

# Novelists'

# INK

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

## ***Everything You Didn't Want To Know (But Definitely Need To) About What Booksellers Think About Writers***

BY VELLA MUNN

[Ed's note: this is the second of a 3-part series wherein our Ms. Munn plays mother-confessor to the bookselling world.]

From crystal balls regarding the direction of the publishing industry, I seamlessly <g> guided my bookseller respondents to their take on the impact POD, e-books, Amazon, etc will have on the way the industry is run. Most see the impact as being felt in the future, but that doesn't mean they aren't aware of those changes/innovations, some more than others.

"Yes—unless I expand to carry readers and disks. I think this is the future—10-20 years from now. People still like to hold the book and like to talk book and recommend. (Amazon, etc) have a place. People who do not live near a big city are really limited on what's available at their stores. I believe people still like to see and hold what they are buying."

"No. At present it is still too small a market. E-book readers are too expensive for the average reader and not

many people will sit in front of a computer to read a book. Because of the ever-increasing cost, the average mass market reader likes to look at a book and read at least the first few paragraphs before buying."

"No. We are a medium sized town. Most print on demand is for 'literary' books and e-publishing makes it hard on those without computers and they prefer the feel of books. (Online bookstores will have) some impact. We are fighting hard to show customer service and inform them that just because they offer a discount, you still have to pay shipping which usually turns out to be higher than the discount."

"It may happen in a few years, but, now, people still enjoy shopping traditionally. On demand books will expand and e-publishing will too, but not so much it affects our business now. People call our store and quote me prices from online and try to have me match price. I can't, but if we have the book, we can have it in their hands immediately, without shipping and handling. It's a customer tradeoff."

Cont. on Page 7 ▶ ▶ ▶

## ***IF YOU BUILD IT WILL THEY COME? Making the Internet Work for You – Part II***

BY STELLA CAMERON  
AND CISSY HARTLEY

### **Also in this Issue:**

President's Voice.....	2
Letter to the Editor .....	3
Breaking News .....	4
Vancouver Calls .....	11
Victoria Sidetrip .....	12
Member News.....	13
Online .....	14
The Comely Curmudgeon.....	16
Dispatches From the Front .....	19
Fast Track .....	20

**Cissy:** When we left off last time we'd determined that creating a website wasn't necessarily the first and last stop in establishing a successful web presence. And we listed the three basic steps you need to follow for your site to be successful: (1) make sure readers can find you quickly by using your pen name as your domain name; (2) make your visitors want to stay by having a site

that loads quickly, is easy to navigate and contains the information readers want; and (3) make them want to return by fostering a sense of community among the readers at your site. Because that last one can be tricky, we promised to talk more in depth about how to go about doing that in our followup article.

**Stella:** Okay Cissy, let's get to the next and probably the most complicated part of conquering the Internet—sort of. You've spent a zillion bucks developing a

Cont. on Page 4 ▶ ▶ ▶

## Novelists, Inc.

FOUNDED IN 1989

### Advisory Council

Rebecca Brandewyn†	Linda Barlow
Janice Young Brooks†	Georgia Bockoven
Jasmine Cresswell†	Evan Maxwell
Maggie Osborne†	William Bernhardt
Marianne Shock†	Victoria Thompson
† Founder	Steven Womack
	Julie Kistler

If you have questions regarding Novelists, Inc., please contact a member of the Board of Directors.

### 2000 Board of Directors

#### PRESIDENT Carla Neggers

P.O. Box 826  
99 Deer Path Lane  
Quechee VT 05059  
Ph 802-295-1193  
Fax 802-295-8795  
CNeggers@vermontel.net

#### PRESIDENT-ELECT Barbara Keiler

32 Atkinson Lane  
Sudbury MA 01776-1939  
Ph 978-443-0770  
Fax 978-443-0775  
E-mail: B.KEILER@juno.com

#### SECRETARY Jane Bonander

2548 Sumac Circle  
White Bear Lake MN 55110  
Ph 651-704-9010  
Fax 651-704-9011  
E-mail: JBONANDER@aol.com

#### TREASURER Debbie Gordon

1240 Noonan Drive  
Sacramento CA 95822-2507  
Ph 916-448-1964  
E-mail: DBHGORDON@aol.com

#### NEWSLETTER EDITOR Terrey daly Ramin

2376 Musson Road  
Howell MI 48843-9082  
Ph 517-545-8946  
Fax 810-821-7070  
E-mail: terrey@ism.net

#### ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE

Georgia Bockoven  
3324 Zircon Dr.  
Rocklin CA 95677-4725  
Ph 916-624-7333  
Fax 916-630-1145  
E-mail: GBOCKOVEN@JPS.NET

#### CENTRAL COORDINATOR David L. Brooks

Novelists, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1166  
Mission KS 66222-0166  
E-mail: davidlbrooks@earthlink.net  
Fax: 913-262-2632

Web site: <http://www.ninc.com>

Send Address Changes to Central Coordinator

Copyright ©2000 by Novelists, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission.

## .....THE PRESIDENT-ELECT'S VOICE

### Authors Coalition: Our Share

Many countries have laws stipulating that authors must receive financial compensation every time their work is reproduced. Sometimes that compensation is clearly earmarked—for example, a library in Stockholm may report that a chapter of a book by Henry Louis Gates has been photocopied, and appropriate payment will be sent to Gates through his publisher. However, quite often the money is not earmarked. The Authors Coalition was created to protect that money and distribute it, as fairly as possible, to the authors whose writings generated the income.

The Coalition includes representatives from NINC and 13 other professional writers' organizations. It distributes the undifferentiated funds (identified by the international community as non-title specific royalties) among the organizations in proportion to their membership numbers and the kinds of writing each organization's members do. Since the money can't be paid out to individual authors, the organizations use it to benefit their membership as a whole.

Here's how it works: if X amount of money is generated from the reproduction of undifferentiated works of fiction, that money will be divided among all the organizations in the Coalition which have members writing fiction (e.g., NINC, Romance Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, Mystery Writers of America, The Authors Guild, etc.) The allocation of money to each organization will be based on the number of its members whose fiction has been published. If Y amount of money is generated from journalistic works, that money will be divided among all the organizations in the coalition which include members writing newspaper and magazine articles. (NINC has professional journalists among its members, so we will get some of this money—albeit a smaller amount than what the American Society of Journalists and Authors will receive.)

Perhaps you recall that along with your annual dues renewal notice, you always receive a survey asking about the kinds of writing you have done professionally. These surveys are used by the Authors Coalition to allocate the funds to the organizations.

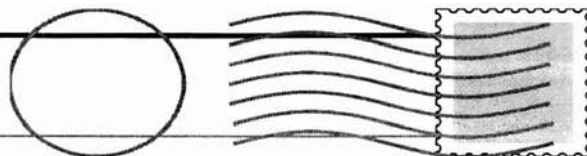
NINC receives a serious chunk of money from the Authors Coalition every year. This money has been used to pay for newsletter articles, conference speakers, conference planners, random publisher audits, NINC's Vision and Image project, and the printing and dissemination of the roster. In effect, these funds have helped to keep down NINC dues and conference fees.

As one of NINC's two representatives on the Authors Coalition board (Marianne Shock is the other; she is also the Coalition's Executive Director), I will confess that our work is neither glamorous nor entertaining. However, it has brought significant funding into NINC—money legitimately earned through the reproduction of our works. Without the Coalition, this money would likely either sit untouched for eternity in some European escrow account or wind up in our publishers' pockets. Instead, that money is being used to benefit our members.

— **Barbara Keiler,**

**NINC President-Elect, Authors' Coalition Representative**

# 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.

## THANKS FOR SHARING

I would like to thank the following NINC members who generously sent me books to pass along to Roman, the avid romance reader who works in a local Ethiopian restaurant: Jane Bonander, Shirley Hailstock, Karyn Wittmer-Gow, Ann Chamberlin, Julie Teitel, Gwynne Forster, Joan Van Nuys and Flora Speer. Roman thanks you enthusiastically and says

that her friends and relatives in Ethiopia will be very excited about receiving these novels after she's done reading them.

If someone sent me books and doesn't see their name here, I guess it means that—as shocking as this may sound—the USPS didn't deliver them to me.

— **Laura Resnick**

*"Feathers shall raise men even as they do birds, toward heaven; that is by letters written with their quills."*

**Leonardo da Vinci**

*How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci*  
Michael J. Gelb

## INTRODUCING.....

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

Julie Kenner, Austin TX  
Suzanne Barrett, Santa Cruz CA  
Ann Josephson (*Sara Jarrod, Ann Jacobs*),  
Tampa FL

### New Members

Betty Winkelman (*Lauren Haney*),  
Santa Fe NM  
Cindi Myers (*Cynthia Sterling*), Pine CO  
Carolyn Woolston (*Lynna Banning*),  
Felton CA  
Diane Noble (*Amanda MacLean*),  
Idyllwild CA  
Liz Curtis Higgs, Louisville KY

**NINC has room to grow...  
recommend membership to  
your colleagues.**

## ELECTIONS NOTICE

### Proposed Slate of Officers for 2001:

President-elect.....Patricia Rice  
Secretary.....Kathy Chweddyk  
Treasurer.....Linda Kay West

### Proposed Nominees for 2001 Nominating Committee: (listed in alphabetical order)

Patti Berg	Jimmie Morel
Carole Nelson Douglas	Pamela Morsi
Lawrence Watt Evans	Joanne Pence
Carla Fredd	Mary Jo Putney
Barbara McMahon	

As set forth in Article IX, Section 4 of the Bylaws, additional nominations may be made in writing if signed by the nominee and at least ten (10) active members who have not signed the nominations of any other person for the same position. Such nominations must be made by August 20, 2000. Mail all written nominations to Julie Kistler, 26 Gloucester Circle, Bloomington IL 61704.



## BREAKING NEWS

COMPILED BY PAMELA BROWNING

### I Also Believe in the Tooth Fairy

MP3.com CEO Michael Robertson says this could be "the dawn of a new age of cooperation between offline and online music companies." The digital music service recently reached settlements with Time Warner's Music Group and Bertelsmann's BMG Entertainment, two of the five companies suing it for copyright infringement.

Sources say that MP3.com agreed to pay Warner Music \$20 million as part of its settlement with the company, plus licensing fees and a small percentage per user-play. Still unresolved: lawsuits filed by Sony, Universal, and EMI Group charging that MP3.com allowed users to unlawfully download music recorded by the companies' artists.

### But Still...

A new study by Sanford C. Bernstein & Co projects that by 2002 as much as 16% of U.S. music sales—representing \$1 billion—will be lost to Web piracy.

Another study from the Pew Internet Project shows that while 2% of Net users pay for downloaded songs, 14% (13 million "freeloaders") regularly download free music.

"Millions of Americans have joined the online music revolution in recent months because it's simple, it's free, and so far, nobody's stopping them," said Lee Raine, director of research for Pew.

### Your Computer's Private Parts

How safe is the stuff on your computer? Jeffrey Rosen's *The Destruction of Privacy in America* is a chilling commentary. If you've wondered how lawyers were able to subpoena Monica Lewinsky's bookstore credit card receipts and unsent love letters from her personal home computer, **To page 7** ▶▶▶

## If You Build It

▶▶▶▶ Continued from page 1

fabulous site. All your friends and leave lovely messages reassuring you that the site is fabulous, but they know you and your books. Their visits make you happy but what you really want is to see brisk traffic, a steady flow of messages on the message board, comments on books, yours and some by other writers. You want action. How do we get this hub of activity to hum?

### The Reader Community

**Cissy:** With the acceptance of the internet into more homes and lives of readers, "community" is one of the buzzwords that has the potential to live up to the hype. Every major portal on the web (Yahoo, Excite, Lycos, AOL, etc.) is spending big bucks to carve out a "community" by way of message boards, free email, and chat forums for its members. Communities have evolved into active spots on most of these major portal sites, but it's evolving just as rapidly in many smaller niche sites. Pick an area of interest—needlework, motorcycle restoration, beermaking, reading—there are community portals with forums to allow members to communicate with one another. Authors can either become part of the community willingly or stand by and watch while the popularity and sales of their more interactive peers are buoyed by the embrace of the online reader community.

It is truly that important, the notion of community. Readers have always loved a connection with others—something to share, a way to talk about their favorite books. And now that the Internet is accessed regularly by more than 100 million US adults and growing across the world, readers influence can be seen daily in the movement of sales on the large online booksellers and auction sites. Simple

mention of a book or an author by an influential reader causes sales and requests to peak. The emergence of *Hot Six* by Janet Evanovich in the number one spot on the *New York Times* list its first week can be partially attributed to internet fervor. Evanovich herself acknowledges that her web site, which received 900,000 hits the month of its release, was a big factor in helping to build buzz for *Hot Six*. In addition to featuring several interactive bulletin boards for readers, Evanovich posted two chapters from *Hot Six* on her site incrementally, scene-by-scene, in the weeks leading up to its release, pulling readers back to the site again and again in hopes of discovering the answer to *High Five's* cliffhanger.

**Stella:** I'm convinced. But we need the details. How do we build these communities?

### Building Community with Relationships

**Cissy:** When you think "community" think relationships. When you build relationships with and among your readership, you're establishing personal connections, between you and your readers as well as reader-to-reader. Those personal connections have lasting benefits beyond simply ensuring that visitors return to your site month after month. They also help to establish a sense of loyalty on the part of your readers, an almost personal stake in your success. Having a group of readers who feels connected to you personally is like having a small army of publicists out in the field on your behalf. They're talking to friends about your books, they're calling their bookstores to make sure your new release is put out on time, they're suggesting your books to others in line at the bookstore. There are even



readers who routinely make sure their favorite authors books are positioned well on the shelves, straightening displays and making sure they're positioned well on full tables.

So how do you build a community? As we mentioned in Part I, the first step is to forget the static model of the website. If every time your visitors come to your site they're greeted with the same opening page and links containing the same information, they'll quickly learn there's no need to visit more than once or twice a year to check for new releases. Give them a reason to come back—a personal letter from you that changes month to month, contests, excerpts or hints about upcoming releases, new covers, etc.

Second, find ways to involve them interactively, set up a guestbook for them to leave notes to you. Better yet use a bulletin board where you can respond to their notes and they can respond to one another. Set up an e-mail discussion list for your fans or an announcement list that goes out every other month or so. Arrange to meet and talk with them in online chats.

*Stella:* Once again I completely understand the points you're making, but you still haven't given us a blueprint for accomplishing the end we hope for.

## **The Building Blocks of Community**

*Cissy:* Okay, let's talk about a few of the key components one at a time.

### **Mailing Lists:**

The online mailing list, or listserv, is one of the best and most inexpensive ways to stay in touch with your readers. With a single email you can send out notice of a new release or new feature at your website to hundreds or thousands of readers at once.

There are basically three types of mailing lists writers should be aware of: genre-specific fiction lists that welcomes

both readers and writers, author lists, and announcement/newsletter lists. Each type of list carries its own rules of etiquette and requires different behaviors on your part. The general discussion list is a great way to get a glimpse of the workings of the online communities; what the hot topics are, who the major players and voices are, etc. But each discussion list develops its own personality, often a reflection of its members, owners and interests. Before you post promotional announcements, make sure they're allowed! You'll also want to be sure that your interests and the image you want to project synchronize with the list(s) on which you choose to participate.

The author list can be an extremely useful tool, but it may also be the most difficult to achieve success with. The author-list is basically a targeted discussion list in which you and your books are the sole focus of conversation. The base of membership will be fans, and they do expect a high degree of involvement by "their" author. It can also be difficult at times to control the direction of conversations. Still, if you have the time and temperament to operate an author list, it can be a good way to accumulate that small army of publicists we mentioned earlier.

The announcement list may be the single easiest way to reach out to readers. It can be a simple online newsletter or series of announcements with a one-to-many relationship. You speak and list members listen. The announcement list does *not* facilitate interactivity but it does serve a purpose of relaying information. And there are lots of ways of stamping it with your voice. Sending bookcover postcards to announce new releases, or major awards, or new reviews, or simply reaching out to readers, helps to build that one-to-one touch that readers have come

to anticipate. If your web-host does not offer a mailing list as a part of your hosting package, there are a number of sites online such as Egroups, Listbot and Topica that offer free (ad-based) mailing lists.

*Stella:* How can we build a good list membership? I've always seen this as tricky.

*Cissy:* Well, this is where all the aspects of community at your site come together. All of the things that you do at your site to encourage reader participation offer your readers an opportunity to send you their contact information. Of course, you should have a signup form on your site specifically for readers to add their names to your mailing list. But don't forget to hang on to all of the addresses readers send you in other ways too, when they sign your guestbook, send you a fan email or enter contests at your site.

A word of warning about privacy and etiquette issues: most readers aren't surprised to find themselves on your mailing list after they've emailed you or entered a contest at your site. Some, though, might be understandably confused about how you got their email address or what you plan to do with it now that you have it. But you can minimize any potential conflicts with a few simple steps. On any entry forms like guestbooks or contests, be sure to tell readers you'd like to add them to your mailing list. At the bottom of every post to your announcement list, make sure to give clear instructions on how to unsubscribe. Also, be sure to post your privacy policy clearly. Readers want to know you won't be giving or selling their e-mail address to a third party.

### **Bulletin Boards:**

A hangover from earlier forms of electronic communication, the bulletin board is a foundation for some web communities. The conversations not only take place in public but ► ► ►

# ***If You Build It***

they can remain part of the record almost indefinitely.

As with discussion lists, you have the option of posting to genre-specific reader boards in existing communities or to set up your own author-specific discussion board at your site. It might be easiest to begin with a cautious toe-dip by posting occasionally to existing reader boards, just as you might do with reader listservs. The only caveat is to closely follow the etiquette of web behavior—don't spam the board by only posting promos, and don't just talk about yourself—a little whining or self-congratulation goes a long way. Think of a list or bulletin board as being at a cocktail party. Join in the general conversation but don't hog the floor.

It's another matter entirely, of course, when the bulletin board lives at your site. The readers who post there are interested in you and your books, and they're looking for your feedback. Answer their questions quickly and graciously, encourage them to talk among themselves as well, and with a little luck and perseverance you'll have a developing community of readers right on your site! Of course, it is also an activity that takes time—time that an author may not be willing to spend but that is at least free and very worthwhile. Using Ms. Evanovich as an example, her website has been active for more than three years, during which she has spent innumerable hours being accessible or appearing to be accessible to her fans. It certainly didn't hurt.

## **Chat Rooms:**

A chat room can be anything from a private space with a couple of people chatting, to a room with a core group of regular chatters, to a large 'auditorium' with hundreds of chatters waiting for a guest to answer questions submitted to a moderator via a typist. But whatever the format, the chat room usually is the heart and soul of a vibrant community. It is easily accessible and immediate conversation. And unless saved into a

transcript very fleeting.

Visit a reader chat room and watch the response. Usually for the first few visits the acknowledged author is greeted with a bit of awe and respect—The Author visiting the populace. After a few visits, the author is still accepted as an expert, but has somehow become "theirs," and the regulars take pride in introducing others to "their" authors and "their" authors' books. It happens over and over. And even when the author is *not* in the chatroom, the author's influence will be felt.

Be prepared to share with the chatters and to learn a whole new language set. Some of it is technology-based but most of it is simply a new vocabulary. It is NOT necessary to embrace it to the very fullest with the LOLs, TTYLs and BRBs, but it does help to get a basic grasp on the terminology. Also be prepared to give up a bit of your privacy; after all, they will own a little piece of you. But the rewards are great!

## **Joining a larger community:**

Of course, community doesn't grow by dropping in a few magic pills (mailing list, bulletin board, monthly contests) and voila! you have community. Building up a core group of readers who are vocal and active enough to attract other regulars to your site can be a tenuous and sometimes tedious process. It doesn't happen overnight, and sometimes despite following all the right steps, it doesn't happen at all. That's where being a part of a larger community can become invaluable.

Being a part of a larger community, as you are at Writerspace, Stella, or as many others are within publishing lines (Avon Ladies, Ladies of Leisure, etc.) can provide a kind of power-in-numbers support structure to put you in touch with readers at a

much faster pace than you can on your own, in isolation. The Avon Ladies bulletin board for example, hosted by Judith Ivory, but home to all of Avon's romance writers is one of the busier romance reader boards online. Likewise, the sheer numbers of authors at Writerspace has helped built a reader newsletter subscription base of several thousand more than an individual author might build on her own.

It also serves as a great support system. After all in a larger community, the author, you, aren't the only entree on the menu. A larger community shares basic things in common. At Avon Ladies it is the Avon book line with its funky contemporaries and steamy historicals; at the Ladies of Leisure, cover models are debated with great enthusiasm. The reader and authors come together on a common playing field and fit into a ready-made community.

Whatever you decide fits your style of personality, there is a community on line waiting for you to join. It's really all a matter of situating yourself where the readers live and establishing yourself as a part of your landscape. Building community also means giving up a bit of your time and yourself to be available to readers, but it's possible to set boundaries you can both be comfortable with.

The important thing is to connect!

**Stella:** Thanks, Cissy. We can't move forward in this electronic arena unless we're armed with as much accurate information as we can get. You've given us some wonderful insights.

*"The knowledge of all things is possible.*

*"All our knowledge has its origin in our perceptions."*

**Leonardo da Vinci**

*How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci*  
Michael J. Gelb

## BOOKSELLERS, TAKE 2

▶ ▶ ▶ Continued from page 1

"I would assume so as everything else has. I would imagine, as with all new changes in technology, that it will take awhile for it to be available to all of us at an affordable and practical level. A few years ago, there was a lot of excitement over cd-roms. We were told that this was the new wave but it didn't turn out that way. For me, the beauty that lies in a well-produced book is going to be hard to duplicate. Paper, typesetting, design are choices that are well made by professionals and well appreciated by book-lovers. I'm not sure how those elements will be incorporated into print-on-demand. (Re Amazon, etc) Again yes, our first noticeable loss was with university press books. This market fits the books-as-commodities and readers-as-consumers concept too well to fail."

"All forms of the books will have some impact. We have seen all the innovations—from the paperback at 25 cents to audio to the e-book. Different forms and formats suit different people. As the above, different methods of shopping suit different people. When the dust settles, it boils down to location, location, location."

"POD will revolutionize the book biz, keeping backlist in print and enriching inventory and letting small publishers take a risk with a small audience book, with backlist having very low sales potential, with reference books. Instead of backroom inventory, POD printers can save time and \$ when they become more affordable. E-books are just another way to deliver a story, like audio books, and will not have a great impact on us as a specialty but may on general bookstores. I suspect the biggest inroads will be into sales of celebrity authors. (As for Amazon) they make business for us and they have increased customer demands for rapid delivery and broader inventory. As long as readers need a filter for the avalanche of books coming out every

year, we will be ok. Online has hurt the in-store collector market but opens up new sales opportunities and turns our customers into book dealers."

"Yes, in about four or five years, we will see a more substantial portion of these 'bindings.' It is more cost effective for publishers. However, the masses have to catch on to e-publishing before it will work on a large scale. I remember when customers didn't care for the mass marketing bindings of paperbacks. As far as print on demand, it will only work with proper distribution...not the current exclusive contracts now in place. Again, large-scale distribution is the key to success for this format. Technology also is playing a large part of the slow success. Right now, the quality is not there. But I have the feeling that it will be soon. (Amazon, etc) are flashy and trendy, but they exist within an irony. They have to be large-scale operations to attract and keep customers; however, their customer service and personalization lack because of their sheer size. Not to mention that stockholders will not allow a business to continue to operate at huge losses. The model does not work long term. Short term, they have become the price yardstick for us all, but independent bookstores are not virgin to mass competition. I feel that 'survival of the fittest' still works. When any kind of independently owned business is not fiscally fit, it eventually closes its doors."

"No. Except that perhaps one day all the stores will have print-on-demand capacity. (Re Amazon) The Internet is the wave of the future. Every bookstore of note has a web presence and if they don't they will. Lower prices, the facility of shopping with the click of a button is a thing that will be more and more commonplace and will of course affect store traffic. Internet retailing is valid competition, however we have yet to see



## BREAKING NEWS

here's your answer. Rosen says that violations of privacy are experienced by less notable (maybe he means less notorious) citizens every day; what used to remain personal can now be taken out of context and used against us. The book is published by Random House.

### E-money

The International eBook Award Foundation, sponsor of the Frankfurt eBook Award, has named judges for its first awards, which will be presented October 20 at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

The panel includes a mix of authors, media types, and people from the book and e-book world (I could list them, but you'd be bored). The grand prize for the best original e-book carries an award of \$100,000.

The five other categories—best fiction and nonfiction works originally published in e-book form; best fiction and nonfiction works originally published in print and converted to e-book form; and the achievement award for the advancement and implementation of e-book technologies and features—have awards of \$10,000 each.

The awards are sponsored by biggies like Microsoft, Glassbook, NuvoMedia and Softbook Press.

### P-money

William Gay, author of *The Long Home*, a first novel published last November, is the second winner of the James A. Michener Memorial Prize. The award is given by Random House to a writer who, like Michener, published his or her first book at age 40 or over.

The prize carries a stipend of \$10,000. Gay was born in 1943 in Hohenwald, Tennessee, has worked in the construction business much of his life, and reads and writes at night.

### E-commerce

Barnes & Noble.com has launched Barnes & Noble TV, which will broadcast over the Internet and feature short book-oriented



## BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ programs. Oh, big surprise, it will also allow viewers to purchase titles. In other words (theirs), this is "streaming video and contextual content with e-commerce capability."

Get ready for three-minute films called bookVideos, starting with *The Hungry Ocean*, based on the book by Linda Greenlaw (*The Perfect Storm*). Videos will change weekly.

BNTV will soon introduce a daily author interview series featuring journalists and other writers interviewing—ta-dah!—authors.

Not to be outdone, Borders.com launched a Web-casting program, Borders Vision, on July 1. It features—guess what—author interviews as well as musical events, kids, lifestyle, travel, and film related shows. Borders Vision will also offer store events online.

"Visual merchandising is something that will make the Web a powerful tool," Rich Fahle, content manager at Borders.com, told PW Daily. Will make? Already has, I'd say.

### Fave Reads

Oprah Winfrey, talk show host and book club guru, recently conducted an online poll about viewers' favorite summer reading. Turns out that romance outdistanced all other genres, with 53% of respondents preferring it over mystery, the closest competitor, by more than 20%. The summer reading poll results are no longer to be found on Oprah's website, so don't bother to go there. Just take my word for it, okay?

### Hallowed Cyber Halls

With college students forking over big \$\$\$ tuition for their educations, please note that registration has opened for classes in the hallowed cyber halls of Barnes & Noble University, which is free. Yes. That's right. Keep reading.

The university is ▶ ▶ ▶

## BOOKSELLERS, TAKE 2

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ a marked decline in store customer presence."

"I believe that POD books could be a real money maker for us. We currently have a large volume in classics—and it could be bigger if made available in quantities at sale prices without us having to carry the books in stock. Publishing and downloading on the Internet will undoubtedly find its way to specialty markets and the concept could be made available to bookstores that could print out and resell. ABA BookSense would be an ideal vehicle for this. Amazon and Barnes and Noble online will eventually have to show a profit or they will fold. They have cut into sales by independent booksellers but they are certainly providing current and prompt information to us all. We buy from them when they offer 50% discounts, and we sell to them via the Internet."

"Eventually it will but it is too early to say how it will affect us. We lost a few customers to online sales but not many. Our store is an important community resource and our customers appreciate that."

Okay, so everyone has their own take on the new and developing technologies. Did we really expect anything different? The same held true when I asked booksellers whether publishers have the pulse of what readers really want. (Hey, there was no way I couldn't ask)

"No. Like anything else, they go for the Big Names (best sellers and Oprah) and too much 'focus group likes.' Publishers are very afraid of deep work, in romance, especially."

"Publishers are fulfilling the void—the amount of self-published works that succeed seems to go against that but the percentage is still very low."

"Too many blockbuster-type novels that require publishers to cut their midlists in order to afford their marketing and publicity for huge promotional campaigns."

"We frankly do not pay much

attention to the publishers' ads. We have great hope for ABA BookSense."

"No. I think publishers think too much in terms of large city interests. Most of the country lives in medium to small markets. Also, too East Coast focused. They should think in terms of regions."

"Most of the books we receive and the numbers are based on sales of the authors' previous books. And then we receive a certain number based on the sales of whatever genre. But of course we always receive more bestsellers than non, as they are bestsellers. But again it depends on previous sales. Some authors who used to be huge bestsellers now have mediocre numbers and we receive mediocre numbers of the next title, still far and above the numbers of a midlist or low list author. But all the figures are really based on the store. We have titles and authors that we sell tremendously well that don't sell so well nationwide. So it is dependent on the store."

"I think that, obviously the larger publishers have a good idea and yes they do have or create the pulse for what folks choose to buy. I gave up on conventional bestsellers many years ago, that is something the chains do with their discounts and there is no way to compete with that, so I don't try. Check out the BookSense 76 bestseller list that the ABA compiles from stores like mine compared to, at this point, the completely bogus *New York Times* list. There is quite a difference in these readers' choices and unfortunately the *Times* list looks more like a drugstore/airport selection every year." (Now is there a separate article in that or what?)

"They get in a rut and publish the same things over and over."

"No, not always. Customers complain that the same theme is used by all publishers for too many books, i.e., babies, pirates, weddings. They like these but want more variety."

"No, the drag time is increasing and the range of books grows



shallower as Big Publishers look more to numbers than to content. There are far too many clone books, too many global thrillers, too many serial killer thrillers, too much leaping on whatever bandwagon worked two years back."

"It depends. Large houses are only pushing for bestsellers or searching for a Clancy, King, or Steel. It has become their 'bread and butter' so to speak. It pays the bills, for them and us. It cannot be ignored. Independent houses seem to be doing a better job of bringing us obscure titles, unknown authors, and edgy genres. It helps us create and maintain a unique inventory mix. Too many celebrity bios in my opinion, but they will stop publishing them when customers stop buying."

As a corollary, I wanted to know how much choice booksellers (remember, most of my respondents are independents) have in choosing what they sell, which distributors they use and why and how they become aware of what's new on the market. Although I designed them as three separate questions, the answers so often dovetailed that I'm combining them here.

"Mostly Ingram. I have total control (over selection) and become aware through publishers' catalogues, sales reps, reviews, etc. Author newsletters and promotions, Ingram's catalogue, newspaper, *Romantic Times*."

"Bookpeople—they are local to us. Ingrams—they carry a whole lot. Baker & Taylor—they have more university press titles. Total control. Sales reps and catalogues first, followed by the actual books arriving, then reviews including publicity by the publishers and/or authors."

"Ingram, Baker and Taylor, Brodart in the US and in the UK, Gardners. Any bookstore today should use just-in-time inventory principles, meaning keeping single copies of most titles on crowded shelves and reordering when each one sells. This is primarily for backlist, as with frontlist one tends to carry multiple copies. The distance from

the New York warehouses is too far to permit overnight restocking, hence our distributors do order overnight. They also have inventory when the publisher warehouse may have sold out and they do special packages for author events if they arise at the last minute or if you have under-ordered. Ingram is bigger and faster but the others are very helpful. Total control, limited only by what is in print. (Become aware through) catalogues, review media, and distributor catalogues. But for us, (a large mystery bookstore) materials flood in from agents, authors, and our reps and we do get recommendations from our own customers. I believe in using every possible source."

"The books that I don't get direct from publishers I order from Ingram. Reorders are from Ingram because of next day delivery service. (Re: Becoming aware) you can always use more. I use Ingram catalogues, Romantic times and the publisher order books. Also author's ARCs and advance publicity."

"I have purchased from them all over the years. My current wholesaler cascade has Baker & Taylor first, then I tend to support the regional distributors whenever possible. In my view, customer support and fill rate are the two most important aspects of wholesaling. If I have difficulty getting titles or clearing up problems, I will take my business elsewhere. We do a large special order business and my customers getting their specific requests quickly and in perfect condition is my primary consideration. My clientele's demand dictates most of our product mix, however, sometimes, that demand can be altered by bringing titles and items in that our customers did not know existed. This ability to try new lines and books is the beauty of independent booksellers. (Awareness) all the above. So much is being printed now, and faster than ever that my buyers rely heavily on catalogues and reviews. Don't see many reps any more due to publisher cutbacks and the tele-sales trend. We ▶ ▶ ▶



## BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ run by notHarvard.com, a developer of online universities with an eye to using them as a "sales and marketing weapon" to reach students, not to mention into their pockets.

B&N.com has made a sizable investment in notHarvard.com, and thus B&N.com has become the main distributor of notHarvard's eduCommerce course materials.

Students can sign up at B&N University for 35 classes, including *Walking Through Shakespeare: The Comedies*; *Introduction to Jazz*; and *Introduction to Programming*. "Schools" within the university are Arts & Leisure, Literary Studies, Life Improvement, Health & Wellness, Business, and Technology.

So when you graduate, do you get a notDiploma? No word on this yet.

### Struck by Lightning

Simon & Schuster recently announced a "long-term strategic alliance" with distributor Ingram's newly organized e-book and print-on-demand services unit, Lightning Source. The agreement designates Lightning Source as S&S's "preferred and primary digital fulfillment company" for the next three years. However, S&S spokesperson Adam Rothberg said that the Lightning Source deal is "not exclusive" and emphasized that S&S would work with other e-delivery firms if necessary, whatever that means.

Lightning Source was created by Ingram in May to consolidate Lightning Print, its former print-on-demand service, into a delivery service capable of providing all the tech know-how needed by publishers to deliver e-books or POD titles.

Lightning Source will soon begin digitizing S&S's 12,000-title active backlist. Rothberg said that S&S has begun choosing which titles will be made available and that e-books will be handled differently from POD titles.

"POD is one thing. It's still a paper book. E-books are another matter, and we will be getting authors' permissions," Rothberg said. ▶ ▶



## BREAKING NEWS

### Has Your Book Been Banned?

Here's how to get free publicity: write a book that gets banned. Or if that doesn't work, write a book about banned books. Which brings us to the fact that September 23-30 is Banned Books Week, and Checkmark Books is promoting its *100 Banned Books: Censorship Histories of World Literature* by Nicholas J. Karolides, Margaret Bald and Dawn B. Sovia.

*100 Banned Books* categorizes titles by type of censorship. For political reasons: *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Doctor Zhivago*, and *Slaughterhouse Five*. On religious grounds: the Bible, the Koran, and the Talmud. Sexual grounds: *Forever* by Judy Blume, *Peyton Place*, *The Group*, and *The Bluest Eye*. Social grounds: *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Black Like Me*, *Catch-22*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and a real hottie, *Fahrenheit 451*.

Really fun are censors' remarks, such as, in the case of *Forever*, the book's "cast of sex-minded teenagers is not typical of high schoolers today." That was in 1987.

If your book's not listed, there's always next year. Since *100 Banned Books* originally appeared in time for last year's Banned Books Week, looks to me as if they'll be reissuing it every year around this time. Gotta keep that goose laying those golden eggs, folks.

### Not Too Wild About Harry

As if 100 banned books aren't enough, here are more candidates: the *Harry Potter* books by J. K. Rowling.

An organization calling itself Family Friendly Libraries wants to remove the books from libraries and public school classrooms. The books have been challenged in California, Georgia, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, and Washington. The zinger? In Zeeland, Michigan, a zealous school superintendent zapped them off library shelves, which makes you think this guy has zilch



## BOOKSELLERS

used to heavily value our relationships with our pub reps, but many have disappeared with the recent industry consolidation. Interestingly enough, we don't buy as much as we used to per order. We proceed cautiously with untested titles. If we start to see and hear heavy marketing and reviews for a title, we will consider bringing it in at that point. Usually through a wholesaler since we now live in a much 'faster' business environment."

"The majority of our distribution is through our own distribution warehouses (Waldens) and then publishers and Ingrams. We work with almost every major distributor of books in the country, be it publisher or distributor. Most of our purchasing is done in the home office. However, any book that we become aware of that we can obtain, we can get. (Awareness) All of the above and the Internet. The Internet, as everyone is saying, is and will continue to be a wonderful avenue of information. I love the Internet for that very reason, everything is at your fingertips and it is becoming easier and easier to access it."

"Ingrams, Baker & Taylor, Anderson News, Andrew McMeel, R.H. Bant, St. Martins, Booksource, Pocket, John Wiley, University Press of Kansas, etc. Opened accounts with all. I do all the buying except for magazines. Anderson News selects magazines. (Awareness) Catalogues—90%, sales reps—5%, media, customers, etc."

"As a B. Dalton and Little Professor manager, we dealt with Ingram quite a bit. And we went to them when we first considered opening our own store. When we decided not to open a "new book" store and to not purchase an initial inventory, Ingram pretty much wrote us off (And I don't blame them). We met with Baker and Taylor at the

ABA book show in Chicago, and we started buying from them. We have been to all of the ABA and BookExpo shows since 1996, where we have made contact with a number of publishers. We anticipate the ABA BookSense program to give us all the choices we might need for new books. We receive catalogues and reviews from Baker & Taylor and from publishers. Also the local newspaper, TV, and the Internet (we receive late news from Barnes and Noble and from Amazon via e-mail) gives us some of the latest."

"Ingram, Partners, Koen. Reliable service and good selection. I usually get to order the titles I find but when it comes to new publisher orders I don't have much say. Mostly I watch fiction backlist and other areas in which I specialize personally. All ways. Catalogues, newsletters. *PW*, e-mail newsletters, bestseller lists, book reviews (*NYT*, *Hungry Mind*, etc.) I pay more attention to these than my manger."

*(Next month we'll get down and dirty)*



## BREAKING NEWS

to do. Gadzooks.

Rallying to Harry's defense are The National Coalition Against Censorship, the Office for Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association, and a few kids who have appeared on TV to talk about how much they like the books.

There would probably be more kids out there defending the books, but they're all at home. Reading.

*Pamela Browning has written a whole lot of books for Harlequin, Silhouette, Mills & Boon, and Berkley, none of which has ever been banned. Yet.*



## **VANCOUVER CALLS:**

### **A Millennial Conference Experience You Won't Get Anywhere Else (or Things That *Aren't* in the Brochure...<g>)**

**(FILED BY TEREY DALY RAMIN)**

**Okay, so how many of you have ever wanted to turn your novel into a movie? Or have it done for you?** We got that. Patricia Gruben, Associate Professor and Director of the Praxis School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver will be there to talk to us on "Screenwriting Techniques for the Novelist" and the problems inherent in adapting films from novels, as well as how (and where) to go about working ours into another industry.

**Ever needed to talk to a literary attorney,** whether it's about e-publishing ways, means and rights that your agent doesn't seem to be interested in, or simply about contract concerns you're not sure how to address? We got that, too. *NINK's* own Bulldog attorney, Alan Kaufman, has come on board. He'll not only talk to us about electronic publishing (he represents Richard Curtis's e-pubbing venture as well as two other major players in the electronic publishing games), but also about how to negotiate to get more from your contracts—and when not to sign. He'll be there to work and expects attendees to get their money's worth out of him while in Vancouver.

**What about wanting to increase your visibility among booksellers and the media?** Yepper, you got it. They'll be there. Seattle and Vancouver-area booksellers have been invited to attend and are on the menu already.

**How about wanting to hear a media coach talk to you about how to handle yourself with print, radio and television media folks so you come across your best?** We've got Yolande Spears at your disposal. Or talking to the gal who does *BookPage* reviews and author interviews for the *RWR*? Sandy Huseby will be in town—as will Jennifer McCord, fresh from the Northwest Bookfest. Or learning more about the burgeoning e-publishing market like Aliske Webb, the publisher of Bookmice.com, a royalty-paying electronic publisher of quality fiction and nonfiction? All there!

**What about hearing from Claire Zion,** who's anxious to tell us all about Warner's new iPublish venture that's looking for the new and unusual and the not-so-safe the way most of New York is not? She'll not only be on the e-pub forum panel, but has expressly requested time to tell our authors about iPublish. (Do I smell opportunity? You bet!) Also available will be Malle Vallik with eHarlequin and Sarah Gallick with Bookspan.

**We've also got Neal Coonerty from the ABA** ready to talk about selling books as well as Stefanie Hargreaves from amazon.com (and I *know* you've all got questions for her!) And editors and agents: Nita Taublib, Leslie Wainger, Marsha Zinberg, Evan Fogelman, and a host of others whose names I'm shamefully forgetting at the moment (and mega apologies for it! All editors and agents who are coming and who are *not* listed herein, please feel free to send me chastising e-mail at [terey@ismi.net](mailto:terey@ismi.net) and I'll include you posthaste in the September *NINK*!)

**And then we've got The Wedding.** Yep, you heard it here first (unless you're on ninclink, then you read it there first <g>). We are delighted to announce that all NINC Conference attendees are hereby cordially invited to attend the nuptials of NINC members Denise Dietz Wiley and Gordon Aalborg at 5:30 p.m. Friday just before the cocktail party. Deni and Gordon met through ninclink, got together finally in Tasmania in June, and decided to commit to each other before God and NINC during the conference in front of the Canadian equivalent of a Justice of the Peace. Now *that's* something you definitely won't get anywhere else!

**And this is just a taste** of the extras to come. So come talk, chat, discuss, argue, learn things you thought you'd been in the business too long to learn—and most of all, come celebrate. We've got it all, and it's in Vancouver waiting for you.

# ***When You're in Vancouver: A "Sidetrip" to Victoria***

**By Jo BEVERLEY**

When you're in Vancouver this fall, Victoria is not far away, but I'll be honest—getting here is not a cinch, particularly for the day. It's worth it, though, for a day or a week. What does Victoria have that Vancouver does not?

**First, it has a better climate.** Nothing is guaranteed, but Victoria sits in the rain shadow of the Olympics, and most of the rain passes over here to bless Vancouver. It does get rainy here, in November and December particularly, but summer is generally a drought with water supply rationed. Whether late October will be summer drought or fall rain is in the hands of the gods.

**Second, although it is the BC capital,** it is a smaller, quieter community with few high-rises and many interesting old buildings.

**Third, it revels in its Olde English ambience,** and comes by it honestly. You'll hear British accents all around you here, especially English ones, because the climate here is very English. The supermarkets carry a lot of English goods, and there are shops specializing in supplying the expatriates. As discussed online, you can visit a "sweet shop" and try some of the many types of English sweets (candies.) You can buy English canned foods and biscuits (cookies) not generally available in North America, and there are excellent teashops. If you want, I can provide directions to my butcher's—Colin Campbell of Whitehaven, Cumberland—who was written up in the local paper for his excellent Cumberland sausages, and who also makes Scotch Eggs, Melton Mowbray pies, and haggis. His shop is in the "village of Oak Bay," my local shopping street, behind what it called the Tweed Curtain because it has such a large population of English people.

There's an Oak Bay tour bus—double-decker, of course—that takes you around this lovely corner, in particularly past the Edwardian mansions. No, I don't live in an Edwardian mansion, but it always amuses me to have the buses stop for a photo opportunity at the beach a couple of blocks from my house where I go to walk. Well, I start out walking, but end up strolling, picking up pretty stones, and watching the life in the tidal ponds, or sitting on driftwood listening to the ocean.

**What to do in Victoria?** The obvious attractions are the world famous Butchart Gardens, (<http://www.butchartgardens.com/admissn.html> Admission \$12.75), the Royal BC Museum, and afternoon tea at the Empress Hotel. (Though I think it's overpriced. You can look around the Empress by going in through the Convention Center entrance on Douglas Street and looking at the shops and Victorian dining rooms. On the other hand, it is a very well done Victorian tea, and a memorable experience.) I phoned the Empress for room rates before and after the conference, and they're pretty full then for some reason. They quoted about \$400 Cdn, but if rooms were available, I suspect you could get them for less if

you hunt on the web. There are also charming B&Bs, many in Victorian or Edwardian houses. Check <http://tourismmall.victoria.bc.ca/downb&b1.htm#edwardian>. An example of a small one is the Gingerbread House, with rates between \$80 and \$125 (All prices here are in Canadian dollars. At time of writing a US dollar will buy about \$1.50 Cdn, so \$100 Canadian will cost you \$66 US.)

**Next door to the Empress,** the Royal BC Museum has an excellent collection with particular emphasis on BC and local native history. This fall there will be a special exhibit on circus life, Circus Magicus. "Circus Magicus will uncrate a barrel of fun and a trunk load of memories for anyone who's ever set their imagination flying at the thrill and daring of the old-fashioned circus!" Admission, including Circus Magicus \$10.65. Add Imax film, \$17.40. Imax alone is \$9. You can check for more details at <http://rbcm1.rbcm.gov.bc.ca>

However, you can simply walk around the inner harbor area, enjoying the beauty of it, then head off to Beacon Hill Park nearby to enjoy the lakes and flowers there. If you walk across the park—or should I say hike. It's close to a mile—you'll come out on Dallas Road, which borders the sea with the beautiful Olympics in the distance. It's hard to go far in Victoria without arriving at another stretch of enchanting island-dotted sea, and it's mostly walker-friendly. You can also hire bikes and scooters—the vehicles a bit like a motorbike except that you don't straddle it, but sit on a seat. There are also tours of downtown in a horse-drawn carriage. With a car, you can explore further, perhaps out along the coast west to Sooke or beyond and walk the West Coast Trail.

**Shopping?** In addition to the English specialties, there are the usual tourist shops, and some interesting craft shops. Not being much of a shopper myself I can't give a lot of detail, but there do seem to be some high-class import shops close to the Empress.

**So, how do you get here?** You can fly, either from airport to airport, but both are a ways out of town, or from harbor to harbor by helicopter. Fares are currently between \$109 and 139 one way. Airport to airport, a new small airline is offering one way fares at about \$50.

The ferry is much cheaper, and is a beautiful trip through the islands, especially if the weather is clear. You can take a car, or catch a Pacific Coast Lines bus in downtown Vancouver that will take you onto the ferry, then take you to downtown Victoria at the other end. The total trip is about four hours, but as I say, the one hour 40 min ferry trip is a pleasure if you like that sort of thing. If you catch the 9 am ferry (which will mean getting on the bus at about 8 am) you'll be downtown at about noon. To return at the latest, you would have to catch the 8pm bus to get the 9pm ferry. Time enough to explore downtown Victoria a bit. Cost for Vancouver to Victoria, one way is \$26. 1-800 661 1725

If you want to take advantage of being up here to do

some tours, there are plenty. I'm giving details of a couple as example. This Inside Passage tour (going between the Queen Charlotte Islands and the mainland covers two Rail tours (Vancouver–Prince George and Prince George–Prince Rupert); Queen of the North voyage through the Inside Passage; Coach transportation between Port Hardy and Victoria; Coach and ferry transportation between Victoria and Vancouver; Overnight accommodation in Prince George, Prince Rupert, Port Hardy and Victoria (two nights) Applicable taxes \$1167 Cdn per person For more information, call BC Rail: by phone 1-800-339-8752 (toll-free throughout North America)

Ferry alone is: Inside package Port Hardy (top of the island) to Prince Rupert (mainland) \$75 one way. Vehicle \$154 [http://www.bcferries.bc.ca/news/totem\\_circle-e.html](http://www.bcferries.bc.ca/news/totem_circle-e.html) 1-800-667-0882

Or, also from BC Ferries: "Starting in cosmopolitan Vancouver, you'll board a deluxe coach (your choice of frequent departures) and then sail with BC Ferries through the spectacular Gulf Islands to the charming provincial capital of Victoria. There, an overnight stay will allow you to visit some of the city's world-renowned attractions. In the morning, climb aboard a Laidlaw coach and travel in style north on Vancouver Island to the scenic town of Port Hardy, where you'll stay overnight. The next day you'll take a leisurely summer day-cruise through BC Ferries' Inside

Passage aboard the ferry-liner Queen of the North to Prince Rupert on the north coast of the British Columbia mainland. On the way, you'll travel through calm inlets, evergreen-covered islands, and majestic coastal mountains, all with the privacy of your own day/overnight cabin. The next morning you'll begin your return journey to Port Hardy where you'll overnight once again before boarding your deluxe highway coach en route to the beautiful harbour city of Nanaimo. An easy coach transfer here and you'll be on your way back to Vancouver, crossing the Strait of Georgia with BC Ferries. From \$825

**For simpler nature adventures**, there are plenty of whale watching trips from Victoria, either in a boat or a Zodiac (super grade inflatable) Cost is about \$80 for four hours. You can see more at <http://tourismmall.victoria.bc.ca/whales.htm>

From Vancouver, it is in fact easier to get to Nanaimo, which doesn't have the charm of Victoria, I'm afraid, but is an excellent gateway to the north of the island and the Inside Passage, and to the beaches and rainforest of the Pacific Rim National Park on the west coast, and the towns of Ucluelet and Tofino.

You can find all kinds of information at <http://tourismmall.victoria.bc.ca/> and <http://www.victoria-tours.com/butchgd.html>

## MEMBER NEWS.....

### Who Was That Lady?

**Fran Baker** has announced that her company, Delphi Books, will release a biography of Craig Rice, the Queen of Screwball Mysteries and the only American mystery author to ever appear on the cover of *Time* Magazine.

Entitled *Who Was That Lady?*, the biography was penned by Jeffrey Marks, who is an editor of and a contributing author to *Canine Crimes*, a Ballantine anthology, and *Magnolias and Mayhem* (Silver Dagger anthology.) A website has been mounted at [www.JeffreyMarks.com/Rice/](http://www.JeffreyMarks.com/Rice/) for more information on the biography. The book will launch in Chicago in April 2001, at Something Wicked Bookstore.

A French magazine has been running excerpts, and readers can pick up the link at [www.JeffreyMarks.com/Rice/](http://www.JeffreyMarks.com/Rice/).

Craig Rice was the author of 14 novels, countless short stories, and a number of true crime pieces. Her popularity with the reading public landed her on the cover of *Time* in January 1946. The past 50 years, however, have seen her fall into relative obscurity.

In addition to the Rice biography, Baker's company has published *Footsteps In The Butter* by fellow Novelists, Inc. member **Denise Dietz**.

Delphi Books is a member press of The Authors Studio. More information is available at [www.TheAuthorsStudio.org](http://www.TheAuthorsStudio.org) or at [www.FranBaker.com](http://www.FranBaker.com).

### More on the Oprah Flap

Is there anyone who *doesn't* know daytime talk show hostess Oprah Winfrey doesn't read romance and

doesn't intend to recommend romances as part of her popular "book club" segment? There have been various suggestions on the part of romance fans and authors to convince Oprah to give romances equal time, but Silhouette author **Moyra Tarling** has broken through the barrier—her eloquent e-mail to Winfrey's web resulted in a taped appearance on the "Mailbag" segment of the show to air her protest. At press time, the segment was scheduled to air August 3.

Here is Tarling's message:

*"Hi Oprah! I caught the end of your show today when you put forth your new Book Club Pick. Someone in the audience commented or said something about a romance and you turned and made a rather negative remark about romances not being real. People read different kinds of books for different reasons, tastes are varied, thank goodness, and I don't feel it's my place to tell anyone what they should read or what's enjoyable for them.*

*"I am a romance writer. I write series romance for Silhouette Books, and I find it*

**Continued on page 15** ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



## MASTERING YOUR DOMAIN

My husband and I often eat at a small sandwich shop called Jen's Place. They have daily specials and one day my husband decided to pop out to the Internet to see if they had a menu online. He typed in [www.jensplace.com](http://www.jensplace.com) and the menu that came up featured a nude woman named Jen and all the things she offered. Not exactly what my husband had in mind.

When I spoke with the owner of the restaurant, she told me that she'd waited too long to secure the name of her restaurant as a domain name.

Being master of your domain has a different meaning on the Internet than it does on a Jerry Seinfeld episode. A domain name is a unique Internet address. Any name can be registered as a domain.

Many authors have begun registering their names as domains and establishing their websites using the domain as the address.

Patricia Pinianski used Domain Direct at [www.domaindirect.com/](http://www.domaindirect.com/) to register her domain name. I visited the site. It's very informative and can answer many of the questions you may have regarding how to go about registering your domain and the reasons why you might want to.

Registration of a domain costs \$70 for the first two years and \$35 a year after.

But what do you do if you're not yet ready to establish a website using your domain?

I chatted with Carmel Thomaston of Painted Rock about an author's options if she wants to protect her domain name but isn't yet ready to establish that address as a website. She told me that "any number of server companies will park your domain for free, for a one-time fee, or small monthly fee. 'Parked' means undeveloped, so that can be a disadvantage if an author isn't planning to develop and use the domain in the near future. In most cases, when the customer goes to a parked domain, they get a generic page that says the domain is under construction. The server won't redirect the reader to any other URL address. That can be a frustrating dead-end. The reader might not understand that the author may have a working website up elsewhere. But the advantage—that no one else can develop that domain with the author's name on it—greatly outweighs the disadvantages, in my opinion.

"A few server companies, instead of the generic page, will allow the author to put up a personalized page. The page says the author's website can be found at so-and-so URL. The server will then automatically redirect the visitor to the author's existing homepage after so many seconds. Or the reader can click the link provided on the page to go to the homepage. That's a major advantage and something an author should ask the server company about when deciding where to park.

"Painted Rock does not offer parking since it does not own its server nor does it register domain names." Carmel generally refers people to Rick Peacock at [Consultme.net](http://Consultme.net). Rick charges \$5 a month to park a domain. Carmel adds, "Many places will park domains for free if you get the domain through them. The rationale is that when you get ready to develop your domain you're more likely to do it on the server you're already on rather than move it somewhere else."

Like everything else, it's wise to shop around when you are considering registering your domain name as well as parking it. As Carmel explained, "Some hosters charge for the service and some don't. There are any number of reputable places that will park your domain. There are very valid promotional reasons for having a domain, along with the protection part of your name and pseudonym."

Cissy Hartley of Writerspace offers these suggestions to determine if your domain name has been claimed by someone else:

"You can use the 'WhoIs' search function at Network Solutions to find the status of your domain name. Just go to [www.networksolutions.com/cgi-bin/whois/whois](http://www.networksolutions.com/cgi-bin/whois/whois) and type yourdomain.com in the search box. You'll find out immediately if your name is available or if it has been taken.

"If your domain has been taken, the above 'WhoIs' search will give you detailed information on who owns your domain name and how to contact them. You'll see listings for the registrant, the technical contact, and the administrative contact for each domain. The 'registrant' is the actual owner of your domain. You'll find snail mail, phone, and e-mail contact information listed under the registrant's name." Writerspace does park domains. Contact Cissy ([cissy@writerspace.com](mailto:cissy@writerspace.com)) for detailed information.

I will admit that I have not yet reserved my domain, but it is something I am seriously considering.

## FANTASY WRITERS

A delightful site, Power of Dragons at [www.delightfulway.com/store/Power\\_of\\_Dragons.html](http://www.delightfulway.com/store/Power_of_Dragons.html) explains characteristics of dragons, has dragon gifts available, provides a newsletter online and has a dragon quiz available. I enjoyed taking the dragon quiz. I won't reveal my score but I did discover some things I didn't know. And I'll give you a little hint: Dragons love chocolate as much as authors do.

## PROMOTION

Web Design at [webdesign.about.com/compute/webdesign/msubmenu\\_clipart.htm](http://webdesign.about.com/compute/webdesign/msubmenu_clipart.htm) provides over 2,000 free backgrounds for WebPages as well as a host of clip art images. It also has some images that require a fee. Many of the clip art images can be used for graphic design as in promotional flyers. Free screen savers and fonts are also available.

Warning: This site is addictive.

## RESEARCH

Are you a visual person? You like to see what things looked like? Try Go.com at [www.go.com/Gallery?svx=webdir\\_toc](http://www.go.com/Gallery?svx=webdir_toc). You will find an incredible collection of downloadable images. I accessed the history of art and was able to see detailed artwork from the Medieval and Renaissance periods. There are many topics: health, sports, movies, books, etc.

The Ship Captain's Medical Guide at [www.mcagency.org.uk/medical/](http://www.mcagency.org.uk/medical/) was designed for ships that did not have a doctor on board. The first edition was compiled in 1868, the most recent edition 1993. Its purpose is to recommend measures of treatment and prevention that could be handled by the ship's officers. The information could be useful for writers who have characters who are not doctors but have a medical situation that needs attention.

So You Wanna at [www.soyouwanna.com/site/index.html](http://www.soyouwanna.com/site/index.html) provides the answers to many subjects you might want to know something about. I browsed the subject of Opera. It provided a history, recommendations, and dispelled many common beliefs.

Maybe I'm morose, but one way that I get the creative juices to flow is to walk through old cemeteries. I'm intrigued by the inscriptions on headstones and always wonder at the stories behind them. Now, when I don't have time to actually go to a cemetery, I visit Cemetery Records Online at [www.interment.net/Default.htm](http://www.interment.net/Default.htm).

## PASSWORD PROBLEMS?

If you spend any time at all on the Internet, you no doubt access sites that require a password for entry. The more sites, the more passwords you have to remember—unless you opt to use one password over and over, which can reduce your security at all sites. Now Passcenter at [www.passcenter.com](http://www.passcenter.com) offers to keep track of your bookmarks and your passwords at no charge. To access passcenter, you are given a graphic

"face" which is used as your password. The concept was developed on the theory that it is easier to remember a face than a word. When you enter Passcenter, you must select your "face" from a random set that is displayed.

## REMINDER

This month Julie Kistler reminds us that you can have a link to your website listed at the NINC website. You need to send "your name and WebPages address to Craig, our NINC webmaster, at [webmaster@ninc.com](mailto:webmaster@ninc.com) or [cj@digidak.com](mailto:cj@digidak.com) and he will post your link." You need to give him your name as it appears on the roster because he has to verify your membership. "Once you give him your roster name, you can have the website address posted under your pseudonym." Simply let Craig know that's what you want.

"You can also ask Craig, the webmaster, for a NINC logo to put on your website if you want to link there."

## NOVELISTS, INC. LISTSERVE

If you want to know more about the NinCLink, you can go to [www.egroups.com/group/NINCLINK](http://www.egroups.com/group/NINCLINK). At the site, you can subscribe and set your preferences (digest, individual posts, etc.).

**You can also subscribe** by sending a blank e-mail to: [NINCLINK-subscribe@egroups.com](mailto:NINCLINK-subscribe@egroups.com)

**To unsubscribe**, send a blank e-mail to: [NINCLINK-unsubscribe@egroups.com](mailto:NINCLINK-unsubscribe@egroups.com)

**To go no-mail**, send a blank e-mail to: [NINCLINK-nomail@egroups.com](mailto:NINCLINK-nomail@egroups.com)

**If you have questions**, you can e-mail one of the three moderators—Brenda Hiatt-Barber ([BrendaHB@aol.com](mailto:BrendaHB@aol.com)); Patricia de la Fuente ([Patricia@hiline.net](mailto:Patricia@hiline.net)) or Julie Kistler ([julie@juliekistler.com](mailto:julie@juliekistler.com)).

If you have sites to share that you think would be of interest to Novelists' Inc. members, please e-mail me.

**— Lorraine Heath ([LorraineHe@aol.com](mailto:LorraineHe@aol.com))**

## MEMBER NEWS.....

### ▶ ▶ ▶ Continued from page 13

*annoying and frustrating that you should dismiss and discount the contribution made to the publishing industry by authors like myself.*

*"The books I and my fellow romance writers write are looked down upon by a number of people, but Romance Novels make up more than 50% of mass paperback sales in the US. Surely that must count for something, if only that there are people reading other types of books. And while they might not be to everyone's taste that doesn't mean they*

*should be dismissed altogether.*

*"While I've read several of your book recommendations I've stopped because I find their content usually depressing in nature. I'll continue to watch your show but I doubt I'll pick up or read the books you are choosing.*

*"I like reading fiction that takes me on an adventure, that draws me into an exciting and wonderful tale of love and commitment. I've been married for 30 years, to the same man yet. What's so wrong about*

*reading books that reinforce and rejoice in the belief that lasting love and happy marriages can and do happen? That's far more rewarding and uplifting than reading about the horrors of dysfunctional families.*

*"Still your fan.  
Respectfully  
Moyra Tarling"*

No one was more surprised than Tarling when she received a telephone call from an Oprah staff member inviting her to report to a local TV studio to tape her message.

**Continued on page 18 ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶**



# THE COMELY CURMUDGEON

## “Habit Forming”

I’ve tried cigarettes a few times—and I’ve never once understood the attraction. I’ve spent enough of my life standing downwind of smoking campfires, thanks, so I feel no need to light up a cigarette to reproduce the effect. Especially since I’m not at my most comely when I’m red-faced, teary-eyed, and gasping for air.

However, I think the real reason I’m not a smoker, apart from my general enjoyment of breathing, is that I lack the discipline to form the habit. To become a real smoker—someone who can indeed call it a *habit*—you need to light up at least ten times a day, wouldn’t you say? And truly dedicated smokers—chain smokers, the real elite of smokerdom—have to do it, what, once every twenty minutes?

Me, I’ve been known to forget to *inhale* on occasion, so I doubt I could cope with the demands of having to remember to locate and light a cigarette that often. You think I’m being facetious (I can see it in your eyes), but there was actually a period in my childhood when I so frequently forgot to inhale that I was constantly passing out in a dead faint; even now, I still sometimes get quite dizzy before I remember to breathe. So perhaps you can see how someone like me could go deep into nicotine withdrawal without figuring out what was wrong.

I’m just not good at habits. As soon as I form one, I get tired of it, or simply find myself incapable of maintaining it. To be regular about anything—even a *bad* habit—is more effort, more discipline, than I can muster.

Consider: To be a smoker, you not only have to remember to light up once every sixty minutes (for example), you also have to remember to keep yourself supplied with cigarettes and matches and places to drop your ashes and put your stubs. See how complicated it’s getting already? Then if you’re *me*, you’d invariably run out of cigarettes at three o’clock in the morning in a strange city right after your rental car blew up, and the sheer overwhelming *pressure* to remain true to your habit in the face of such obstacles would be monumentally destructive.

Which is why, as I’ve matured, I’ve shed all guilt and concern about not being a creature of habit. I’ve decided it’s just my little way of ensuring that I don’t someday find myself hitch hiking in Poughkeepsie at 3 am in search of Virginia Slims.

It’s also why I utterly loathe, hate, despise, and dread the inevitable questions about my “habits” as a writer.

You know the questions I mean: Do you write every day? How many hours per day do you write? How many pages-per day do you write? Do you research before you start the book,

or while you’re working on the book? How much research do you do? How long does it take you to write a book? Do you have any rituals when you sit down to write? What kind of music do you listen to while you write? Do you know everything that will happen before you write a scene, or does it all come as a surprise to you? What do you do about writer’s block? How long is a chapter? Do you see the characters or the plot first? Does setting arise from story, or story from setting? How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?

I DON’T KNOW.

Well, no, I’m lying. Gee, here’s a big cat to let out of the bag: I do not write every day.

I probably think about writing every day. In my mind’s eye, I dream of an ideal Laura Resnick who writes every day. (She also exercises daily, manages money well, rarely loses her temper, and eats a high-fiber low-fat diet.) I don’t necessarily sneer at writers who say things like, “Writing is a muscle, and you need to exercise it every day.” I often punish myself for not writing every day. I occasionally neglect to correct total strangers who simply assume I write every day.

But, no, I don’t write every day. And if I ever do, then you’ll probably need to expose and arrest the person masquerading as me. Because, hullo!, writing every day qualifies as a *HABIT*, and I don’t have any. We’ve already been all through this—pay attention!

However, since I know lots of writers who don’t write every day, I don’t get too touchy about this question. Besides, *no* is an easy answer. Short. Succinct. To the point.

It’s all those others questions that drive me bonkers. And my bonkerism increases ten-fold when other *writers* ask me this stuff. In general, I think that “how writers write” is a topic right up there with laundry products for sheer lack of scintillation. However, noted sf/f author Harry Turtledove woke me up to the facts of life in a *SFWA Bulletin* article where he compared writing to sex: Everyone (Harry said) wants to know how everyone else does it.

Ah-hah! My problem in a nutshell—I don’t want to know how my friends and enemies (let alone my relatives or my colleagues) have sex. Not ever. I mean, please, I can accept, in a purely abstract way, that you have sex; but I never ever want to have even *one* mental image of you having sex, or vice versa. Line drawn, door closed, cut to the waves pounding against the shore, and FADE OUT.

Similarly... sorry, all my esteemed fellow NINCers, but I really don’t give a damn how any of you write your books. Not Kathy Eagle, whose books are so moving that I often want to quit writing after I read them. Not Nora Roberts,

who writes so prolifically and successfully that she constitutes a genuine phenomenon. Not Mary Jo Putney, one of my wisest and favorite writing friends. Not Valerie Taylor, with whom I brainstorm on book ideas and story problems at local restaurants. No matter how much I respect the person, love the work, envy the success, or enjoy attacking the story problem together, I really have no interest in hearing or reading about or discussing the *process*. Everyone makes love in their own way; and the key words there, in my opinion, are *in their own way*.

I'm often flabbergasted when I hear about how someone else writes a book. Multiple drafts? (I'd quit in exhausted despair.) Graphs and charts and right-angle juxtaposition? (I was always bad at geometry.) Everything planned in advance, all factors known and accounted for before composing the prose. (I'd never feel compelled to write if I already knew everything that would happen.) Scenes written at random, then later put in order and quilted together. (How does one even do that?)

I'm usually equally aghast at people's (unrequested) descriptions of their sex lives: You do *what* to get in the mood? You did it *where*? He asked for *what*? And this was *how* many people? But didn't the latex itch after a while? Well, why don't you just *tell* him that you're bored and counting ceiling tiles? Wait, this wasn't the feather boa I loaned you, was it?

I'm also regularly bowled over by the work habits which writers come out of the closet with: Writing from 4 am to 7 am. (Sorry, I'm busy REMing at that time.) Writing 10 pages a day everyday no matter what. (The number of friends whom I've had to coax out of the "I'm so inadequate, I'm such a fraud!" doldrums after hearing *that* one....) Writing on separate projects in the morning and the afternoon. Writing without leaving a room for weeks. Writing in public, in private, by hand, with voice-operated software, without music, with one specific piece of music playing non-stop, with the TV on, with the blinds drawn, with candles burning, with cookies at hand, outside, inside, at the beach, on a laptop, in a laundry room....

And what have you learned, Dorothy?

Everyone's different. So there's no "right" way. Ergo, no one can give you the answers, whether you're a dreamy-eyed aspirant who has yet to complete even one short story, or the burned-out veteran of 50 novels looking to refresh yourself. It's like sex. Once in a while, someone may have a specific gem of advice that will help you find the path to fulfillment, but mostly—whether writing or making love—you just have to muddle through by yourself (or with your collaborator, shall we say), in an open-hearted trial-and-error quest, and find your own way of doing what you need to do in order to get what you want.

And if you're someone who can't ever get into the habit of forming habits, like me, then your writing process is always changing. Which is why I can never answer those damn questions about how I write. I don't know how many pages a day I write, or how long it takes me to complete a book, or how many hours a day I sit here, or what daily goals

I set, or what I know (or don't know) at the start of a project or a scene, or how much research I do! I don't know because every book is different, and because *I'm* different for every book.

At 37, with 15 novels, 35 short stories, a nonfiction book, and a truckload of articles behind me, I'm no longer the innocent young virgin I was (in the literary sense) when I wrote *One Sultry Summer* on a beach in Sicily and sold it to Silhouette Desire more than a decade ago. My process has evolved, and it keeps evolving. Moreover, my process for a 250,000-word epic fantasy is different than it was for a 55,000-word category romance—as is my process for non-fiction, or my process for a 110,000-word romantic thriller, or my process for a 3,000-word short story.

In addition, the process that works for one 250,000-word fantasy novel doesn't necessarily work for the next. My pace is never the same (*boy*, is my pace never the same!), my method of construction has to vary, and even the way I coax my butt into the chair for that big a project keeps changing.

So when people ask me all that stuff about how long it takes, and what order I do it in, and what I listen to while I'm doing it, and how I make myself do it.... Not only can I not fathom why anyone would want to know this, since there is no right answer, no universal formula, no secret handshake, and it's a pretty darn dull subject, anyhow... but I also simply *cannot answer*—no more than you can answer (I hope) how you make love every time for more than ten years. One way or another, the books and the stories and the articles get done year after year (just as, one way or another, the hormones get exercised), and that's all that really matters.

So Harry Turtledove was right: It *is* like sex. I mean that it's a private, special, individual process which often yields a very public result (a book or a baby)—and which also sometimes fizzles out into an awkwardness you don't ever want anyone else in the whole world to know about (those "what was I even *thinking*?" moments at the keyboard, those "oh, let's have a drink and forget the whole thing" moments with your partner).

And, as a card-carrying I-don't-care-how-YOU-do-it novelist, I'm always amazed by how many accomplished writers (never mind aspirants) worry that their process isn't "right," that they're doing it wrong. If someone else writes in the mornings, or every day, or nine pages per day without fail, or three drafts of every novel, more power to them. I have written in the morning. I have written nine pages in one sitting; in fact, I once wrote 35 pages in one sitting, but I was younger and hardier then. However, I've never written three drafts of a book, and I think I'd rather eat ground glass than do so. And, yes, I've even been through phases where I wrote every single day.

And you know what? BIG FAT HAIRY DEAL.

What works for someone else has nothing to do with you or with me. I can't light up a cigarette when I get stuck on a tricky scene because, oops!, I don't smoke. (That's a *habit*, remember?) I do whatever the hell it is I have to do at that moment on that day with that particular scene. Sometimes I get cookies (because I *am* an ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶



## THE COMELY CURMUDGEON

▶ ▶ ▶ adherent of the Elizabeth Bevarly Theory: There is no plot problem that cookies will not solve). Sometimes I circle the computer in chaotic despair for three days, sometimes I go back 50 pages in the MS to figure out where I went wrong, sometimes I scrap a scene (or a character, or a premise, or a plot thread, or even a whole story), sometimes I get hit with sudden inspiration (usually while I'm in six-lane traffic)—and sometimes I just sit there *wishing* I smoked.

One way or another, I just figure it out each and every time—though I'd be the first to admit that years of experience help, particularly in terms of confidence: "Come on, Resnick, you've done this five thousand times before, so I know you can do it now. Just hang in there." And that's not something I could say to myself on that beach in Sicily as I composed my first-ever novel so many moons ago.

Only I can find my own way. Only you can find your own way. Only Stephen King can find his own way. We can grouse and share and commiserate all we want—in fact, it's fun to do so! But no one has the answers—and I recommend punching them hard if they say that they do. (No, you don't really have to punch them. Just be aware that I will. You've been warned in advance.)

I also know a number of people who've become proponents of Julia Cameron and *The Artist's Way*. Hey, that's great; if you find something within her advice that helps you

work, then do it. Me, though, I've never read Cameron. I feel it's my duty not to read her. I'm holding out against the faint possibility that she's going to wind up as some sort of corrupt creative guru. Nothing personal against Ms. Cameron, I'm just trying to be prepared for all eventualities. If her adherents suddenly disappear into the desert someday, eat lots of peyote and crackers, and then sign over all their literary rights to her, I intend to be the holdout, the heroine, the person who calls the FBI and saves the day.

No, I'm not a creature of habit; but I do believe in planning ahead whenever possible.

— **Laura Resnick**

If the Comely Curmudgeon seems even more bad-tempered than usual, it may be because, while writing this month's column, she was simultaneously moving house, proofreading 724 pages of galleys, and passing page 1,100 of her overdue manuscript. *NINK* extends its apologies to smokers, users of latex, and fans of *The Artist's Way*.

*Laura Resnick is the award-winning author of lots and lots of romance, sff/f, and non-fiction. Her next release is the paperback edition of the epic fantasy novel In Legend Born, due out soon (probably October). Everyone except Kirkus and her best friend's mom thought it was a good book, so you might want to go pick up a copy now that it's coming out in a version under \$10. Besides, the sequel is finally done, so if you read In Legend Born now, you won't have to wait as long to find out how the story ends as did all the poor bastards who bought it in hardcover.*

## MEMBER NEWS.....

### ▶ ▶ ▶ Continued from page 15

"I'd been flipping channels one afternoon...It was a spur of the moment thing," she said.

The taping, Tarling said, went well.

Tarling's 16th Silhouette Romance, *Denim and Diamond* the third in a trilogy, was published in July. The other two titles in the series are *A Diamond for Kate*, which was released in December and was nominated for a National Reader's Choice Award for best Traditional, and *The Family Diamond*, released in February.

### Winnin' Dixie

Dixie Browning took first and third places respectively in the North Carolina Press Club's Book/Fiction/Romance contest with

her books, *The Bride-In-Law* and *Texas Millionaire*. *The Bride-In-Law* went on to win second place in the National Federation of Press Women's Book/Fiction/Romance competition.

### Those Texas Nights

Sylvie Kurtz's first Harlequin Intrigue, *One Texas Night*, is a *Romantic Times* nominee for Best Category Romance. The book is also a finalist in the Romantic Suspense category of the Booksellers Best Awards. Congratulations, Sylvie!

### Heirloom Quilt Contest

MIRA Books will award an antique Star of Bethlehem, Amish-made quilt valued at \$850 to promote Karen Harper's new suspense novel,

*Down To The Bone*. The book has an Amish setting. Harlequin authors are ineligible to enter.

To enter the contest, Write 100 words or less explaining which of your own family's heirlooms mean the most to younger generations, and how the heirloom records their family history. Submit the essay to MIRA Books' Heirloom Quilt Contest, c/o Dunwoodie Communications, 386 Park Ave. South, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10016 by Jan. 31, 2001.

*Please send items for Member News to Kathy Chwedyk via e-mail at KChwed@aol.com or regular mail at 1215 Fairmont Court, Algonquin, IL 60102. Chwedyk writes Regencies as Kate Huntington and contemporaries as Kate Ivers. Her current books are Lady Diana's Darkings (by Kate Huntington) and Midsummer Lightning (by Kate Ivers.)*



# DISPATCH FROM THE FRONT.....

## NEVER WASTE ANYTHING

By Ardath Mayhar

For 20 years I have advised my writing students never to waste anything that happens to them, be it pleasant or painful. I thought I had taken that advice as far as it could go on my own, but, as life has a habit of doing, I learned that I hadn't even begun.

In September 1999, I lost my husband of 41 years. He had been terribly ill for many years, but I learned then that sometimes death is a friend, not something to grieve over. In October I swerved to miss a small animal in the road, lost control and wrecked my car. That was when fresh material began to pour in, uninvited, unwanted, but hopefully not to remain unused.

I know how it feels to be that guy bound solidly to a backboard, staring at the roof of the ambulance while EMTs work. (NOTE: They bind your head down so tightly that it feels as if a quarter-sized bit at the back of the skull is slowly turning into mush.) I understand what it feels like to wait, still bound to the board, while the ER team assesses the injuries and waits for an opening in X-ray to make sure just what all you broke. I did a pretty good job on myself, too: fractured ankle that needed surgery to put the jigsaw puzzle back together, using six screws and a plate, plus a compression fracture in the spine at T-5, which is just where the lungs work hardest in breathing.

The term "Guarded Breathing" meant nothing to me before. Now I understand. This means that the pain is so intense that your lungs refuse to expand more than the minimum amount needed to supply oxygen. You breathe in short gasps, which makes eating all but impossible.

When that term was used on a rerun of the old "Emergency" show a while back, I understood exactly what the victim was feeling. Now if I can only get it onto paper in a story, this experience will prove valuable. Waste nothing, remember?

Have you heard about pain management specialists? Bless them all! One came to my rescue after the ankle surgery and did a Thoracic Epidural, injecting a cocktail of drugs directly into the compressed disk. *It Stopped Hurting*, comparatively speaking. I intend to use this rather new medical discipline in a story or

book before I am too old to attack the computer.

In addition, I can sympathize with anyone wearing a plastic back brace and describe its man-eating habits. This thing encased my entire torso, though the bosom could have contained at least one more woman of my dimensions. If I could sing, I could have stood in for a Wagnerian soprano. I carried my purse, a book, etc. in it when going to the doctor, as using what I have been given is an old habit.

I suspect the slug from a .350 Magnum wouldn't penetrate the thing, and I could have fallen off the roof without reinjuring my back, I feel certain. Never again will I turn a turtle onto its back, for now I understand the helplessness such a big, thick shell entails.

Going to the bathroom and getting out again while wearing it was simply impossible. My sister and her husband took me home from the hospital to recuperate and put me in their room, by day when they were at work, so I could get to their small bathroom, using the walker. The first time, I went wearing Matilda, the brace, I sat down without a problem. Though my brother-in-law had installed a bar to grab, my arm motion was so curtailed and my leg so unstable that when I tried to pull myself up again it didn't help.

The space was too narrow to get my elbows down so I could undo the six Velcro straps that held Matilda on. Luckily my sister came home for lunch and freed me from the trap. This was no situation for a long-time claustrophobe!

Speaking of Velcro—I now know how it might feel to wrestle an octopus. Using the wheelchair, I went to the bathroom (the larger one) but shed Matilda after entering.

When I was ready to leave, I decided to save my sister some effort by taking the brace back to the bedroom with me. I picked it up. Those straps grabbed everything—pants legs, hair, skin, cast—until I threw it away in desperation and fled as fast as I could wheel my chair.

When I got into a walking cast, it, too, had a set of Velcro straps. Getting caught between Matilda and the walking cast was something like being in the

middle of a fight between King Kong and Godzilla.

Emancipation from Matilda gave me a bit of insight into what it would feel like to be let out of a straitjacket. Getting out of the cast was almost as satisfying. I thought I was on the road to recovery at full speed.

Then I discovered I had a staph infection, as often happens after surgery. I learned, to my utter disgust and despair, what fragility feels like. Having been strong (East Texas dairy farmers have to be that) and active all my life, being incapacitated, not to mention *weak*, was a revelation and gave me a lot of material that may prove useful, given time. A lot of time. Some things have to "cool off" quite a bit before you can bear to go back into them in depth.

Now, five months after the accident, I am truly recovering and can walk without a cane. The back, having been abused to its limit while I was dairying, got better on its own without surgery, and my spirits are good. Being an incurable optimist helps there.

I turned 70 in February, and my doctors, all the time, have been mind-boggled at the way I heal. One of the neurologists came into my hospital room in the middle of the second night and asked me to squeeze his hands as hard as I could. Never assume that an old woman lying flat on her back is weak. Remember that I milked cows for ten years and a goat after that. I squeezed, and he flinched, said, "That is enough of that!" and retreated.

In March 2000, I attended AggieCon, a science fiction convention at Texas A&M, driving myself there and back. I walked up and down stairs as if the ankle was completely well (it isn't quite, but getting there).

After being unable to write for almost three years, drained by my husband's illness as well as keeping our bookshop afloat without help, I can now sit down at the computer and *start something new* without wanting to scream and run. The con recharged my batteries.

The most valuable thing I have learned is that a positive attitude will carry you through almost anything. You can make stories out of the strangest and most painful things, if you remember them. I made mental notes all the way along, and I intend to use them all before I sink forward, dead, with my nose in the keyboard.

# .....THE FAST TRACK...

Compiled by MARILYN PAPPANO

## 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. 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>.

Members who write under pseudonyms should notify Marilyn at any of the above "addresses" to assure their listing in "Fast Track."

NINC Member	Book Title/Publisher	June 1	June 8	June 15	June 22	June 29
Mary Lynn Baxter	<i>Sultry</i> , Mira		123	145		
Julie Beard	<i>My Fair Lord</i> , Berkley			213	119	
Patti Berg	<i>Bride for a Night</i> , Avon	149				
Sandra Brown	<i>Tomorrow's Promise</i> , Mira		30	29	51	62
Sandra Brown	<i>Standoff</i> , Warner	58				
Shirlee Busbee	<i>For Love Alone</i> , Warner	140				
Stella Cameron	<i>Key West</i> , Zebra	114				
Catherine Coulter	<i>Devil's Embrace</i> , Signet	90				
Kathleen Eagle	<i>What the Heart Knows</i> , Avon			129n	128	
Janet Evanovich	<i>High Five</i> , St. Martin's			34n	37	36
Janet Evanovich	<i>Hot Six</i> , St. Martin's					7n
Patricia Gaffney	<i>The Saving Graces</i> , HarperTorch	10	12	14	18	14
Julie Garwood	<i>Heartbreaker</i> , Pocket					67n
Eileen Goudge	<i>One Last Dance</i> , Signet	68	98	142		
Kristin Hannah	<i>On Mystic Lake</i> , Ballantine	120				
Linda Howard	<i>All the Queen's Men</i> , Pocket Star	33	35	59	94	99
Iris Johansen	<i>The Killing Game</i> , Bantam	9	15	28	38	35
Iris Johansen	<i>The Search</i> , Bantam			50n	61	70
Susan Johnson	<i>Legendary Lover</i> , Bantam	112				
Jayne Ann Krentz	<i>Eclipse Bay</i> , Jove			7n	12	22
Elizabeth Lowell	<i>Midnight in Ruby Bayou</i> , Morrow					43n
Debbie Macomber	<i>Family Men</i> , Harlequin	67				
Anne McCaffrey	<i>The Tower and the Hive</i> , Ace	141				
Linda Lael Miller	<i>Bridget</i> , Sonnet	147				
Linda Lael Miller	<i>Christy</i> , Sonnet	48n				
Mary Jo Putney	<i>The Burning Point</i> , Berkley	76				
Emilie Richards	<i>Whiskey Island</i> , Mira		140	136		
Nora Roberts	<i>Carnal Innocence</i> , Berkley	40				
Nora Roberts	<i>From the Heart</i> , Berkley				194	94
Nora Roberts	<i>Irish Hearts</i> , Silhouette	95n	3	1	5	6
Nora Roberts	<i>Irish Rebel</i> , Silhouette		5	5	9	11
Nora Roberts	<i>River's End</i> , Jove	6	11	19	30	28
Joan Wolf	<i>Someday Soon</i> , Warner		69	63	105	

### Novelists' Ink

Novelists, Inc.

*An organization for writers of popular fiction*

P.O. Box 1166

Mission KS 66222-0166

Publishing Services by Huseby Agency, Ltd

FIRST CLASS MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
FARGO ND  
PERMIT #281