dum-dum.' They said 'Let's make a movie!'"

Of course, it's not quite that easy. This generation of moviemakers would never think of merely revisiting the old series. The have to twist it, probably meanly. For instance, take "The Loveboat" and send it on a voyage like the Titanic's.

Or crafting a remake of "Green Acres" in which, as Permut puts it, "all the people of Hooterville are devil worshippers."

My first reaction to this line was outrage. Any fool can take a premise and turn it upside down. That's not creativity. Then I got to thinking. The truth is most writers are cannibals. We eat one another, and ourselves, quite regularly. Even novelists recycle the television shows and characters we were all raised with. I am reminded of a famous writer's response when she was asked how she did all the research for her Westerns.

► ► ► ►



She looked up, blinked her big browns and said: "What's the matter? Didn't you ever watch 'Wagon Train'?"

And no, she's not the famous writer I'm married to. She's even more famous.

### THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

It may have been five years ago that my son, the kid who was the first on his block to have a 1984 Apple Macintosh computer, warned me:

"Stay off the Internet, dad. It is the largest time-sink in the world."

By "time-sink" he meant "bottomless pit." The Net is endlessly fascinating. It will soak up as many hours and as much energy as you wish to give it. That's not to say the expense isn't repaid. The Internet has taught me more about the world we live in than all the newspapers and magazines I have read in the past five years. It is, so far as I am concerned, the major technological advance of the century.

But the Net has enormous potential for mischief, as well. One such danger lies in its lack of restraint. Anyone in the world—whether intelligent or stupid, informed or biased, venal or honest—can post anything he or she desires to say, anywhere in cyberspace. There are no editors, no filters, no gatekeepers. The Net is no license, all liberty.

But such freedom invites abuse. The *Los Angeles Times* spotted one such potential abuse in the marketing model of Amazon.com, the online bookseller.

It seems that Amazon all but refuses to screen the reviews and critiques of new books posted by readers. There have been a few situations where Amazon has acted. For instance, the company did review a nasty negative review of a business book that was signed by somebody posing as Jeff Bezos, Amazon's president and CEO.

But with a few exceptions, it is Katy, Bar the Door! on the Amazon Web site. Reviews can be posted anonymously. Good reviews by friends, bad reviews by enemies, reviews by publishers, publicists, fans, even authors.

Now, there's nothing sacrosanct about the normal review process. My favorite recent example involves a friend whose editor told her she (the editor) had just hand-carried the galleys of a new book to a reviewer who she "just knew" would be sympathetic to the book. Corruption exists wherever there are humans with ulterior motives. Hell, I've played the game myself.

But the whole exercise is a reminder. Freedom of the sort that is endemic on the Internet can have the effect of cheapening all endeavors. If enough phony, self-serving reviews appear on Amazon's Web site, on fan boards, and in chat rooms, then eventually all reviews will come to be regarded for what they truly are: one person's opinion, nothing more important and nothing less.

I learned the same lesson in a slightly different Internet venue recently. I got a hot stock tip from my barber

regarding a new company just coming onto the market, so I decided to check it out on the WWWeb. Sure enough, Yahoo, the Net Portal of Day-Traders, had a long message string extending over two weeks.

The string had become one of the busiest on Yahoo. It extolled the new company's products and virtues; it waxed poetical about the venture's prospects. Several of the regulars on the message board were positively thermonuclear.

"Buy now. This baby's going straight to thirty, maybe higher, when the quiet period is over."

"The new Microsoft, I kid you not."

"We're all gonna be rich."

But the nice thing about the Net is that you can keep track of such things. Entranced, I went back to the very beginning of the string, just after the new firm's Initial Public Offering. There I discovered that much of the traffic had been generated by a handful of individuals, most of them apparently day-traders who worked together to inflate the market for the new company's relatively small number of shares.

"This is one we can really work with," read one of the first messages among the insiders. "Now, get out there and start working the other message boards."

That's interesting, I thought. So I started checking other online chat rooms and message threads. Sure enough, the same phrases and messages started showing up, sometimes from people who signed themselves with the same screen names they used on Yahoo, sometimes with what appeared to be fictitious names. But whatever the name, the message was the same: "Buy, Buy, Buy."

Probably because they were in a position to sell, sell, sell.

The tactic was remarkably effective. I watched over a two-week period while the stock rose from \$12 a share to \$34 a share, all in the complete absence of new information. (I can say that because IPOs must observe this thing called a "quiet period" after issuance.)

The higher the stock went, the more interest was shown on the board, and in the market. In the last couple of days before the end of the mandated quiet period, hundreds of thousands of shares changed hands and hundreds of messages were posted. It was a freaking frenzy.

Then came the end of the quiet period. The air went out of the balloon as the expected brokerage "buy" recommendations and "hot new earnings estimates" failed to materialize. The stock tumbled from its highs to the middle of its range. When last I checked, it was still headed south.

Then I read one last posting. It made reference to a stock-trader's game called "Pump and Dump." Sounded like the formula for a blind date and I suppose it was. Going a little further, I found out that this sort of thing goes on all the time on the Net.

So before any of us begins to take Internet reviews, on Amazon.com or elsewhere, seriously, just remember: Nobody needs a license to drive the Information Superhighway.

— Evan Maxwell

# Taking the Pulse of... Science Fiction

By LAWRENCE WATT-EVANS

When I tried to find out what other professionals in the field thought of the current state of science fiction, most of the answers boiled down to, "I really don't know any more." Combining that with my own experiences, I've reached the following conclusions:

Science fiction has an image problem. There are a heck of a lot of readers out there who really don't know what a science fiction novel is.

It's not a new problem; when I was a kid SF writers complained about having their work labeled "that crazy Buck Rogers stuff." Nowadays it's "that silly Star Wars stuff," but the concept is the same.

Usually what happens is that a potential reader will look at one or two samples, and decide that's what SF is—and the samples might be anything from watching "Deep Space Nine" on TV to picking up *The Sword of Shannara* at the used book store, or reading a friend's copy of *A Fire upon the Deep*, or reading *The Martian Chronicles* in English class. And if that sample isn't to that reader's tastes...

What's really frustrating is when I hear people denouncing SF as a bunch of mindless adventure stories, then turn around and hear someone else say that SF is too technical, too intellectual, for him. Obviously, these people would have been happier if they'd traded the books that they tried.

Not knowing what SF (true fans don't generally like the term "sci-fi") actually is just one part of the image problem. Another is the idea that SF is currently thriving and healthy, because hey, look at all the sci-fi on TV and in the movies!

These two factors interact badly, too. A kid watches "Babylon 5" on TV, thinks it's the coolest thing ever, picks up an SF novel—and gets one (say, Gene Wolfe's *The Shadow of the Torturer*) that's nothing at all like B5. He decides that he doesn't like SF after all—just B5.

So there are millions of people who think that they know all they need to

know about SF, that they don't like it, and that doesn't matter because it's hugely popular with...well, with somebody, hip teenagers maybe, but not with their sort of people.

This is made somewhat worse because at the moment there is no hot trend in SF.

Back in the 1980s, "cyberpunk" came into its own—grim 'n' gritty stories of alienated young adults messing around with computers. There were great rhetorical wars within SF fandom, with eager young cyberpunk fans raving about this wave of the future and saying that more traditional SF was outdated junk, while the traditionalists said that cyberpunk was a passing fad, all flash and no substance.

This was a good thing because it gave people a handle on the idea that SF is varied—if there was this specific category of SF called "cyberpunk," then there must be other categories, as well. If a reader didn't like *Neuromancer* (the seminal cyberpunk novel), he wouldn't assume that that meant he didn't like all SF.

It also drew attention to the field. People who hadn't read a SF novel in years heard about this new "cyberpunk" stuff and took an interest.

The problem is that cyberpunk was absorbed into the mainstream of SF, like other "revolutionary movements" before it. What had been hot new ideas in cyberpunk initially—cyberspace, virtual reality, neural linkage—just became part of science fiction's available toolbox, like hyperspace or cryogenics. Some of them were absorbed directly into popular culture, as well, and now regularly turn up in movies and on TV, and are in development in real life. All those useful boundaries blurred out.

And no new movement has come along. SF is muddling along with no

movement to support or oppose. There are no really hot authors right now, no young turks stirring things up, no old masters doing brilliant new work. Lots of titles are still being published, but most of them aren't selling well. Mass-market paperback sales in SF, as elsewhere, have dropped off steeply, and trade editions have only made up some of the loss.

Ten years ago, when people tried to guess what the Next Big Thing would be after cyberpunk, the guess I heard most often was alternate history. Well, lots of alternate history has been published, and some has done well, but it's hardly become a major trend.

Another guess, especially after the Gulf War, was military SF, and that, too, has done okay without becoming dominant.

The latest theory I've heard is that "space opera"—big-scale interstellar adventure stories—is due for a comeback, and in fact some space operas are selling pretty well. Again, though, they're not really standing out from the background.

Nothing is. A lot of science fiction books are being published, and most of them are only modestly successful.

In short, the current state of science fiction is fragmented, overcrowded, surviving but not thriving. Which is why, frankly, I'm concentrating on writing fantasy these days, rather than science fiction. Fantasy is selling better. But if you think you can launch the next hot trend...

*Lawrence Watt-Evans just celebrated the 20th anniversary of selling his first novel. He is the author of about 30 novels in all, including science fiction, fantasy, and horror, as well as over a hundred short stories in various genres. He received science fiction's prestigious Hugo Award for best short story in 1988, served two terms as president of the Horror Writers Association, and has been an active member of SFWA since 1982.*

# Oh, My Aching...Episode 5

## The Big A

By SHERRY-ANNE JACOBS

Arthritis seems to strike quite a few writers, since many of us are—um—well on the way to turning into valuable antiques. Online discussions have thrown up some surprising information.

Research suggests there are almost 200 types of arthritis. It also suggests that it's possible that anti-inflammatory drugs may not only mask arthritis symptoms, but speed the progress of the disease. So maybe anti-inflammatories are not the first treatment to try. I once tried them at one doctor's insistence and four days later was totally depressed—then realised the drugs were downers for me and abandoned them instantly. Some people swear by them, however. Just tread warily.

I used to get up slowly and painfully in the mornings. Standing at a social function or to deliver a speech would make my back ache for two days. But not any longer! I've improved my back by a consistent 70% (and that's continued over two years) by taking glucosamine orally (a substance classed as a food additive in the USA, I believe, and readily available without prescription. It's usually used in conjunction with chondroitin sulphate.) Mind you, it took me about nine months to build slowly to this stage. I still get a little stiffness from time to time, but that's "blissful," when you've had to ease yourself painfully and slowly out of chairs like a 200-year-old woman.

I read up on the subject of the arthritis/glucosamine link before I tried it\* and I consider such research essential. Only you can judge what you're prepared to believe/try and what will be safe for you.

I'm not alone in loving my glucosamine. Linda Lang Bartell and her husband have started taking the divine G recently and she says: within a few weeks "My joints are better and my

husband says his arthritic pain has lessened."

I was told glucosamine only helped osteoarthritis, but Judi Lind, who suffers from rheumatoid arthritis/lupus, has used it with "wonderful results. Almost no swelling and pain," with only a few small flare-ups easily controlled.

Mary Kilchenstein believes glucosamine "kept me from having to have my left hip replaced" at the age of 44. However, she has recently had trouble with ankles swelling badly and thinks changing to a cheaper brand of the divine G did this. (I've had no side effects and hadn't heard of any till Mary mentioned this, but there you are, people are all different and glucosamine does attract water to the joint cartilage.) Returning to the more expensive brand has reduced Mary's swollen ankles to bearable, however, and improved her other hip.

Kathleen Creighton, after years of treatment for arthritis, found she didn't have it at all, but a simple (relatively speaking) Vitamin D deficiency. She now takes Calcium/Vitamin D tablets and "This winter for the first time in memory I have no aching and stiffness." Hey, I can relate to that, too. I thought I had arthritis quite badly in my knees, but they did not respond to the divine G. Then a physiotherapist told me I should be wearing arch supports. Result: knees 70% better, shoes now all ugly and old lady-ish, costing \$50 a pair extra to build in arch supports. Thank heavens the current fashion for longer skirts hides my unglamorous feet!

But if none of those remedies appeal to you, there are still others to explore! Judy Griffith Gill has found the traditional copper bracelets

helpful—but sadly has grown allergic to them. She is now drinking white grape juice and finding that, too, helpful. She also recommends "frequent and gentle exercise" and notices the difference if she stops. Ann LaFarge goes swimming "Every day for at least a half an hour" and daren't even miss one day. Jeane Westin gave up dairy foods and reports "by two weeks I had an 80% improvement and by two to three months pains and aches were gone—totally." Martha Johnson went trembling to an acupuncturist (those needles would make me tremble, too, Martha!) and "after three treatments found myself without pain for the first time in months." She also recommends swimming and water exercise.

Terey Ramin, who coerced—um, I mean *commissioned*—me to do this article, reports that her grandmother had terrible arthritis in her hands and crocheted constantly to keep it at bay till the age of 97—see, it's that gentle exercise again!

My layperson's conclusion to all this is that there is not just one way to deal with the dreaded A—and don't let anyone (whether a medical practitioner or not) tell you so. Go forth boldly and consider other treatments. Talk to Ninclinkers about it—they know something about everything.

And if you find something that works for arthritis (or whatever) of the hands, please let me know! I'm still searching for a cure for that one, darn it!

*Australian NINC member Sherry-Anne Jacobs writes under three names in several genres. Her most successful persona is Anna Jacobs who writes historical novels for Hodder & Stoughton UK. As Shannah Jay she writes SF/F, and as "herself" she writes historical/contemporary romances and how-to's.*

\* I read *The Arthritis Cure* by J. Theodosakis (a medical doctor)



## BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ *continued from page 9*

**Y2K PC tip:** Denise Dietz Wiley passed this one on... "There is a quick fix for a small Y2K problem almost everyone working in Windows should do: Test. Double click on 'My Computer.' Double click on 'Control Panel.' Double click on 'Regional Settings' icon. Click on the 'Date' tab at the top of the page. Where it says, 'Short Date Sample,' look and see if it shows a 'two digit' year. That's the

default setting for Windows 95, Windows 98, and NT. This date RIGHT THERE is the date that feeds application software and will not rollover into the year 2000. It will roll over to 00. Click on the button across from 'Short Date Style' and select the option that shows mm/dd/yyyy. Then click on 'Apply' and then click on 'OK' at the bottom. Easy enough to fix, but every single installation of Windows worldwide is defaulted to fail Y2K rollover." (Ed's note: If your computer is like mine there'll be a note in this area stating "When a two-digit year is entered, interpret as a year between 1930 and 2029." There are also arrow buttons so you can increase or decrease the time span—which would indicate to me

that some of the Windows 98 users are all set to miss the Y2K PC crash.)

**And finally...Tish**, the world's oldest living goldfish, has died at the age of (at least) 43. Tish was won by seven-year-old Peter Hand at a fairground in 1956 and later retired with Peter's parents to Yorkshire, England. Tish spent his life going around in circles but nonetheless managed to achieve international fame, so those of you who feel your careers are doing the same, take heart!

From Sally: REMEMBER:  
STRESSED SPELLED BACKWARDS IS  
DESSERTS

**NINK**



## Even More Reasons to Attend the Conference

We're very pleased to announce one late addition to the conference program that promises to be worth the price of admission in and of itself and to give you an update on which editors and agents are planning to attend. If you're looking for an agent, this looks like the year you'll want to make a special effort to attend.

**KEN BAKER, former Chief of the FBI's Behavioral Science Division** will provide a special presentation on Saturday afternoon on criminal profiling and sexually deviant behavior. Mr. Baker also worked for the CIA on the Assassination Assessment Team. For those of our members who like dangerous men—or at least hearing about them—this is one session you won't want to miss!

**To date the following Editors and Agents** have indicated they will attend the conference:

### **Editors:**

Leslie Wainger, Silhouette  
Jennifer Weis, St. Martin's Press  
Isabel Swift, Harlequin  
Marsha Zinberg, Harlequin (Canada)  
Audrey LaFehr, Dutton/Signet  
Sarah Gallick, Literary Guild  
Beth de Guzman, Bantam Books

Jennifer Enderlin, St. Martin's Press  
Caroline Tolley, Pocket

### **Agents:**

Damaris Rowland, Damaris Rowland Agency  
Elaine Koster, Elaine Koster Literary Agency  
Ethan Ellenberg, Ethan Ellenberg Literary Agency  
Jeff Kleinman, Graybill & English  
Evan Fogelman, Fogelman Literary Agency  
Maria Carvainis, Maria Carvainis Literary Agency  
Pattie Steele-Perkins, Steele-Perkins Literary Agency  
Claudia Cross, William Morris Agency  
Pam Strickler, Scovil Chichak Balen Agency  
Eileen A. Hutton, Brilliance Audio  
Linda M. Kruger, Fogelman Literary Agency  
Karen Solem, Writers House  
Maureen A. Walters, Curtis Brown, Ltd.

**When you register for the conference**, you will receive a confirmation letter detailing travel information to and from the airport as well as directions for those driving in. You'll also receive a fascinating description of the sights to see in Savannah, prepared by our own Ellen Taber. Thanks, Ellen! We hope you'll make the most of your trip to the city. See you in Savannah!

— **Victoria Thompson**  
**Conference Chair**



## The Fast Track

# NINC Members on the USA Today List

Compiled by MARILYN PAPPANO

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. Marilyn's phone number is 918-227-1608, fax 918-227-1601 or online: [pappano@ionet.net](mailto:pappano@ionet.net). Internet surfers can find the list at: <http://www.usatoday.com>.

Member	Title	July 1	July 8	July 15	July 22	July 29
Catherine Coulter	<i>Moonspun Magic</i> , Signet	71	65	99		
Catherine Coulter	<i>The Target</i> , Jove				35n	11
Jude Deveraux	<i>The Blessing</i> , Pocket Star	18	19	32	46	64
Christina Dodd	<i>Someday My Prince</i> , Avon			57n	53	51
Janet Evanovich	<i>High Five</i> , St. Martin's Press	27	82	117	125	144
Janet Evanovich	<i>Four to Score</i> , St. Martin's Press	109	111	145		
Heather Graham	<i>Tall, Dark &amp; Deadly</i> , Onyx	21	24	42	57	105
Linda Howard, Geralyn Dawson, Jillian Hunter, Mariah Steward, and Miranda Jarrett	<i>Under the Boardwalk</i> , Sonnet	258	52	39	68	91
Iris Johansen	<i>The Face of Deception</i> , Bantam	17	18	30	45	55
Jayne Ann Krentz	<i>The Family Way</i> , Mira				95n	87
Elizabeth Lowell	<i>Pearl Cove</i> , Avon	146	149			
Debbie Macomber	<i>Orchard Valley</i> , Mira	45	68		138	
Kat Martin	<i>The Silent Rose</i> , Zebra		135n		202	108
Connie Mason	<i>Gunslinger</i> , Leisure	289	145		230	145
Judith McNaught	<i>Night Whispers</i> , Pocket	177	17	5	7	5
Nora Roberts	<i>Rebellion</i> , Harlequin	8	10	24	38	58
Nora Roberts	<i>Genuine Lies</i> , Bantam	41	77		109	

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