

# Novelists'

# INK

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

## **RESEARCH ROADBLOCKS: History The Way It Wasn't, and Other Obstacles In Writers' Paths**

BY REBECCA BRANDEWYNE

### Part 1 of 2

Back in my wild, younger days, I was a journalism major in college, minoring in history and music. I mention this because one of the first things I ever learned as a journalist was to get the facts: the who, what, when, where, why, and how of any story. This was also one of the first things I ever learned in my history classes. And for years as an author, I thought I did a pretty darned good job of all this. In fact, a great deal of my time was devoted not to writing, but to researching history and other pertinent details extensively for my novels—doing my homework and getting my facts down as accurately as I possibly could, just as I had always been taught.

Yes, like all writers, I occasionally slipped up, and errors crept now and then into my work. However, for the most part, I was not, I prided myself, one of those flagrantly heedless authors who obviously didn't know the Ming Dynasty from Ming of Mongo, and who just as obviously couldn't have cared less, so long as the books kept on selling like hotcakes.

Then, four years ago, I divorced my then-husband, and two years after that, I met the most utterly brilliant, erudite man I have ever known—"my Welshman," I call him—and I was just as swept off my feet by him as any of my heroines have ever been by their heroes. My Welshman and I speak the same languages: cosmogony, esoterics, history, mythology, occultism, philosophy, theology, and so on. From acanthus to zodiac, we have

covered it all over the course of our relationship.

### The Spark

One conversation, in particular, that we had about the Knights Templar treasure sparked my imagination, and I decided (naturally) to write a novel based around this theme. Not only would this be something that would interest me deeply, but it would also be a challenge, as I planned to switch back and forth between the past and the present with the chapters in the past following from place to place the progress of what was to become my Knights Templar treasure, and with the chapters in the present following the progress of my hero and heroine as they searched

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## **AGENT CLAUSES IN BOOK CONTRACTS:**

### **Author Beware**

Ninc recently asked AAR, through liaison Steven Axelrod of The Axelrod Agency, about the practice of some agents including language in agency clauses that give them a commission on an option book, even if author and agent are no longer working together. Specifically, Ninc members wanted to

know if AAR could prohibit this practice among its member agents under its Canon of Ethics.

Steve Axelrod brought this question to Arnold Goodman, chairman of AAR's Ethics Committee, who provided the following answer:

"The contractual provisions in question relate to the services to be performed

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## Novelists, Inc.

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## THE PRESIDENT'S VOICE.....

A new year is born, and Novelists, Inc. has a new president. But unlike the recent elections in the United States and Canada, I never campaigned for this job. I never stood before you and articulated my vision for Ninc. It's too late now—you're already stuck with me—but let me share my vision with you, anyway.

If life is a three-ring circus, my three rings are my family, my writing, and Ninc. There's a fair amount of overlap among these rings. For instance, my older son (family) is graduating from high school this spring, and every time I contemplate how much his college tuition is going to cost, I am inspired to plant myself in front of the computer and produce pages (writing).

In a sense, Ninc is both writing and family. I agreed to take on the presidency not because I craved power (I don't!) or because I had tons of free time (ha!) but because I view Ninc as an unwieldy, occasionally dysfunctional but generally warm and affectionate family of working writers. I see Ninc's mission as twofold, half family and half writing: to offer the emotional support this wonderful clan of writers needs as we strive within what can often be a brutal business; and to advocate, when possible, for the rights of authors.

Please note that qualifier: *when possible*.

If only the Ninc presidency came with a magic wand! With a single wave of it, I would endow all editors with brilliant taste. I would make all publishers recognize the difference between books and widgets. I would have all agents decide a fifteen-percent commission is really too high, and they'd roll back their fees to ten percent. I'd vaporize the numbers-crunchers in publishers' marketing departments and replace them with passionate bibliophiles. I'd bless you all with gorgeous covers, smooth laydowns, rave reviews, and blockbuster sales. I'd make this business we're in just a little less brutal.

But I don't have a magic wand, and none of those wishes falls under the heading of *when possible*.

Novelists, Inc. is small. We have a limited budget. We face legal constraints that sometimes prevent us from making statements or taking actions, even though we want to. I am lucky to serve with a marvelous board—President-Elect Pat Rice, Secretary Kathy Chwedyk, Treasurer Linda Kay West, Advisory Council Representative Georgia Bockoven, and Newsletter Editor Pam Browning, as well as having former NINK editor Terey daly Ramin in place as the conference coordinator for our Philadelphia conference. But they also have loved ones and careers making demands on their time. As far as I know, none of them has a magic wand, either.

So, unlike the U.S. and Canadian politicians who spent the past so many months issuing empty promises, I'm going to make only two promises to you—but they won't be empty ones. I promise that *when possible* I will do what I can to better the novelist's lot. And I promise to work hard to make this a good year for Novelists, Inc.

— Barbara Keiler

## 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.*

### POD Correction:

In my article on print-on-demand publishing I said that Barnes and Noble can get books out of iUniverse when no one else can. I spoke too soon.

I've had no problem getting the reprints from the B&N

online store, true. Then I agreed to do a talk and signing at a local bricks and mortar B&N. I told them in early September iUniverse wasn't moving very quickly, so the Community Relations woman went ahead and placed the order. When I showed up on October 14, only one copy each of two titles had arrived. "In spite of confirming our order!" the CR woman exclaimed over and over again. Those books never did arrive. I ran into the CR woman again recently and she was still rolling her eyes and fuming.

On the other hand, the books ordered by the Texas Book Festival on November 11 arrived in good shape on November 10—and the participating B&N had several copies as well. Plus iUniverse has dutifully been paying me royalties on the sales of the reprints. I'm trying not to wonder, though, how much higher those checks would be if iUniverse filled *all* their orders.

— **Lillian Stewart Carl**

## AUTHOR BEWARE

▶ ▶ ▶ *Continued from page 1*

by the agent and the compensation to be received by the agent for those services. As such, they are quintessentially the kind of provisions that are beyond the jurisdiction of the AAR to regulate.

"The AAR is a membership organization of individual agents who compete with one another, and the laws governing such organizations generally prohibit as 'anti-competitive' any regulation by the organization of the separate 'business' arrangements that may be entered into by their members with individual clients. Also, and as even your examples indicate, such provisions vary in scope and content; even if legal, we believe it would be beyond the proper role and capacity of the AAR to try to judge or regulate the approach which a member-agent might take in attempting to conclude an agency representation agreement with a writer.

"Having said that, I do want to bring to your attention that each member of the AAR is governed by a Canon of Ethics, which prohibits unethical conduct. The AAR takes very seriously and duly acts on all complaints that it receives alleging specific unethical conduct on the part of its members."

Nine members should be aware that agency agreements and clauses are a place where there is the potential for a conflict of interests between authors and agents, that the agreement and/or clause should be read carefully (or reviewed by a publishing attorney), and that among the pitfalls is the option issue.

Option language in sample agency clauses:

"...The provisions of this Paragraph shall apply to any options exercised by the Publisher..."

"...The Author further hereby irrevocably appoints XXX as the Author's sole and exclusive agent with

respect to the Work, including without limitation works to which any option herein apply. In consideration for the services rendered the said agent is entitled to receive or retain as its commission fifteen percent of gross monies paid to the Author hereunder including said optioned works. The provisions of this paragraph will survive the termination of this Agreement..."

"...Furthermore, this agency is one coupled with an interest and XX Agency retains an irrevocable agency for the lifetime of this Agreement including any extensions, renewals, and/or assignments; and the provisions of this paragraph shall apply to any options exercised by Publisher..."

Many thanks to AAR, Steven Axelrod, and Arnold Goodman for continuing to help Nine members to better understand the role AAR plays in the author-agent relationship. **NINK**



## BREAKING NEWS

COMPILED BY  
PAMELA BROWNING

### Orr Naught

Former agent Alice Orr advises that her literary agency, the Alice Orr Agency Inc., is closed. The previous New York City address of the agency will no longer receive mail, and all mailings, including manuscript submissions, will be returned unopened. She requests that we inform others in the writers' community that she is no longer an agent "so that authors won't waste time, postage, and hope on submissions that will come to naught."

### Chasing Names

The Authors Guild, Inc., on behalf of nine authors—R. L. Stine, John Berendt, Charles Frazier, Thomas L. Friedman, Joanna Lindsey, Louis Sachar, Elizabeth Strout, Susan Elizabeth Phillips, and Billie Letts—has filed a complaint in accordance with the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy adopted by ICANN, the non-profit overseer of domain name registration, against a British company known as Old Barn Studios, Ltd., asking an arbitration panel to transfer to the authors the ".com" domain names incorporating the authors' own names.

"For authors, whose names and reputations are their most valued stock-in-trade, bringing this proceeding was absolutely necessary," said Letty Cottin Pogrebin, president of the Authors Guild. "We hope to establish the precedent that in cyberspace, as in

## RESEARCH ROADBLOCKS

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for it after its disappearance in the Middle Ages. A bonus was that since, to this day, no one really knows what the Knights Templar treasure actually was, I could make it anything I wanted it to be. And being a writer, I also decided (again, naturally) to make it a book—an extremely ancient manuscript filled with arcane knowledge and the keys to the mysteries of life and the universe.

Greatly enthused, I set to work. I never do outlines; I only do research and make copious notes for myself—primarily because if I don't have all my facts, at least, straight in my head before I ever start writing, I just don't ever seem to make any real, concrete progress. And research, I have learned over the years, is both an art and a science. How do you even begin researching, for example, when you don't even know what questions to ask or where to start looking for the information and facts you need?

Personally, I always begin with just three things: time period, place setting, and subject matter. This leads naturally to my initial questions: What was (or, for contemporary novels, is) taking place during my time period? Where is my place setting, and what does it look like? What is my subject matter going to cover? For general answers and overviews, I've always found an excellent encyclopedia one of the best places to start, followed by moving on to specialized sources once I get a fairly decent idea of what all I'm going to require.

### The Book

But my latest novel (entitled *Destiny's Daughter*) is different from anything else I've ever written before.

A projected fourteen chapters set in the past, covering time periods and place settings from an unknown B.C. date in the fabled Elysian Plain, where my ancient manuscript is written, to 1446 A.D. in Scotland, when it abruptly vanishes, plainly have to be properly laid out in sequence—especially when they are going to be interspersed between chapters of a separate, however related, ongoing storyline in the present. Clearly, one of the very first things I need for this book, I realize, is an accurate, workable timeline. And that, I swiftly learn, is just the start of all my difficulties with this intricate, complex novel.

Despite my quite-considerable, in-depth research, however, I probably wouldn't ever even have known about all the various mistakes I had made in my timeline alone had it not been for the fact that I decide to e-mail all this material over to my Welshman, in Wales, to get his opinion, which I value highly. Among other things, he's both a historian and a writer himself, so I know he will be the ideal person to assist me with all of this—besides which, I reason, it is all his fault that I have hit upon this particular idea for a novel, anyway, since he is the one of us fascinated by the Knights Templar treasure!

### Major Problem

"Sweetheart, there are problems with your timeline," he informs me after receipt of same, and he then proceeds to detail all these for me. This is when I begin to have the very first inklings that all the well-known, highly respected, tried-and-true sources that most of us, as authors, rely on daily for the majority of our facts and story backgrounds often contain information that is simply incorrect.



Erroneous. Totally and unequivocally wrong.

I am truly astonished and absolutely shocked and stricken by this. I mean, inferior, ill-informed sources are one thing, usually obvious, and thus easy enough to spot and avoid. But like most writers, I've regularly used all the well-known, highly respected, tried-and-true sources—for over twenty years now—and if you can't trust even the dictionary that is the publishing industry's standard or the encyclopedia deemed to be the best in the whole wide world, then, for pity's sake, just what can you trust? How can you know that any source is providing you with accurate information and facts?

Unfortunately, the hard truth that presently hits me dead-on is that, without exhaustive—not just surface or even deeper—digging and comparison, you can't. As one character in *Destiny's Daughter* thinks to himself: It's not the Age of Aquarius. It's the Age of Misinformation and Disinformation!

### The Mystery of Research

Research, I am now made fully aware, is not only both an art and a science; it's also a mystery in which we writers must assume a role not unlike that of all the great, fictional private detectives. We must get all the information and facts, yes. But we must get them while simultaneously sorting them out from all the red herrings that have—whether unintentionally or deliberately—been placed like obstacles in our paths to mislead and deceive us. And quite often, despite all the seemingly competent police inspectors (scholars, experts, and sources) we have assisting us, it is still nevertheless completely up to us to expose who done it and bring about an arrest (make our own logical deductions, based on all the available evidence, and draw our own appropriate conclusions).

So, my Welshman's comprehensive (however kindly) critique in hand, I go back to the drawing-board to revise my timeline. The ancient manuscript that is going to be my Knights Templar treasure has been placed by my alleged author into an ornate puzzle box for safekeeping, and one of the people in the past who is going to open this box is—surprise!—Pandora.

### Prying Open The Box

The only trouble is that she is also one of the people wreaking havoc on my timeline—not to mention the fact that in some of the Greek myths, it is a jar and not a box that she opens, which is one of the things my Welshman has pointed out to me, just in case I've missed it (I haven't). Well, okay, but I'm allowed some literary license here, I insist to him. Jar. Box. What's the difference? Never mind that the jar myths are evidently older than the box myths and therefore presumed to be more correct. In truth, for all we really know, Pandora opened a tin can (of worms, of course).

"I am going to use the box," I stubbornly declare to my Welshman. He just grins, as he always does whenever I am in such a mood. Ever seen the movie *Life with Father*? We are like Clare and Vinnie discussing the return of a china pug dog to a department store in exchange for a suit. Clare says that he is going to have to pay either for the china pug dog or for the suit. Vinnie blithely replies that she doesn't see why. After all, she has returned the china pug dog to the store, so they shouldn't be charged for it, and since she has also given the store the china pug dog in exchange for the suit, they shouldn't be charged for that, either. I know my Welshman is thinking that I am currently behaving like Vinnie with the china pug dog and suit. Scowling at his impertinence, I return to the Greek myths.



## BREAKING NEWS

▶▶▶▶ traditional venues of trade, authors' names belong to them, not the to the first outfit that registers a famous name as a domain," she said.

A panel of three arbitrators will decide the proceeding.

(Members of the Authors Guild may register their domain names at discounted rates at <http://www.authorsguild.org/domainmain.html>. By registering through the Guild, authors avoid making their contact information public.)

### Supreme Court Appeal

The U.S. Supreme Court has announced that it will consider the publishers' and databases' appeal of the *Tasini v. The New York Times* decision reached by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in September, 1999. The decision ruled that publishers may not license freelancers' works that first appeared in their publications to electronic databases without the freelancers' permission.

After the circuit court ruling, the Authors Guild and several freelancers sued nine electronic databases claiming copyright infringement for their long practice of making freelance works available for a fee to subscribers. The suit claims the databases, including Lexis-Nexis, Westlaw, Dow Jones Interactive, and others did not obtain the authors' permission to republish their works.

The appeal will probably be argued in the spring, and a decision could be reached next summer, according to plaintiffs' attorneys.

Franco Funny

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## BREAKING NEWS

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The *Internet Movie Database* reports that French pressure groups have accused J. K. Rowling, author of the popular Harry Potter books, of “astounding racism” and Francophobia.

They’re saying that Rowling has deliberately given all of Harry’s enemies “French” names, including archnemesis Lord Voldemort, which translates as “flight of death.” Other supposedly offensive names are Malfoy and Pettigrew. Rowling insists that she chose the names more for the “sinister sounding syllables” than country of origin.

FYI, you funny French pressure groups you, the French did not invent Latin. Heck, they didn’t even invent French, which is basically an offshoot of Latin.

The Volde- in Voldemort is clearly taken from the Latin word *volare*, which means to fly. Mort is from the Latin *mors, mortis*, death. The etiology of the prefix mal- shows that it’s descended from the Latin *malus*, meaning bad. As for -foy, it derives from the Latin *focus*. (Mal+foy = Bad Focus, okay?)

With Pettigrew, Rowling could have taken it from the Latin *petulans, petulantis*, meaning forward, petulant, from the Latin root word *petere*, one of the meanings of which is to attack. As for -grew, the word *grew* in English is the past tense of *grow*, which has its root in the Anglo-Saxon *growan*, to sprout. True, one could possibly make a case here that the last syllable of Pettigrew hearkens back to the obsolete word *grue*, to shudder, but we’re still talking Middle English here, not French.

It doesn’t look to me as if the French have a case. The Romans might, but they’re dead.

And anyway, the furor ▶ ▶ ▶

## RESEARCH ROADBLOCKS

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Oh! By Zeus!

Further research reveals to me that instead of Mount Olympus, the Greek gods were originally associated with Mount Ida on the Isle of Crete. Zeus, in fact, is stated to have been raised on Mount Ida—all of which seems to indicate that the so-called Greek myths may actually be Minoan in origin rather than Greek, and this is, in fact, another detail my Welshman has already imparted to me.

Indeed, there is, it turns out, enough scholarly support for this theory that I feel I can safely transplant Pandora and company to Crete, c. 2400 B.C. to help straighten out my timeline. I realize, however, that this is now going to necessitate the addition of an author’s note explaining why I’ve done this, lest I receive dozens of fan letters politely (or not so politely) pointing out to me that I have “mistakenly confused” Mount Ida with Mount Olympus.

Inwardly, I groan. Just one more thing to write, when I am already behind schedule, as usual—one of the reasons for this being that I expend all this time and energy on research.

Next, it’s on to Moses and the Exodus, my puzzle box having now traveled from Crete to Egypt. Obviously, Moses, I deduce, must have taken something quite valuable from the Egyptians, or else the Bible’s unnamed Pharaoh wouldn’t ever have bothered pursuing him in the first place after letting him and his people go. Perhaps it’s even this purloined treasure that was placed into the Ark of the Covenant, along with the later stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments, I speculate. So in *Destiny’s Daughter*, Moses has stolen my puzzle box containing my ancient manuscript from the Egyptians. - More literary license (but,

hey, the Qabbalah came from somewhere!). Still, therefore, the rest of the Exodus chapter, I determine, has to be historically accurate—but unfortunately, this speedily proves a much harder task than one would ever imagine.

### Unsolved Mysteries

Do you know when the Exodus occurred, and under which Egyptian Pharaoh? I have news for you. Nobody does. Forget the movie *The Ten Commandments*. Yes, Charlton Heston was a fabulous Moses, and yes, Yul Brynner was an equally fabulous Rameses the Great. Unfortunately, education by Hollywood leaves a heck of a lot to be desired (or so my Welshman disdainfully proclaims to me).

It is, in fact, extremely doubtful that Rameses the Great was Moses’s Pharaoh, and there are numerous other contenders for that honor, I soon discover. So despite all the various sources I am now consulting, it is still incumbent upon me to somehow ascertain the likeliest Pharaoh candidate, there being little or no agreement whatsoever among scholars on any of this. Although fairly widely read in ancient world history, I’m still by no means an expert on either Egyptian or Hebrew history. Nevertheless, I’m confident that I am intelligent and knowledgeable enough to take a reasonable stab at identifying Moses’s Pharaoh for purposes of my novel. At the very least, I surely can’t do any worse than anybody else has, I suppose.

Rameses the Great, I quickly judge, has been dragged into the Exodus principally because the Bible calls the Egyptian region inhabited by the Hebrews the “Land of Rameses” (it’s also called the “Land of Goshen” and the “Fields of

Zoan"). However, "Rameses" means "Sons of Ra," and Ra was the god to whom most of the temples in this part of Egypt were dedicated long before Rameses the Great ever appeared on the scene. Thus, the name—and the confusion in this regard—begins to be easily explained.

As for correctly dating the Exodus itself, forget that, too. Scholars, I also rapidly find, routinely shift the entire Egyptian timeline back and forth over centuries (never mind that people called Immanuel Velikovsky a crackpot for suggesting decades ago that it was at least 600 years out of proper synchronization). Today the Egyptian timeline definitely shifts, depending on who is examining it and why (never mind that all these shifters and their detractors have been known to call one another crackpots, too. However, please do keep in mind that these and others like them are also the very same people producing all the nonfiction books that the rest of us regularly employ as our "expert" sources).

### A Plague Upon It

In my own mind, I am convinced that the plagues visited upon Egypt just prior to the Exodus are the result of some natural disaster and therefore have some scientific explanation (and no, please don't send me e-mail about blasphemy; right or wrong, we are all entitled to our own opinions, and there is, in fact, a perfectly legitimate, scientific explanation for all the plagues, involving a domino effect).

The largest natural disaster that occurred during the time period in question was the explosion of the isle of Thera (also called "Kalliste" and "Santorini") in the Mediterranean Sea. By various scientific means and measures, this massive volcanic eruption—estimated to have equaled the detonation of eight to fifteen nuclear bombs—has been dated to 1628 B.C. This date is earlier than all the other dates (and there are several different ones) proposed for the Exodus. Nevertheless, some scholars do support it, and other historical

pieces actually fit in with this 1628 B.C. date quite well, I conclude.

For one thing, prior to the Hyksos invasion of Egypt, the Egyptians didn't use chariots much at all, and what few they did have were for parades, not war. So, that they had an army of them with which to pursue Moses and company starts to narrow the timeline parameters for me. Next on my list is the fact that the Pharaoh in question cannot have been a first-born son; otherwise, obviously, he would have croaked right along with the rest of the first-borns during the last plague.

### In Search of Pharaoh

This means one of two things to me: He was either the younger son of a previous Egyptian Pharaoh, or else he was a foreigner (and younger son) who had seized power in Egypt. The chariot-driving Hyksos were foreign Pharaohs, I note. Further, Moses's Pharaoh lacked knowledge about the Hebrews' Joseph, who had been a Grand Vizier in Egypt and saved it from starvation during a time of famine. All Egyptian-born and Egyptian-educated Pharaohs would have known this. A foreign Pharaoh would probably not have—and that, too, points to the Hyksos, I observe.

To continue, the Hebrews departed on their Exodus from the city of Avaris (later called Rameses). Fascinatingly enough, Avaris was also the Hyksos capital in Egypt (as opposed to Memphis or Thebes), and Sheshi, the first Hyksos Pharaoh, rebuilt and refortified it, just as Moses's Pharaoh is said to have done. It was, too, later again rebuilt and refortified under Rameses I and Rameses II (the Great)—which additionally satisfactorily accounted for the confusion of the Land of Rameses with Rameses the Great. Last but not least, the varying dates generally assigned by most Egyptian scholars to the Pharaoh Sheshi all overlap the year 1628 B.C.

All this clinched it for me. Even more important to me, while my Welshman doesn't necessarily



## BREAKING NEWS

▶▶▶▶ hasn't stopped French children from snapping up thousands of copies of Harry's latest adventure. Nor has it stopped Rowling, who has made over \$40 million so far. She doesn't seem too mortified, if you know what I mean.

### Harry Deal

A London dealer recently bought a first-edition copy of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* at auction for £6,075. The dealer sees demand for first editions rising further as the movie approaches.

### H/S Cycle Dates

Harlequin/Silhouette cycle dates arrive with Harlequin orders at bookstores, usually on a bookmark-sized sheet. Authors are not usually privy to the information, which details what titles arrive in stores on what dates. But in the interest of keeping our members informed, we're publishing it just for you, darlings. This should keep you and your readers from looking, looking, looking all over for your books in stores when they're not there yet.

Cycle content is split. First Cycle (1) content includes Harlequin Historicals, Presents, Harlequin Romance, Temptation, Intimate Moments, Special Edition, Harlequin and Silhouette Single-title Promotions, and Steeple Hill.

Second Cycle (2) content: Harlequin American Romance, Blaze, Duets, Intrigue, Superromance, Desire, Silhouette Romance, H/S By Request 2s and 3s, H/S Limited Continuities, and Reader's Choice.







## BREAKING NEWS

### Harlequin In 2001 for U.S./Canada January 2001

1. December 29, 2000; 2. January 12, 2001

#### February

1. February 2; 2. February 16

#### March

1. March 2; 2. March 16

#### April

1. March 30; 2. April 13

#### May

1. April 27; 2. May 11

#### June

1. June 1; 2. June 15

#### July

1. June 29; 2. July 13

#### August

1. August 3; 2. August 17

#### September

1. August 31; 2. September 14

#### October

1. September 28; 2. October 12

#### November

1. November 2; 2. November 16

#### December

1. November 30; 2. December 14

#### January 2002

1. December 28; 2. January 11, 2002

### His Own Toshiba

*The English Literary Review* recently awarded their Bad Sex in Fiction Award to Sean Thomas. In a passage from his entry, he describes a man's encounter with a small and compact woman: "She is his own Toshiba, his dinky little JVC, his sweet Aiwa."

### Revolving Doors

Steve Zacharius at Kensington Books confirms that Tomasita Ortiz has resigned. Kensington named Ortiz editor of the Encanto line after laying off senior editor Diane Stockwell in November. Kensington is planning to hire "another very strong romance editor" to supervise the line as well ▶▶▶

## RESEARCH ROADBLOCKS

▶▶▶▶ agree with this hypothesis (he isn't convinced that the plagues were the result of a natural disaster and so should be connected with the explosion of Thera), he can't punch any holes in it either, as he has everything else I've shown him so far, and he is compelled to admit to me that it is an entirely reasonable—however unproven—theory. I am elated.

Will you find it in any source detailing the Exodus? I highly doubt it, as in all my searching, I never once saw Sheshi's name among all the various candidates proposed as Moses's Pharaoh. I had to piece all this material together myself, from dozens of extremely conflicting historical, archaeological, and scientific sources, using logical, deductive reasoning to boot—all the while confronting shifting timelines as well as sifting through other information that was in disagreement and often simply erroneous.

### Whither Moses?

Then there was the problem with Mount Sinai, the initial destination of the Hebrews. Do you know where Mount Sinai is located? Once more, I have news for you. Nobody does. There are as many contenders for that honor as there are contenders for Moses's Pharaoh.

But here again there are clues, several of which have simply been ignored by scholars and thus by our sources, too. The primary of these clues is that Moses was tending the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro, when God allegedly appeared to him in the form of a burning bush on Mount Sinai. Now, Jethro was a priest in Midian, and I don't know where that is (my contact with "Midians" being limited to our local, fez-adorned

Midian Shriners), so I drag out my biblical maps.

Lo and behold, Midian is on the eastern side of the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea. Maybe I just don't get it, but for the life of me, I am quite incredulous that, based on scholars tentatively identifying almost all possible "Mount Sinais" as assorted mountains in the Sinai Peninsula, Moses appears to have been driving his father-in-law's flocks clear out of Midian, around the Gulf of Aqaba, and into the Sinai Peninsula to graze them.

Even more incredible to me is the fact that nobody I can find seems ever to have questioned the logic—or, more precisely, the apparent lack of logic—of this. Now, I live in Kansas, and I don't know any cattle ranchers or sheep farmers who move their own herds that far (although perhaps they do)—and naturally, I don't figure that Moses had any pickup trucks or other modern conveniences at his disposal, either.

So I do some more digging....

### NINK

[Editor's note: Next month in the continuation of this article, historical sleuth Rebecca Brandewyne continues hot on the trail of facts and figures. She'll also give pointers on how you can avoid the twin pitfalls of misinformation and disinformation in your work.]

*Rebecca Brandewyne is the NYT/PW/USA Today bestselling, award-winning author of nearly thirty historical and contemporary novels and novellas. Her latest release, *Destiny's Daughter*, is scheduled for publication in January 2001, by MIRA Books—and needless to say, she has dedicated it to her Welshman!*



# FAST TRACK.....

*The Fast Track* is a monthly report on Novelists, Inc. members on the USA Today top 150 bestseller list. 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. 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."

## USA Today Bestseller list for Nov. 2000

Mary Lynn Baxter, Marilyn Pappano, and Christine Flynn, *36 Hours, Silhouette*

Barbara Bretton, *At Last*, Berkley

Sandra Brown, *The Alibi*, Warner

Elaine Coffman, *The Bride of Black Douglas*, Mira

Catherine Coulter, *Beyond Eden*, Signet

Christina Dodd, *Rules of Engagement*, Avon

Patricia Gaffney, *The Saving Graces*, HarperTorch

Tess Gerritsen, *Gravity*, Pocket

Jill Gregory, *Rough Wrangler, Tender Kisses*, Dell

Joan Hohl, *My Own*, Zebra

Kay Hooper, *Hiding in the Shadows*, Bantam

Kay Hooper, *Out of the Shadows*, Bantam

Susan Johnson, *Temporary Mistress*, Bantam

Andrea Kane, *Run for Your Life*, Pocket

Jayne Ann Krentz, *Soft Focus*, Jove

Debbie Macomber, et al\*, *Holiday Blessings*, Steeple Hill

Kat Martin, Jo Beverley, et al\*, *Five Golden Rings*, Zebra

Kat Martin, *Perfect Sin*, St. Martin's

Connie Mason, *The Outlaw Jess*, Dorchester

Linda Lael Miller, *Courting Susannah*, Pocket

Nora Roberts, Jill Gregory, Ruth Ryan Langan, and Marianne Willman,

*Once upon a Dream*, Jove

Nora Roberts, *Night Tales*, Silhouette

Nora Roberts, *The Stanislawski Brothers*, Silhouette

Sharon Sala, *Butterfly*, Mira

\* et al: indicates that the book was written with other authors who are not members of Ninc.

### Correction:

Bertrice Small was inadvertently left off the October list for her contribution to the anthology, *Fascinated*. Our apologies.



## BREAKING NEWS

as to acquire for the rest of the Zebra list. In the interim, Hillary Sares, currently managing Precious Gems, will assist with Encanto. Kensington is still acquiring for the line and hoping that the English-only editions will gain wide acceptance in the marketplace.

At Pocket, Maggie Crawford has been named vice-president, editorial director, women's fiction. Further promotions were also announced in the women's fiction line, including Caroline Tolley's becoming executive editor.

Rosemary Ahearn has been appointed director of Washington Square Press after thirteen years at Plume.

### The Plant Uprooted

Author Stephen King finally gave up on his e-project, a serialized online novel offered at a dollar a chapter on the honor system. Only 46 percent of the readers paid, so *The Plant* was plowed under after Chapter 6. The announcement was met by angry responses from readers, some of whom said they felt cheated after paying \$7 for a book that has no ending. King says he'll continue writing *The Plant* in print, but readers might have to wait until he's finished other projects.

### New E-Publishing Company

Diana Saenger and Sandy Scoville have announced the launch of SANDS Publishing.

Saenger, entertainment writer, book author, past president of both Romance Writers of America, San Diego Chapter, and California Media Professionals, has operated her own syndicate for fifteen years.



## BREAKING NEWS

►►►► "We will work with our authors to enhance their writing skills and create well-edited, marketable products," said Saenger.

Sandy Scoville, author, editor, and 1999 Member of the Year, Romance Writers of America San Diego Chapter, came to publishing from banking. "We've negotiated an exclusive agreement with online distributor and publisher, eNovel, headquartered in Richmond, Virginia. eNovel will market SANDS Publishing titles and afford them strategic placement on eNovel sites. Our authors will find themselves exposed to readers on many venues simultaneously," Scoville said.

eNovel's recent acquisition of the popular writing site, The Amazing Instant Novelist, affords eNovel and SANDS Publishing authors access to AOL's 26 million members through the Instant Novelist's placement on AOL.

SANDS Publishing is currently accepting submissions in most genres including nonfiction, articles, and short stories. They offer a royalty structure and advances in most instances. Queries and proposals are welcome. For guidelines, e-mail [ssnetbookbiz@aol.com](mailto:ssnetbookbiz@aol.com); or send an SASE to SANDS Publishing, P. O. Box 92, Alpine, CA 91903.

### The Mind's Eye

*The Washington Post* reports that researchers from the University of California at Los Angeles and Cal Tech have for the first time measured brain cells in people as they imagined ►►►

# Artist or Entertainer

BY ETHAN ELLENBERG

For the career writer, "artist" or "entertainer" remains a perennial problem.

I use the term "artist" to distinguish the most personal, creative goals of a writer. The "artist" wants to tell the stories that the writer wants to tell, regardless of their commercial viability or any other external value. Every writer has an "artist" inside him.

The "entertainer" distinguishes the writer's need to cater to her audience. The "entertainer" wants to be loved, respected, valued and compensated. The "entertainer" wants to know how her stories are being received by the audience, it's the ear that's turned outward, listening for every laugh, titter, clap, sigh, and boo from beyond the footlights. Every writer has an "entertainer" inside her.

The conflict between "artist" and "entertainer" represents a serious, ongoing emotional challenge for the writer. I don't want to address the emotional conflict because it's too personal. Every writer is on his or her own journey and I don't believe generalizations would be useful.

I do want to address the concrete, practical dilemmas that writers face around this issue. First, let me sketch for you the gospel of commercial publishing. I believe that what I'm about to write plays into the goals of all the major publishers. I've heard it from their lips many times, and in my own analysis I see it in their behavior.

The chief goal of all fiction publishers is what I would call "franchise publishing." They do not want to publish one book by a writer. They do not want to publish a number of very different books by a writer. Their ideal writer originates a character, a voice, or a fictional world so compelling that they create a fan base for this entity. With this valuable en-

tity now established, they want the author to ride it as long and as deeply as possible. As a practical matter, they are not interested in the artist, but the entertainer. "Give 'em what they want" is the motto here. Create a "franchise."

This worldview permeates the philosophy of all genre publishing and reaches into the literary world as well. Mystery publishing is a pristine example. Mystery editors more often buy "series" than "books." They believe it's so hard to establish a writer, the initial shipments of the first book are so small, that they must spread their risk and the author's chance over a number of books. It is a sound publishing philosophy. It's the single most important philosophy out there. All writers must live with it, understand it, and even exploit it for their own good. I am not writing to criticize this philosophy, but to point out the conflicts it creates for the writer.

Franchise publishing conflicts with the goals of the writer as artist. Let me share two specific instances that brought this home for me for writers that I represent.

One writer is an up-and-coming writer in a certain genre. One year ago she showed her current publisher an outline for the next book she wanted to write. The publisher was not taken with the outline and suggested she write something else. She refused to write something else and went forward with the book because it was important to her and she felt creatively that this was the book she needed to write next. So, the book was written without being under contract. The completed book was shown to the publisher, who wasn't really taken with the finished book. The publisher acknowledged we would shop the book elsewhere, though they did retain a strong interest in the writer and wanted to continue to publish her.

This writer had, over the course

of a number of books, previously originated a fictional world that was quite successful. As it rejected the spec manuscript, the publisher requested more books set in this world.

This was not the first time the publisher had made this request; they believed more books set in this world was the best way the author could advance her career. Though the publisher had published other books by this author not set in this world, they remained convinced that these books were the way to go.

Suspecting that the publisher might not love the book she had written on spec and knowing this publisher's long-term interest in more books set in this world, the author did have an outline ready for an additional book that she was willing to write next. After some serious negotiating, we did conclude a deal to write one additional book in that world. The advance we got was a substantial increase on her previous advance, which we feel represents the publisher's belief that books set in this world were worth more than any other book the author could write. The book that was rejected is being shopped elsewhere, and the author's dilemma remains in place. She wants to write the stories she finds compelling; she also wants to succeed.

Another writer I represent faced a similar dilemma recently, at a much earlier stage of his career. He sold a first novel for a modest advance to a good house which is publishing it in hardcover. The opportunity is a good one. He delivered a new outline for his second book, using different characters than the first book. Before replying to the new outline, the editor asked us why the second book did not utilize some of the same characters from the first book and was not set in the same universe. The editor articulated the franchise-publishing philosophy almost exactly as I've described it in this article.

After some real soul searching and even writing a second outline set in the original world, the author decided to stick with the new outline with the

new characters. We received a modest offer for the second book and as of this writing, the author has decided not to go under contract, choosing to write the second book on spec. With publication a few months away and his own very serious marketing plan in place, this author would rather wait to see if he can establish himself at a level where he may have the freedom to write a second book more of his own choosing or get a substantial advance based on the success of the first book. He is also writing the new book, so when the first book is published, he will be ready to contract for the second immediately and be published one year later, not missing the opportunity to publish once per year.

Authors are sometimes given the advice to never write on spec. Here are two instances where it seems to me that writing on spec was the right decision.

These are just two examples in the real world of the real dilemmas writers face. I wouldn't suggest any hard-and-fast rules here. Franchise publishing is a legitimate goal for any writer. Know yourself and think about your choices. Apprenticeships are common in many businesses, so accept the fact that you may have to write a number of books as an entertainer to earn your shot as an artist.

Don't be afraid to dig in your heels. You may have to switch or add a publishing house or work under a pseudonym or find some other way to have certain of your books published. I would encourage writers to be flexible enough to work for love and money. Each demands sacrifice. Each has rewards. I never advise writers to drop their favorite projects because of market conditions.

For almost all authors, writing can never be only about money. If you do write on spec however, you may have to live with an unpublished manuscript. **NINK**

**Invest in your future...renew  
your Ninc membership now.**



## BREAKING NEWS



objects.

Scientists studied epileptic patients as they were undergoing surgery to determine what parts of their brains were causing seizures. They used microelectrodes to record activity of 276 brain cells in parts of the patients' brains involved in memory and social behavior while they imagined objects they had seen, such as cars, animals, food, and famous people.

Single neurons in certain parts of the brain fired about the same as when the patients were actually seeing the objects, according to the researchers. "Our study reveals that the same brain cells that fire when a person looks at a picture of the *Mona Lisa* are, in fact, the same neurons that excite when that person is asked to imagine the *Mona Lisa*," said Itzhak Fried of UCLA.

### From Web to Page

Internet magazines have started to cross over into print by publishing books. Three anthologies compiled from online content are now in bookstores as trade paperback originals: *Full Frontal Fiction*, a collection of erotic stories compiled by Jack Murnighan and Genevieve Field from Nerve.com; Salon.com's *Wanderlust*, edited by Don George from the archives of travel stories previously on Salon.com; and *The Slate Diaries*, a collection of daily e-mail journals from Slate.com.

Earlier this year, Penguin published *The Salon.com Reader's Guide to Contemporary Authors*, a compendium by Salon.com critics and staffers. In 1999, Random House published the first Salon.com anthology. ▶ ▶ ▶





## BREAKING NEWS

►►►► *Mothers Who Think:  
Tales of Real-life Parenthood*, now  
available from Pocket.

### Blue Box Specials

Erick Goss, Amazon.com's group product manager for books, defends the little blue button at the top of the Amazon site page that allows customers the choice of buying a used copy of your book instead of the new copy that puts money in your pocket.

Goss told *PW Daily*, "Amazon.com is focused on the customer and giving the customer choices. By offering the reader different formats—both new and used—we're giving them the opportunity to try new titles and new authors at a lower price point. By selling the used titles, we're hoping to get readers to buy books that are new to them. By doing this, we're introducing authors to new readers."

Although many authors view the practice of selling both new and used editions of recently published books on the same page as a threat to royalties, we've heard of at least one writer who plans to turn the blue boxes to his advantage by offering autographed or personalized collectible copies of his books.

### Dial M for M-Books

Horror author Douglas Clegg, one of the first authors to offer a serialized e-novel via the Internet, has rung up something new. Clegg is offering the first chapter of his latest novella, entitled *Purity*, to Internet-enabled cell phones.

"I really don't know if this m-book is going to catch on, but I'm excited about it. People both in and out of this industry

►►►

## Online.....

Recently, many listserves, including our own Ninclink, have had numerous discussions regarding amazon.com's policy of including an icon encouraging people to sell copies of items. The icon appears with the buying information for a particular product and is visible for brand-spanking-new book releases—hence the author interest in this policy. Discussions eventually

branched into copyright, the rights of the author, the publisher, the booksellers, the readers... far too many avenues to be broached here, but I did want to share a few items of interest in regards to this subject.

Carla Neggers and Terrey Ramin pointed us toward an interesting article on a copyright infringement case and how its outcome will affect all writers. The article can be found at *National Association of Science Writers Inc*, [www.nasw.org/](http://www.nasw.org/). It provides a link to [www.loc.gov/copyright/circs/circ1.html#rp](http://www.loc.gov/copyright/circs/circ1.html#rp) where you can find instructions on how to register your copyrighted material.

The copyright discussion then turned to licensing of software, and Sally Hawkes reminded us that although it may appear that we aren't being told that we're buying a license instead of a product, in fact we are in a rather subtle way.

"You probably don't notice it, but the licensing agreement you agree to in most software packaging is on the shrink wrap that you break open to get at the disk or CD. Simply by opening the package you are agreeing to the

license. The license is also there during installation routine. It's something a lot of individuals overlook. Why should a retailer who sold you a legal copy warn you? Their responsibility ends with the sale.

"The software police aren't going to be knocking on individual doors to check each household, but those of us purchasing for networks are very

### Controlling Your Listserve Preferences at a Glance

Subscribe	NINCLINK-subscribe@egroups.com
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No-Mail	NINCLINK-nomail@egroups.com

### Moderators:

Brenda Hiatt-Barber	BrendaHB@aol.com
Patricia de la Fuente	Patricia@hilene.net
Julie Kistler	julie@julickistler.com

aware of the fact we need to have enough licenses to go with the head count. The software police do come and check on us. They will be able to track people on e-Bay and others if they so desire.

"The shrink wrap licensing was a big controversy in the library world a few years back because we had been negotiating CD and online use agreements prior to use. The shrink wrap situation was a no-bargaining deal, and naturally, it left all the advantages to the seller. What a surprise!"

The discussion then rolled into used bookstores. Terri Brisbin alerted us to *Best Book Buys*, [www.bestbookbuys.com](http://www.bestbookbuys.com). You can input a book by title, author, keyword, or ISBN, and it will search 34 online bookstores (both new and used) and provide you with a listing of all the prices, including shipping, so you can

do a comparison. It's interesting to discover who has your books available and the selling price.

**AGENTS:** Vella Munn contributed *Guide to Literary Agents*, [www.literaryagents.org](http://www.literaryagents.org). When you arrive at the site, you are immediately offered the opportunity to subscribe to their newsletter, which will keep you updated on publishing and agents. The site is full of interesting information. You can even do a search on your agent and you'll receive a list of articles in which your agent is mentioned. I found that endeavor fascinating.

**RESEARCH:** Did you know that in the United States, the first census was taken in 1790? The U. S. Census Bureau provides its history and statistical facts about all the states at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). The main function of the Census Bureau is to collect data, and the Bureau makes much of that data available to the public. I discovered this site when someone on the Painted Rock Research listserve (to subscribe, send a blank message to [prock-research-on@mail.list](mailto:prock-research-on@mail.list)) was interested in Spanish surnames. Someone suggested downloading an article from the census bureau, so I checked it out. The files provided by the Bureau are in \*.pdf format so you need *Adobe Acrobat Reader* to access them. The file I downloaded, [www.census.gov/population/documentation/twpno13.pdf](http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twpno13.pdf), provided over 600 Spanish surnames based on the census information. With *Adobe*, you can access the file online without downloading it.

The *History and Primitive Technology Page*, [www.onagocag.com/index2.html](http://www.onagocag.com/index2.html), is a fascinating site created by Wyatt R. Knapp, a member of the HTML Writers Guild. Articles provide information on making fire from the Stone Age to the 1800s, flintknapping (making flints—photos are provided), and other primitive skills. Links are provided to other interesting sites.

Courtesy of Garda Parker who teaches a class through *WriteDirections.com*, Terey shares "Thickening the plot with forensics": "If DNA, drugs, fingerprints, hair fibers, and linguistics are your writing bailiwick, then you will find this forensic site invaluable for your mysteries and detective stories. From arson to toxicology, this forensic science site explains it. *Zeno's Forensic Site*, [www.forensic.to/forensic.html](http://www.forensic.to/forensic.html).

"The creator of this site is Zeno Geradts, a forensic scientist at the Netherlands Forensic Science Laboratory in the forensic computer science department. From arson to toxicology, he covers it here, providing lots of links to the forensic topic of your choice, in science, medicine and psychology.

"You'll even find a search feature that provides more options. And, if those options aren't enough, then head on over to the *National Center for Forensic Science*, [ncfs.ucf.edu/index.html](http://ncfs.ucf.edu/index.html) for even more."

**NOVELISTS, INC. LISTSERVE:** If you want to know more about 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.) or you can control your preferences through e-mail. If you have questions, e-mail one of the three moderators [see box, left].

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

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



## BREAKING NEWS

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ constantly need things to reinvigorate their interest in books. Anything that brings fiction to the attention of readers is worth exploring. Let's see if people follow this and how."

Use your internet-enabled cell phone to access <http://www.beaker.net> if you want to check this one out.

### E-Book Booster

Talk-show host Oprah Winfrey chose Gemstar's e-book reader among her favorite things for winter holiday giving. She gave 350 audience members one of the devices as well as an electronic copy of *Open House*, a book by Elizabeth Berg.

### The Chicken House

Scholastic has announced a partnership in which they will bring Barry Cunningham's UK-based The Chicken House list to the US. Cunningham is the original publisher of *Harry Potter*.

The Chicken House is targeted toward children eight to twelve and consists of pop culture-focused books and titles for the expanding "tween" market of pre-teen girls looking for "cool and exciting new formats."

### Going Quackers

Warning: This has nothing to do with writing. It has nothing to do with anything, and it isn't an advertisement.

Having a dull day? Reading a dull column? Lighten up by calling National Discount Brokers at 1-800-888-3999. Listen to the options. Be sure to listen to what option #7 says before you push the number 7. When you hear #7, hit 7.

I told it you it didn't have anything to do with anything. It's just for FUN, which isn't all that easy to find when you're sitting at a computer all day.

I do what I can to help you out, folks.

*Pamela Browning has been writing the Breaking News column since early last year. She is the new editor of NINK starting with this issue.*



# THE COMELY CURMUDGEON

## “Lions by Night”

So I'm watching a forgettable romantic comedy on cable TV one night, and the male love interest is an aspiring novelist who, like all his friends, is very impressed that he has (wait for it!) written a book. Completed a whole manuscript! Actually “done it” rather than just *talk* about it (which seems to be what all his friends settle for doing).

I reserve judgment and keep watching.

In a later scene, his novel has been “rejected by yet another publisher,” and the heroine finds him slurping booze, flinging manuscript pages into a blazing fire, and feeling terribly sorry for himself as he decides to quit writing.

Well, a writer's world is inhabited by lions, and—oops!—this fellow is clearly a baby gnu (wildebeest). Most gnu calves get eaten on the African savannah right in front of their mothers. So I change the channel—but not before I say to the character, “Better run home, Gnu Boy, before the lions get you.”

(Okay, yes, my secret's out: I talk to the TV.)

If you or I got that melodramatic every time we got rejected... Well, we'd never have published enough books to join *Nine*, that's for sure.

### *Who are you? Who made you what you are?*

As an aspiring young writer, I wrote three complete manuscripts on spec to warm up. Yes, I know, this is nothing. In my current local writing community, Lori Foster wrote ten manuscripts to make her first sale, and Toni Blake wrote more than that. They broke their backs to break in, instinctively knowing that total commitment was the least of the things they'd have to give. So did I.

And so did you.

I will boast a little about my fortitude, however, by adding that I wrote my first three manuscripts by hand, then typed them on a manual typewriter before sending them from Italy to the U.S. via trans-Atlantic surface mail.... How long ago it all seems now.

Anyhow, I was hoping that, with three manuscripts in submission, I would at least see enough consistent comments in my rejection letters to help me improve upon my future efforts. As it happened, however, Silhouette bought my first manuscript—but not before eleven (count them, Gnu Boy: eleven) agents whom I queried all rejected me. However, at least the agents' comments had some of the consistency I had hoped for. Half of them said (I paraphrase here) that I had no talent and couldn't write. (Run if you're

already bleeding, Gnu Boy, because their claws aren't even out yet.) The other half said that maybe I could write, but the romance market was dead and I should try writing something with a bright future—like horror, for example. (Yes, really.)

When you've stopped guffawing, I'll continue....

As soon as I signed with Silhouette, my editor quit. Then my next editor quit. (Is it something *I* said?) Then I got an excellent editor, Lucia Macro...who promptly rejected four of my next six proposals and wrote me epic-length revision letters on the two she bought. Actually, it's thanks to Lucia that I know about things like structure, conflict, and point of view, all of which were pretty foggy concepts before then.

(Where are you going, Gnu Boy? The fun is only beginning!)

Throughout my stretch of full-time, self-supporting writing for Silhouette, they rejected at least half of my proposals. I eventually became unhappy writing category romance, but almost everything else I wrote was rejected by every editor in the free world. I found solace in writing sf/f short stories, which refreshed me enough to keep writing the books which paid my bills, but I felt I was in a maze and couldn't find my way out.

Meanwhile, of course, I was routinely treated to condescending comments from aspiring writers, none of whom had ever even completed (never mind sold) their Great American Novels. One fellow even suggested I should spend my advance monies learning “real” writing in an MFA program so I could make something of my life.

You know about that, though, because this sort of thing happened to you, too.

Anyhow, one day I hit the wall. I decided I had shed enough blood on the savannah. I was tired, burned out, done. I abandoned my career and decided to spend nearly a year crossing all of Africa overland. (Well, it made sense to me.)

So there I was, shooing a warthog away from my tent in Kenya one evening, when a letter from Silhouette caught up with me, officially terminating our relationship. Enjoy irony? I received this news the same day I learned that my tenth book for them was named Best Silhouette Desire of the year by *Romantic Times Magazine*. However, my long-term sales had, by then, proved that my writing was unsuited to Silhouette's market. We parted on very friendly terms (yes, really), and I've always stayed in touch with the fine editors I knew there.



Then while I was in Zimbabwe—trying, without success, to place an international phone call—my secondary publisher, Meteor (anyone remember them?), folded. While I was in South Africa, drunkenly evading some feisty elephants one memorable night, I won the John W. Campbell Award (Best New SF/F Writer) at the World Science Fiction Convention held halfway around the world (and still remembered by some as “Confiasco”). I was less encouraged by this recognition than you might suppose, though; after all, *Romantic Times* had named me Best New Series Writer once upon a time, and look how *that* had turned out.

(Newsflash, Gnu Boy: Writing well isn’t the final goal, it’s just the first step.)

I reached the Cape of Good Hope and, short of swimming to Antarctica, knew my odyssey was over and the time had come to resolve who and what I was. I returned home quite broke, forever changed, and bearing an interesting assortment of scars. And I tried not to write. I tried really hard. (I also tried to get used to showering regularly and using toilets again.) Writing was a life that had taken only a few years to eat my heart, and I wanted to give it up. But I couldn’t.

And neither can you.

Who are you? Who made you what you are?

I never wanted to write. Born to a writer’s household, I knew what awaited me if I followed that road, and so I took every detour I could find—yet I wound up selling my first book at 25 and never escaping this life thereafter, despite at least two genuine attempts to quit.

***No, I can’t quit. And neither can you.***

When I first started writing professionally, my life was full of friends and family members all snickering about how I had always insisted I would never write, all saying to me: “I knew you’d write. I always knew you’d wind up writing.” When I came home from Africa and, after several months of insisting I wouldn’t do it, started writing again, new friends were now snickering alongside the old. One night, when I was still in my “I’m through with writing” mode, I wanted to hit one of my oldest, dearest friends who said to me, “I don’t know all your future holds, but I know you’ll always write, whether or not you accept that right now. That’s who you are, and there’s nothing you can do about it.”

And there’s nothing you can do about it either. Tough luck.

(What about you, Gnu Boy? Ready to feed your heart nightly to the lions, too?)

Fast-forward to my return to active writing status. Life soon becomes business as usual for me. A brief random sampling of typical events:

My next publisher lays off my editor and closes down the imprint; no one there ever answers my calls again. I write a new two-book proposal that’s so unsaleable I suspect my agent of shedding tears over it. One day, some editor hates my work so much he says he’s insulted I sent him such a piece of shit. (Yes, really.) I write a new three-book proposal

that no publishing house on earth wants. I write two individual proposals that are so unmarketable my floor nearly collapses under the weight of the rejection letters.

At some point, I even make another genuine attempt to quit writing. I get accepted into graduate school; but when I spend two days visiting the campus, everyone I speak with—students, advisors, professors, administrators—assures me the program is so intense that I won’t have time, for the next two years, to write. Suddenly, my right arm, the endurance athlete of so much longhand prose, can’t seem to fill out the enrollment form. Maybe one day I’ll be ready to go two years without writing; but not today. Today, I cave in and send my regrets.

Next, I sign for two epic fantasy novels... and my brain turns to boiled jelly by the time I complete the second book in this 625,000-word story arc. My big reward, as they scrape me off the walls like so much protoplasm, is to start another book; one that I had damn well better write faster this time.

So, sure, I’ve seen some rough times. Yeah, I hear you: Big fat hairy deal. (Wake up and smell the river, Gnu Boy! You have to bring true grit to this party if you want to party here.)

I ponied up when true grit was called for, and so did you. However, I have a highly developed sense of self-preservation, so, yes, I tried—I tried really hard—to leave the party when I discovered the “unconditional surrender” clause. I tried, but I’m like you: I cannot leave. I cannot quit. I cannot walk away.

Hey, you can try if you want to. Be my guest. After that initial burst of relief, that first flush of freedom, you’ll be amazed at how hard it is. Believe me, I know.

Gnu Boy gets sloshed, weeps, flings pages into a fire-place, and decides to quit writing because his very first book is rejected a few times. I meet a lot of aspiring writers who might not be as self-pitying as he is, but I still see their faces fall when they find out that completing one whole manuscript doesn’t even meet the ante if they really want to play with lions. I hear indignation in their voices when there’s no place left to send their sole completed book, when all it has evoked among editors and agents is a bland dismissal even more discouraging than vicious rejection. (After fifteen novels, 35 short stories, and a handful of awards, I still get bland dismissals—not to mention vicious rejections. So go cry me a damn river.)

If I meet 200 aspiring writers in a given year, I know that 199 of them will probably never sell a book. If I meet two novelists who’ve recently sold their first books, I know that one of these writers is likely to disappear before long. So why am I, who genuinely wanted to escape, still here? Why are you?

Talent certainly matters, and luck may be a factor, but as night descends upon the savannah, they’re irrelevant without total commitment, true grit, and...what was that other thing? Oh, yeah—unconditional surrender. To what? Why, to your congenital inability to stop writing—and to everything you’ll endure to satisfy the song in your blood.

▶ ▶ ▶



# THE COMELY CURMUDGEON

▶ ▶ ▶ Who are you? Who made you what you are?

I can't eject the characters that invade my dreams by night and my thoughts by day. I can't stop the constant "what if?" that pounds through my veins as insistently as my own heartbeat. I can't escape the "and then" which pursues me down every dark path where I have fled from visions so strong they're sometimes like hallucinations. All so a *Kirkus* reviewer can dismiss me with a few contemptuous adjectives, an anonymous amazon.com reader can complain I disappointed her, and my next-door neighbor can snickeringly confuse "fantasy" with "erotica."

*I can only surrender. And that's all you can do, too.*

So I feed my heart to the lions by night, because I've learned that it just hurts more if I resist. I have no real choice about this, and neither do you. Where will you turn when there's no one left to tell your tales to? How long can the voices in your head deafen you before you have to write them down? How far can you run from the fantastic thoughts and bizarre speculations which will always, in the end, outrun you, catch you, and bring you to your knees, fumbling through the dust of the savannah for your pen?

No one can run that fast or far. Least of all me. I know because I've tried. I've tried hard.

When I was a young writer, I really believed it was a choice. I could give it up. I could walk away any time. I only did this because I didn't really know how to do anything else. But now I know the truth, and since you're probably smarter than me, maybe you knew it all along: I do this because I can't *not* do it. Even if I could do something else, I'd still do this. And so would you.

If you could stop because of rejection, you would. I have friends in this business who've endured two, four, eight years of continual rejection without a sale, but couldn't stop. If you could stop because your publisher's shredding your work to make it conform to production standards or adhere to marketing trends, you would. Hell, you're not a masochist, of course you would! If you really had a rational choice about this, you'd spray the lions with a high-power garden hose, pick your heart up off the savannah, and take it home to be coddled and cared for only by the people who love you.

However, that's not among your choices. You'd know if it was, because when you got "rejected by yet another publisher," like Gnu Boy, you'd sit slurping booze, feeling sorry for yourself, and quit writing. Just like that. Other people can do it. But not me. And not you.

So you give your heart to the lions, night after night, be-

cause somehow, when it feeds them, your hunger is satisfied, too. You'll tell your tales until dawn breaks, and you'll keep writing them down even after that, because you can't stop. You'll always want it, need it, hunger for it. You'll never quit, never give up. You may try to walk away. You may flirt with another life or sleep with another dream; but you'll always be married to this vice, this gift, this obsession, this insatiable passion to tell a story and, above all, to let the lions feast on it. To let them feast on you, on your heart, on your tale after tale after tale.... Because if you could have kept it to yourself, you would have. You're not a fool.

Who are you? Who made you what you are?

Womb to tomb, you are a writer, a filthy pro, a storyteller. You are the endurance athlete of the imagination. And—cast the blame where you will, or listen to others taking credit—the truth is that *you* made yourself what you are. You accepted, from the first, that total commitment was the very least of the things you'd have to give. When true grit was called for, you met the ante and didn't fold when the stakes were raised.... And when you found out about the unconditional surrender clause, you laid your heart upon the savannah and let the lions come.

— Laura Resnick

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## INTRODUCING.....

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

### New Applicants

Carole Bellacera, Manassas, VA  
 Lori Royal-Gordon (*Lauren Royal*), Irvine, CA  
 JoAnn Ferguson (*J.A. Ferguson, Jeanna Hampton, JoAnn Brown, Rebecca North*), Rehoboth, MA  
 Lynda Sue Cooper (*Lynda Sandoval*), Littleton, CO  
 Gayle Callen, Liverpool, NY  
 Dee Davis Oberwetter (*Dee Davis*), Austin, TX

### New Member

Kayla Perrin, Hamilton, Ontario

**Ninc has room to grow...recommend membership to your colleagues. New members can apply online at [www.ninc.com](http://www.ninc.com).**

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# MEMBER NEWS.....

## Kane Makes The NYT List

Andrea Kane's November release, *Run For Your Life*, marks her debut on *The New York Times* bestseller list.

"What makes this accomplishment so special for me is that *Run For Your Life* is my first contemporary romantic thriller after publishing fourteen historical romances. I was really excited about branching out, and I'm thrilled with the results!"

Kane's editors learned the good news while she was on a train heading home from Manhattan, and they called the author on her cell phone.

"I could scarcely hear her over the tunnel sounds, but when I figured out she was asking, 'Is this *The New York Times* bestselling author of *Run For Your Life*?' I started shrieking so loud, I think I even managed to startle some New Yorkers!"

*Run For Your Life* is a November 2000, Pocket Books release. Kane's next contemporary romantic thriller, *No Way Out*, is tentatively scheduled as a Fall 2001 Pocket release.

## Bernhardt's New Arrival

William Bernhardt, former Novelists, Inc., president, and his wife, Kirsten, are the proud parents of a new baby boy!

Ralph Elliot arrived at 1 p.m., Friday, Nov. 17, and weighed eight pounds, two ounces. The Bernhardts have two other children, Harry, age nine, and Alice, age six.

Bernhardt's next novel, *Murder One*, will be out in April. His previous book, *Silent Justice*, is still available and will be out in paperback in March. His previous 12 books are all still in print.

## Resnick Adds Another Column

Starting in January 2001,

*Novelists' Ink's* Comely Curmudgeon, Laura Resnick, will be authoring a second monthly column in her capacity as this year's PAN representative on the board of her local RWA chapter.

In writing the column, which is to be published in the chapter newsletter, Resnick promises to, in her words, "recklessly fling myself into the chasm between published and unpublished RWA members in a well-meaning but possibly doomed effort to foster better mutual understanding."

The newsletter, "Under the Covers," is available on the web at: <http://www.egroups.com/files/ovrwa-announce>.

## Pushcart Prize Nomination

Dawn Reno has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize for a short story that appeared in *Futures Magazine*. She was also interviewed by a *Family Circle* writer for an article on time management.

## Francis Marion Biography

Kay Cornelius's children's biography of Francis Marion was released in December. The hardcover book is part of the series "Heroes Of The American Revolution" from Chelsea House.

## Hailstock Article

Fran Baker's article on Shirley Hailstock ran in the print edition of *Today's Librarian* in December.

## RT Winners

Several Novelists, Inc., members received awards at the recent *Romantic Times* convention in Houston.

Among them were Maggie Price, who won the Career Achievement Award for Series Romantic Suspense; Tess Gerritsen, who won

the Best Suspense award for *Gravity*, and Deb Stover, whose *Stolen Wishes* won the Reviewer's Choice Award for Best Innovative Historical.

The Best Historical Romance of the Year Award went to Jean Ross Ewing for *Flowers Under Ice*, which also won the 2000 Colorado Book Award from the Colorado affiliate of the Library of Congress.

In related news, Janelle Taylor's 1990 title *Follow The Wind* was listed as one of *Romantic Times's* 200 All-Time Favorites in a recent issue of the magazine, as was Ewing's *Flowers Under Ice*.

## Amazon's Top Ten

*Novelists' Ink* received a press release from editor Stephanie Hargreaves of online bookseller Amazon.com listing the editors' choices of the top ten romance novels for 2000.

"In a genre like romance, where hundreds of books keep ravenous readers busy every year, it's almost impossible to pick only ten top books for 2000. But pick we did, and we think that you'll like the results. Enjoy!"

Novelists, Inc., members whose books are included on list are Susan King for *The Stone Maiden*, Patricia Gaffney for *Circle of Three*, Linda Howard for *Mr. Perfect*, Julia Quinn for *The Duke And I*, and Shirley Hailstock for *More Than Gold*.

## The Mistress Scores

*The Mistress* by Susan Wiggs is listed as one of the Top Ten Historical Romances of 2000 on the website of online bookseller Amazon.com.

Please send items for this column to Kathy Chwedyk at [KChwedyk@aol.com](mailto:KChwedyk@aol.com) or 1215 Fairmont Court, Algonquin, IL 60102.





## **NINC CONFERENCE REPORT Vancouver 2000**

**BY LAURA RESNICK**

No, we didn't think that you wanted to sift through even more of my deathless prose in your newsletter this month. But reporting on the conference for *NINC* is one of the few ways to get your conference fee comped, and since I am a thrifty Midwesterner (or, as some might say, cheap), I volunteered.

### **Night Owl Sessions**

As has become the tradition, the Ninc 2001 Conference commenced Thursday night with a series of Night Owl sessions, informal discussion groups which focus on topics of interest to the popular fiction novelist. Moderator Holly Newman led a discussion of "Popular Culture and Popular Fiction" wherein the group postulated a phenomenon that explains the popularity of women's fiction novels which explore community and roots, spin-off and series novels with recurring characters, numerous "reality" TV shows, and the vast Internet itself. Each of these things, in its way, helps people explore or create a sense of community which has been lost to many individuals in modern American life. The popularity of a "community" of characters, particularly in a series of connected novels, may well have something in common with the community-feeling generated by being able to discuss TV's "Survivor" with various friends and acquaintances all over the country, just as the Internet now hosts thousands of groups which can reasonably be described as "communities" even though their

members may never have met face-to-face.

### **Book of the Heart**

Participants in the "Book of the Heart" discussion defined a BOTH in various ways: A book you feel compelled to write; a book that you'll walk through fire for; the book you want to be remembered for. Several Ninc members shared their experiences with such a novel, and two clear paths emerged for publishing a BOTH which is difficult to sell. The first was self-publishing, for those BOTHs which cannot find a commercial market. The second was to explore ways of striking a deal with commercial publishers—which could include writing a book your publisher wants in exchange for their publishing the one they don't particularly want, or perhaps making (sincere) threats to leave if they won't support the BOTH in question, or even rejecting initial offers for the book if they don't seem right for it. Both authors who related positive experiences in finally selling a BOTH to a commercial publisher, it was noted, were with agents who believed in the projects.

### **Mystery Writing**

"Whodunnit: What's New In Mystery Writing," moderated by Joyce Ware, revealed that series books are stronger than ever in mystery, with very few single titles being published. The difficulty now, in entering this market with a new series, is to pick a setting which isn't already being done. A couple of particularly interesting points which emerged from this session is that the market is now heavily slanted towards women, and that small presses are developing good mystery-publishing programs. In addition, Berkley is publishing a number of series now wherein they come up with the basic series premise and then find a writer for the series, which is yet another possible way for

an experienced writer to enter the mystery market.

### **Workshops...**

The more formal workshops commenced on Friday. Terey daly Ramin, may the sun always shine upon her, believed me when I said I'm incoherent before 10:30 a.m. and so didn't assign me to cover any early programming.

"Selling Books in the 21st Century" was moderated by the formidable Catherine Coulter, who politely put tough questions to ABA president and independent bookseller Neal Coonerty (who was brave and good-natured), as well as to amazon.com romance editor Stefanie Hargreaves. Coonerty announced that the ABA's case against Barnes & Noble and Borders goes to trial on April 9, 2001. The ABA has already won a claim of \$25 million from certain publishers in a case based on anti-trust law violations. Coonerty explained that the ABA doesn't object to chain discounts, but rather to unlawful chain discounts.

Coonerty recommended ABA's *Booksense.com* website to us, and fielded questions about when independents will (if ever) become more friendly to popular fiction. Coonerty insisted that a good bookstore knows what its customers want and provides that.

Meanwhile, Coonerty was full of praise for Amazon. Their quick turnaround time on customer orders made their competition (traditional booksellers) improve their own turnaround time on special orders. He also admired Amazon's use of "cookies" to track buyer preferences and thereby handsell to customers, when they log on, based on their purchasing patterns.

Hargreaves, who said that Amazon may become profitable toward the end of 2001, described the efforts Amazon puts into handselling and also admitted that some fine-tuning is needed to make the system more consistent and

reliable. Like Coonerty, Hargreaves thought there was plenty of room in the 21st century for both traditional and online booksellers.

The discussion only touched briefly on the subject of e-publishing, possibly because that subject was destined to be the focus of Coonerty's lunchtime address an hour later. Amazon and Microsoft have recently announced a partnership, using an e-publishing model different than that being launched by the new B&N-Adobe relationship. Only time will reveal which model will emerge as the frontrunner in the 21st century.

The moderator cancelled "Think Tank: 4 Authors/4 Strategies" when no speakers turned up for it. I adjourned to the bar.

### ...And More Workshops

Yolande Spears, Director of Education and Community Initiatives at Bushnell Performing Arts Center in Hartford, Connecticut, showed Ninc members how to maximize their PR interviews in "Working With A Media Coach." Spears, who is also an award-winning producer and former television host, led a fun and dynamic session, commencing with some guidelines for interviewees (stay cool, be yourself, be prepared and enthusiastic) and then convincing Ninc members to do some role-playing using an interview script she had written containing the kinds of questions that popular fiction writers often endure in interviews.

The session was lively and educational, and some of Spears's most useful lessons to the group included: Take your time, make your points, take control, don't tolerate disrespect, don't apologize for yourself. Keep your agenda in mind, which is that you're there to promote your book. Above all, never forget that without you, the interviewer has no interview, so he needs you more than you need him.

I commenced Saturday by

attending "Investigating 'Cold' Homicide Cases," an interesting session led by Constable Bruce Pitt-Payne of the Serious Crime Unit, Coquitlam RCMP Detachment. Although there is no set period of time for a case to remain "fresh," if sufficient evidence is not found in a relatively short amount of time, then the case becomes "cold"—a term which refers to any murder investigation which has not culminated in charges being brought against a suspect. In a busy district, "fresh" cases soon take investigative priority over "cold" ones. A homicide case is never closed until it's solved, but the passage of time makes a case less and less likely ever to be solved: Witnesses die or forget important information; new physical evidence rarely comes to light; previously collected physical evidence sometimes disappears.

Cases may become cold for a variety of reasons, including lack of resources, incompetence, laziness, or lack of physical evidence. Pitt-Payne said that gang-related killings comprise the majority of unsolved homicides due to the lack of witnesses (including those who saw the whole thing but deny remembering anything).

Cold cases (at least in Canada) are usually assigned to newly arrived officers in a unit. A fresh pair of eyes sometimes sees something new in the assembled evidence, and the new person in the section may be determined to prove himself by solving a cold case and therefore brings tremendous energy to the task. There is also a specialized section in Canada, the Unsolved Homicide Unit, for cold cases. DNA has become one of the most likely ways to solve a cold case; but it's only valuable if you have a suspect—in which case, a blood test is the most reliable way to obtain a DNA match. Computers also significantly assist investigations, enabling police to more effectively organize and collate information.

Pitt-Payne went on to describe a

number of additional investigative techniques, including interception of private communications, undercover operations, knot analysis, blood-splatter analysis, and forensics. The most interesting subject he covered was interview and interrogation techniques, many of which he demonstrated on Kay Hooper, who apparently looked like a killer to him.

Unlike TV and the movies, Pitt-Payne said that effective interrogation is conducted by one sole officer; people can be induced to confess their darkest secrets to one person, but not to two or more. Everyone who commits a crime has justified it to himself (said Pitt-Payne), and one good interrogator can eventually break him with feigned sympathy, themes, and analogies—on average, it takes about two hours of this to get a suspect to share his rationalization for committing the crime (and thereby elicit his admission that he did it).

By contrast, if a suspect is innocent, the suspect's denials will get louder and more vehement as the interrogation progresses and the officer explores the suspect's possible "acceptable moral justification" for committing the crime.

### Screenplays

After lunch, Ninc members Robyn Carr and Ron Montana, who write screenplays together and separately, led a discussion on "Screenwriting Techniques for the Novelist," during which time I realized that there aren't nearly as many good jokes about publishing as there are about Hollywood. Montana and Carr explained that collaboration is more practical (and therefore more common) for screenwriting than for novels, primarily because the screenplay relies so heavily on dialogue, and writing dialogue that delivers a punch is a technique which often profits from teamwork.

When writing a screenplay, or when adapting a novel to ▶ ▶ ▶



screenplay format, the writer should probably begin by considering what scenes are essential to telling the story in the traditional three-act movie structure. Not everything in the book will suit a screenplay, and many things in a screenplay may never have appeared in the book. Most marketable movie scripts are 110-120 pages, with the three acts divided informally into sections of (respectively) thirty, sixty, and thirty pages.

For more information about the structure of screenplays, the speakers recommended Syd Field's *Introduction to Screenwriting*. Recommended screenwriting software included *Final Draft*, *Scriptware*, and *Movie Magic*. Due to the "stupid idiosyncracies" (Carr's words) of screenwriting, you clearly need to do a lot of homework to be taken seriously in this field. Example: A screenplay must have exactly three holes, in exactly the right place, and be held together with two brads, which must be of exactly the right size; any deviation from this physical format can lead to a script, no matter how good, being mistaken for birdcage lining.

Finally, for the professional novelist, an easier way into the industry than submitting original screenplays may well be to sell a movie option to your book, then offer to show them your attempt at adapting the novel.

## Teaching and Editing

NINK's fearless editor, Terey daly Ramin, moderated the final session I attended at this year's conference, "Teaching Writing: Community Colleges, Online Classes, Correspondence Courses." *Writer's Digest* offers any number of online and correspondence courses, so (naturally) they need teachers for this.

Happily, *WD* is concerned with providing a good service, so they're interested in hiring experienced professional writers and assigning them to students writing in their areas of expertise or experience. *WD's* various courses are also very structured and even provide a workbook for the students to follow, ensuring that the students and teachers each know their responsibilities and have consistent procedures to follow.

Due to the application process, most students entering the course are pleasant to work with, and *Writer's Digest* also protects the teacher's privacy. The work can be very time-consuming, though the computer can help reduce the time involved: most students make the same mistakes, ensuring that fairly standard letters can be used in many cases. Creating standard hand-outs can also reduce the amount of time you spend repeating yourself.

Freelance editing can pay well; however, unlike the *Writer's Digest* programs, no one ensures that you're

paid or not sued, and no one screens the people you work with. One Nink member created additional income for herself by pursuing tech writing/editing work on a freelance basis, going to various businesses and offering to edit, write, or improve their Standard Operating Procedure manuals, brochures, etc. Working freelance as a first reader, a proofreader, or a writer of cover copy are other possible ways to supplement a writing income, but these particular options often require the freelancer to live within commuting distance of the publishing house. Meanwhile, Barnes & Noble has reputedly started marketing online writing courses, though no one present knew if they were hiring—or if they paid.

Finally, there was also some discussion of teaching continuing education courses, but the general consensus was that they rarely pay enough to make this a profitable pursuit.

As a final comment, the food at the hotel was unusually good, but what I found most delightful was the service. The sullen, surly incompetence I have come to know and expect in most hotels was missing, replaced by a staff who were, in every instance, capable, courteous, and helpful. Maybe we should go to Canada more often?

*Further Reports from Vancouver upcoming in NINK....*

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*An organization for writers of popular fiction*

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