



### Volume 4 ~ Issue 10

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October 2008

**Whether you are a published author or a writer-wanna-be, this e-zine is for you. Here, you will find articles, announcements, book reviews, poetry, and information about the craft and business of writing, publishing and book marketing written by our readers. Our goal is to connect the writing and publishing community through networking that benefits both.**

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### AUTHOR'S CORNER BY YVONNE PERRY

Fall is in the air and with it comes the celebration of harvest and of course [Samhain](#), better known to some as Halloween or All Hallow's Eve. Along that theme, we have a special treat for our podcast listeners this month with near-death experimenter [Juliet Nightengale](#) joining us on October 31, and science researcher and shamanka MaAnna Stephenson sharing The Sage Age on October 3. Plus, I will be uploading an interview about my own book [More than Meets the Eye True Stories about Death, Dying, and Afterlife](#).

Speaking of podcasts, I thought I might let you know that we use [Audio Acrobat](#) to record and broadcast our show. Please use the link above to learn more.

My eBook *Book Marketing in the Digital Age, Online Promotion Made Easy* is nearing completion and will be available sometime toward the middle of October. While working on the book, it dawned on me that I needed to update my Web site in order to not only show examples of the techniques being explained, but to actually be utilizing SEO (search engine optimization) on my site. That required a complete overhaul since many of the pages had dual purposes and did not focus on just one topic. As you will learn in my eBook, this is important for attracting visitors to your site. Our new URL is [www.writersinthesky.com](http://www.writersinthesky.com) so please be sure to bookmark or change it in your favorites.

Our new site will have a project board where you may see what each member of the WITS team is working on. We have all been busy on multiple projects, but I would like to share a little info about the ones I've personally been working on:

[Keep the Legs You Stand On](#), by doctor of podiatric medicine Mark Hinkes, is an insightful and personal look at the high-risk patient with diabetes and a reminder of what can be done to help keep them healthy, active, and on their feet. Mark's personal experiences and comprehensive text is written in a manner that a lay person can easily understand and provides a tremendous resource for patients with diabetes and their caregivers.

Rita Alexander was referred to WITS by Denna Shelton who is a wonderful client I've worked with on several occasions. You may have seen Denna's [Twenty Gems, Journey to the Self](#) meditation DVDs on a US Airways flight. Rita asked me to write a few media releases and articles for her company, [International Stem Cell Institute](#). Having authored a book on the subject, [Right to Recover](#)) I was happy to assist her. Since posting the media release online, the number of hits on her Web site have doubled.

When I started the developmental and copy edit for Carl David's book, I knew I come upon a skilled writer with a superb story. It has the drama of human emotion stirred by true events that bring lovable characters to life. Plus, there are interesting historical facts intertwined throughout the telling. Add some mysterious and ghostly happenings to those components and you have a great book—[Bader Field](#).

Our chief editor, Barbara Milbourn and I have edited and proofread ten books for [Hal Leonard Publishing Corp.](#) since January. This batch includes authors Bobby Owsinski, Lisa Aschmann, Karl Coryat, Greg Forest and others. Four of the titles have published this year and are available on our new Web site.

One thing I love about networking online is that you meet (okay, *virtually* meet) some of the nicest people and get to interact with them on their projects. One such example is Irene Watson. She and I have participated in several joint ventures. She and Victor Volksman are coauthoring a new book *Authors Access: Success Secrets for Authors and Publishers*. Irene asked me to write a chapter on getting started in the freelance writing business. I had notes on this topic scattered among the files on my computer, but since I have given the robe and royal scepter as our team's [author publicity assistant](#) to Sarah Moore, I asked her to provide the developmental editing for me. She did a great job making sense of my haphazard material and getting it into a publishable format.

In the past month, I've been a guest on [Authors Access](#) as interviewed by Irene Watson and Victor Volkman. I enjoyed speaking for Nashville Writers Meetup [Nonfiction Writers Group](#) on September 8, and I had a great interview with H. Les Brown of ProActivation® Coaching on his Blog Talk internet radio show [The Frazzled Entrepreneur Program](#) on September 18.

In this month's issue, I am proud to recommend Jessica Dockter, the graphic designer for the WITS team. She is able to create book covers, lay out the interior of a book, design logos and icons, and assist clients with branding a company image.

Yvonne Perry  
Find me online:

WITS Website: <http://www.writersinthesky.com>

WITS Blog: <http://www.writersintheskyblog.com/>

[MySpace](#)

[Facebook](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Twitter](#)

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

Blog Site: <http://yvonneperry.blogspot.com>

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## Tips for Social Networking

By Carolyn Howard-Johnson

This is an excerpt from my coming 2nd edition of *The Frugal Book Promoter*. Here are some specific tips for social networks.

- Unless you are just having fun, forget adding people in your neighborhood or old high school bus to your network. That is, unless they would also be possible readers of your book. Invite and accept people with whom you share *career* interests.
- Build your buddy lists slowly and methodically. Make a list of those who are influential in your fields that are related to the subject or theme of your book. Ask them one or two at a time so you can connect with a couple of personal messages, perhaps explore a bit with each of them how you might work together.

Caveat: Using the list from your Yahoo or AOL account to invite people wholesale probably won't give you the advantages you're looking for and could backfire because it may feel a little spammy to some.

- Keep your biography (or profile) updated.
- Once you have a large group of friends you can create events on facebook and some others as well. You know how I like to recycle so I'd make them events that I market to your general audience (or your own niche) and then include facebook, too. That might mean you'll attract social networking pals who will need to sign on to a network before they attend and later be part of your group. That can't be bad if you're leading them to free content that they need.
- Some of the social networks include a bar on your profile page that tells you which of your friends are also logged in; that lets you connect with them easily and personally to offer them ideas, ask for help or whatever. This feature alone is worth the time it will take to build a reasonably useful profile page on one of these networks.
- Add your social network widgets (little logos that help people click through to your social network profile page) on your blog(s) and Web site(s).

There are all kinds of social networks with different focuses. Some are by invitation only. If your novel is about the world of the rich and famous, you may want to find a social network that fits that theme. Asmallworld.net is a network dedicated to jetsetters. You'll find dozens, maybe hundreds of others that might work for your book. imeem.com is for iTunes fans. If you don't find a suitable one, that's your clue to start one yourself.

The Ning group is one that allows anyone to start a new network. John Kremer's bookmarket.ning.com is an example of one of those and it happens to be one I like because I can find other authors there and authors need what I write. Allyn Evans, author of *Grab the Queen Power*, has one focused on mother/daughter relationships. This concept is similar to the groups on facebook but I think they lend more of a feel of expertise and credibility to the network's founder.

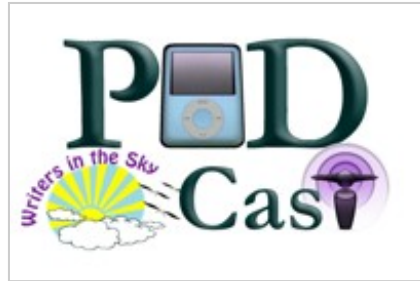
Another that supports independently published authors is [www.nothingbinding.com](http://www.nothingbinding.com). It is the baby of Jerry D. Simmons, former Time Warner Executive. I like Squidoo because you can focus all lenses on specific aspects of your writing career or specific themes in your book. Yvonne Perry has a nice one with tons of resources for writers in it. See it at [www.squidoo.com/bookwriter](http://www.squidoo.com/bookwriter). I also like Jennifer Akers' Squidoo lenses ([www.squidoo.com/JenniferAkers](http://www.squidoo.com/JenniferAkers)) because they are full of content. While you're there, vote. Add to favorites, leave messages in guest books. When you sign your message, leave your regular Web site address and your Squidoo lens URL. It doesn't take long to build one.

Carolyn Howard-Johnson is the award-winning author of the [HowToDoltFrugally Series](#) of Books for writers, including USA Book News' award winners [The Frugal Editor](#) and [The Frugal Book Promoter](#). Find her Squidoo lens <http://www.squidoo.com/HowToDoltFrugallyforAuthors> and her iFOGO page <http://www.ifogo.com/1Authors/Carolyn%20Howard-Johnson/howard-johnson.html> or visit her blogs:  
<http://www.SharingWithWriters.blogspot.com>  
<http://TheNewBookReview.blogspot.com>

<http://www.AuthorsCoalition.blogspot.com>

<http://www.TheFrugalEditor.blogspot.com>

## WITS Podcast Schedule October 2008



### Podcast Schedule for October 2008

#### October 3

Nashville author of *The Sage Age—Blending Science with Intuitive Wisdom*, MaAnna Stephenson, will be the guest on [Writers in the Sky Podcast](#). Stephenson is a published composer with airplay in eleven countries. Her advanced education includes attending Jackson State Community College and Lambuth University concurrently, double majoring in music and acoustics with a special apprenticeship at a local recording studio as a sound engineer. She also has a degree in electronics. Both scientists and those embracing new age thought will enjoy this book, as well as the wisdom and wit the author shares in our interview. Visit [www.SageAge.net](http://www.SageAge.net) for more information and links for purchase.

#### October 10

Irene, the author of *The Sitting Swing: Finding Wisdom to Know the Difference*, was born and raised in a tiny hamlet of Reno in the northern area of the province of Alberta in Canada. Irene wrote about growing up in a semi-abusive home to finally accepting that experience as a path to a spiritual understanding of life. Her powerful story is a testament that it's never too late to change your life, never too late to heal. *The Sitting Swing* is a classic story showing us that change, growth, forgiveness, and recovery are possible. It's heartwarming, healing story is a testament to the strength and courage of the human spirit. In the end, it gives hope and freedom to those who accept the past and move forward by rewriting life scripts that have been passed down for generations. For more information, please visit <http://irenewatson.com/>

#### October 17

We will take a mid-month break from the theme of the spirits to interview Marc Boyajian about his book *The Next Falling Empire*. Mr. Boyajian is a Syrian-born author who was raised in Lebanon and moved to the United States as a young adult. As someone who always held a deep love for this country, even before having the opportunity to live here, Mr. Boyajian shares his thoughts on steps that must be taken to preserve the American way of life.

Mr. Boyajian provides a road map of policy changes, ranging from issues of health care and education to the Iraq War and our global economy. He discusses each subject in straightforward language with specific solutions. Whether or not you agree with his proposals, you will appreciate the ability of Mr. Boyajian's writing to spark debate. Check out this interview to learn about his prescription for America. For more information about this book, please visit <http://outskirtspress.com/thenextfallingempire>.

#### October 24

Carol Denbow will interview Yvonne Perry about her book *More Than Meets the Eye*, which covers many aspects of the dying and grieving process and sheds light on near-death experience, suicide, euthanasia, and spirit visits after the passing of a loved one. Carol has experience with South Coast Hospice & Palliative Care in Coos Bay, Oregon. "Hospice care is one of the topics in my book," says Perry, "and one I believe is a concern for many people who have aging loved ones they need to care for in their final days."

Yvonne's book, [More Than Meets the Eye, True Stories about Death, Dying, and Afterlife](#), is available for free as a PDF for anyone who subscribes to our free newsletter at [writersinthesky.com](http://writersinthesky.com).

#### October 31

Have you had a Near-Death Experience ~ Out-of-Body Experience ~ Spiritually Transformative Experience ~ or other experience that can't be readily explained? Then, be sure to join Yvonne Perry as she interviews Reverend Juliet Nightingale. Because of her NDEs (near-death experiences) and her involvement with the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS), Ms. Nightingale pioneered her own weekly radio program, *Toward The Light*, and has been interviewed on radio and TV programs and has appeared in numerous print media.

Nightingale is a facilitator, radio show host, speaker, teacher, medium, and life coach, and is available for public and private speaking engagements. From England, her accent immediately draws people in. Her "tell-it-like-it-is" style engages the audience in a colorful discussion. [Toward The Light](#) offers near-death studies and support, Reiki and remote healing, psychic, spiritual, grief, and motivational counseling, as well as books, videos, and DVDs on related topics.

Listening to Writers in the Sky Podcast on a computer is easy.

Just click this link: <http://yvonneperry.blogspot.com> and go to my blog.

On the right sidebar there is a list of archived shows. Click on the interview you would like to hear and it will open a post that has a link to open the audio file.

For information about being a guest on Writers in the Sky Podcast, see [www.writersinthesky.com/writing-podcast.htm](http://www.writersinthesky.com/writing-podcast.htm)

## The Real Secret to Succeeding as a Writer

By Anne Walls

Ah, the life of a writer. Toiling away over your keyboard, stacks of old cereal bowls and who knows what else accumulating on your desk while your brain turns itself inside out trying to be brilliant. Finally, one glorious day, you finish your project. Hurrah! Triumph! Glory!

But then what?

Then you have to get your masterpiece out there. Many successful writers believe to maximize the chance of publication, it's best to have at least ten submissions out at all times. Consider it the writing world's secret to success. But how can one person manage this feat on a constant basis and still have time to write? Suddenly, you're required to turn your well-oiled writing brain into a multi-tasking business/publicity machine. You have to research writing markets and competitions. Flawlessly copy and package your work. Juggle the Post Office, Staples, and the ATM because sending those babies out to the world is going to cost you, and not just in your wallet. I've seen whole days lost while I've turned my living room into "Operation Get Published." Yes, it is of the utmost importance to send your work out. But, as you sit there with four paper-cuts and three annoying "Return to Sender" stamps, don't you ever wonder if there's a better way?

I used to wonder this too. Then my partner John and I decided to stop waiting for a miracle solution and create one ourselves. We started WordHustler.com, a website dedicated to providing writers with everything they need to get published. WordHustler is the first website to take care of the whole process of writing and submitting work.

With WordHustler, you can upload projects of any kind, search markets you want to submit to, and voila! We print and ship everything for you. It's easy to track all of your submissions using WordHustler's organized tracking system and we cost less than doing it yourself. Most importantly, WordHustler saves you time so you can do what you're supposed to be doing: WRITING.

One of the basic tenets of publishing success is that you have to submit often and well, but writers face an incredible barrier because of the sheer amount of secretarial work involved. There has never been anything out there to address the issues of sending and tracking work in one complete package. Since John and I are also writers, we want to provide the most cost-effective, helpful service we can. Our over 3,500 literary markets are free, as is membership. The only thing you pay for is the cost of printing and shipping your work, which starts as low as \$0.99 for sending four pages or less. For under a dollar, you can send a query letter, a poetry submission, and more. This price includes shipping, a SASE, and WordHustler's professional tracking services. Due to the overwhelming request of our clients, we are also about to unveil our email submission system so writers can track all of their submissions using WordHustler.

WordHustler offers additional useful writing tools such as unlimited, protected storage for your projects, a sophisticated letter composer, a signature tool, online contest forms, Virtual Office for writers on the go, an Advanced Submission Wizard and more.

At the end of the day, submissions coming from WordHustler increase your chances of landing on an editor's desk, not the slush pile. We are constantly strengthening our relationships with agents, editors, and publishers so they are aware of what WordHustler is doing in the writing world. Our goal is to create a place where writers can submit flawless, professional submissions and markets are happy to receive them because they know they will be formatted correctly and organized properly. Everyone wins.

We know how hard it is to get your work out there. But after uploading a project, choosing a few markets, and hitting "Submit Now," we hope you'll breathe a sigh of relief because the hard part is over. The best part is that you now have time to start your next project. What's it going to be about? Not sure yet?

Good thing you've got lots of time to think about it.

*Anne Walls and John Singleton are the co-founders of [WordHustler.com](http://WordHustler.com). They live in Los Angeles with their two semi-insane dogs and a house crammed full of books. They enjoy movies, tennis, and of course, writing.*

### NETWORK WITH US!



Add your announcement or brag about your writing accomplishment. Tell us about your book or business. Share information and ideas or send articles or advertorial for the next issue by contacting us on our Web site [www.writersinthesky.com/contact.php](http://www.writersinthesky.com/contact.php). Here are some announcements from our readers this month:

MaAnna Stephenson's book *The Sage Age—Blending Science with Intuitive Wisdom* was featured in [Publisher's Weekly on September 22](#). WITS had the honor of editing this book and we are very proud of this author. We invite you to [subscribe](#) to the author's newsletter and receive the free eBook *How Thoughts Become Reality*. Read an article about the [Large Hadron Collider](#) and learn more about frontier science and current intuitive practice at [www.sageage.net](http://www.sageage.net). Be sure to read the review in our book review section of this newsletter.

### ~~~~~ **Book Promotion E-Course October 6-31, 2008 Helps Authors Build Exciting Buzz**

Got a book coming out you want to promote? Has your publisher's publicist moved on to other projects? Do you have a book in stores that you know deserves more media attention than it's getting? Do you need to know more about book promotion for your next book proposal? You need "Book Publicity 101: How to Build Book Buzz," a dynamic online course taught by a veteran publicist and author.

Offered October 6-31, 2008, the class is taught in a forum format, with lessons and homework assignments posted online in a private, password-protected forum. The highly-interactive course covers how to:

- Create a book publicity blueprint that makes the most of your available resources
- Craft the most compelling media materials needed to generate results
- Conduct a virtual book tour with bloggers who can help you build buzz quickly
- Employ the media relations tools that will take you farther faster

- Generate high-impact radio interviews
- Build an author Web site that supports book sales and other goals

Students receive instructional materials and resources and complete weekly assignments that help them discover how easy it is to create book buzz. Student interaction on the forum offers fresh perspectives and new ideas for all participants while one-on-one instructor guidance and feedback takes your work to the next level. A free-for-all Q&A corner lets students get answers to questions not covered in the course materials, making this a highly-personalized learning experience for nonfiction and fiction authors.

The class is taught by Sandra Beckwith, a recovering award-winning publicist; publisher of the free e-zine *Build Book Buzz*; and author of three books, including two on publicity topics.

Registration is \$179 and limited to twenty students.

Register at <http://www.buildbookbuzz.com/workshops/book-publicity.htm>; send course inquiries to Beckwith at [sb@buildbookbuzz.com](mailto:sb@buildbookbuzz.com).

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[Indian Age](#) is a magazine that never skirts the issues but always excels as a powerful instrument to shape public opinion. *Indian Age* has been publishing from Vadodara since October 25, 2001 having its offices in all main cities of India. *Indian Age* brings out special features on various issues focusing on the citizens and their issues. The current issue of *Indian Age* is now available. If you have any difficulties finding *Indian Age*, please write us at [publication@indianage.net](mailto:publication@indianage.net).

*Indian Age* Communication has also stepped into the publishing world with a series of ten books by eminent writers from South Asia. The first book of the series is *Waiting for Manna*, a short story collection of veteran South Asian feminist writer Dr.(Ms) Sarojini Sahoo, published in September 2008.

The *Indian Age* Communication has also planned to promote avant-garde writers by publishing their work in a concessional self-financing method. Writers may contact [info@indianage.net](mailto:info@indianage.net).

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[The 2008 Copywriting Success Summit](#) is for existing commercial copywriters who write for businesses and already have a few corporations as clients, but is actively pursuing new opportunities. The online seminar is also for full-time freelance writers and those who write on the side. Here are some of the sessions:

- \* How to Be a Highly Paid Copywriter as a One-Person Business
- \* Contact to Contract: Turning Prospects Into Clients!
- \* Your 60-Minute Marketing Plan
- \* Becoming the King (or Queen) of the Hill in Your Niche
- \* How to Gain Exposure Using Social Networking Sites
- \* Becoming a \$125-per-Hour Writer and Beyond
- \* Making Top Dollar Writing White Papers
- \* Pricing Your Copywriting Services

The Summit combines the efforts of many thought leaders in the field of business copywriting to provide a unique professional development opportunity. The event will be delivered as a series of 12 virtual presentations over the course of a month (October 2008). The event will also include an exclusive online forum for all participants.

**The speakers** are Bob Bly, Peter Bowerman, Steve Slaunwhite, Michael Stelzner, Brian Clark, Casey Hibbard, and Jon McCulloch.

**For more information**, see <http://www.copywritingsummit.com>

**The cost and availability:** Ticket prices will be discounted to \$397 between Sept. 26th and Oct. 6th (\$100 savings).

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Poet and Author Hal Manogue is giving a CD away with a purchase of his book *Short Sleeves Insights* <http://www.shortsleeves.com>.

[net/](#). To get your free CD, email Hal at [hal@shortsleeves.net](mailto:hal@shortsleeves.net)

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Karen is putting a call out to the WITS writing community for a writer to help her with a pro bono project. If you have the time to spare for a good cause and would like to write the article and help her with the magazine querying process, please contact her and see what you can do to help her. **Karen says:** I am working with an artist, Jacqueline Cattaneo, who has done a series of 21 paintings titled "In Reverence." There are 21 images of children praying, and this never-before-seen series is now at Restored Traditions, the largest Catholic Art Gallery online. We believe that these hope-filled kids, and what they are about, is an interesting story, that will touch many people.

If you could pass this on to some other writers who could possibly help, we would really appreciate that. We can't pay for the writing, but would love to have some articles in national magazines (Readers Digest, Ladies Home Journal, and others), and on Web sites (beliefnet.com is a wonderful one). Thank you in advance for your time and help!

Blessings,  
Karen Ogulewicz  
928-478-6908  
[kareno333@hotmail.com](mailto:kareno333@hotmail.com) (the small letter o is not a zero)

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MousePrints Publishing announces the release of the 5th Antelope Valley Anthology. The new volume is titled *Off the 14* and is filled with stories, poems and essays by and about the people of Southern California's Antelope Valley.

MousePrints has been publishing this anthology of local work for five years and the book gets better every year. *Tales of the Green Jack-A-Lope*, the first of the books, was pretty rough. It didn't even have page numbers, but by the third book, *Aldous Huxley Slept Here*, we were learning how to produce a professional volume. This year's book is especially close to our hearts because it is dedicated to Kay Ryan who has just been named Poet Laureate of the United States. Ms. Ryan is from the Antelope Valley, having graduated from Antelope Valley High School and having attended Antelope Valley College.

The book will be released October 22, 2008 but pre-release orders are being taken by email at [mouseprint@earthlink.net](mailto:mouseprint@earthlink.net). The cost of the book is \$10.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling. Earlier AV Anthologies and the novels of G. L. Helm can be ordered from [www.mouseprintspublishing.com](http://www.mouseprintspublishing.com).

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Introducing a new blog: [Steven Clark Bradley's Patriot Acts](#)

This blog is on the one hand, to feature my novel, Patriot Acts and to encourage thought and response from readers to look into the issues such as terrorism and security and to challenge them to write and speak out on issues in support or in opposition to the views presented in this blog. It is a forum to challenge and express one's view freely and forcefully. I hope you'll go there and take a look around.

Watch this Video Trailer for Patriot Acts: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePbQewMTmKI>

You can get your own copy of Patriot Acts at:  
<http://www.mobipocket.com/en/eBooks/eBookDetails.asp?BookID=106715>

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**The Dream Quest One Poetry & Writing Contest** is open to anyone who loves expressing innermost thoughts and feelings into the beautiful art of poetry or to write a short story that is worth telling everyone! And to all who have the ability to dream. Write a poem or short story for a chance to win cash prizes. All works must be original. <http://www.dreamquestone.com>

**Guidelines:** Write a poem, thirty lines or fewer on any subject, style, or form, typed or neatly hand printed. And/or write a short story, five pages maximum length, on any subject or theme, creative writing fiction or non-fiction (including essay compositions, diary, journal entries and screenwriting). Also, must be typed or neatly hand printed. Multiple poetry and short story entries are accepted.

**Postmark deadline: December 31, 2008:** All winners will be announced on January 31, 2009

**Prizes:** Writing Contest First Prize is \$500. Second Prize: \$250. Third Prize: \$100.

Poetry Contest First Prize is \$250. Second Prize: \$125. Third Prize: \$50.

**Entry fees:** Writing Contest entry fee: \$10 per short story. Poetry Contest entry fee: \$5 per poem.

To send entries: Include title(s) with your story (ies) or poem(s), along with your name, address, phone#, email, brief biographical info. Tell us a little about yourself on the coversheet. Add a self-addressed stamped envelope for entry confirmation. Fees payable to: "DREAMQUESTONE.COM"

Mail to:

Dream Quest One  
Poetry & Writing Contest  
P.O. Box 3141  
Chicago, IL 60654

Visit <http://www.dreamquestone.com> for details and to enter!

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Jo Linsdell, the creator and manager of Writers and Authors, is planning to re-launch Writers and Authors site. The new format will be:

- Mondays: Opportunities for writers
- Tuesdays: Featured Authors
- Wednesdays: Publishers, editors, etc...
- Thursdays: Book reviews
- Fridays: Upcoming events

A virtual tour will begin October 1, 2008 to re-launch this site in its new format. Anyone who is interested in hosting Jo for an interview or featuring the Writers and Authors Web site on theirs, may send an email to [writersandauthors@yahoo.it](mailto:writersandauthors@yahoo.it) with "virtual tour" in the subject line.

For those interested in being interviewed for the "Featured Author" section, send an email giving details about yourself and your writing. Please also include your Web site address. The same applies for publishers, editors, etc.

Jo also wants to include a section with book reviews. You are welcome to review any type of book and add it to the mix. If you are new to writing reviews and want some pointers check out <http://library.queensu.ca/research/guide/book-reviews/how-write>. Please send your review in the body of the email to [writersandauthors@yahoo.it](mailto:writersandauthors@yahoo.it) with "Book Review" in the subject line.

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Good news! We've completed the mechanical licensing phase for the music used in the audio book *Sightlines: A Family Love Story in Poetry and Music*. Now, onward into the production phase!

For those interested, the phases in creating and producing your own audiobook are:

- 1) creative phase: recording, editing, fileswapping, decisionmaking, "notes" back and forth
- 2) technical phase: mastering and disc spanning
- 3) mechanical licensing: copyright, permissions in the print publishing world
- 4) production: making the discs, pricing, packaging, delivery
- 5) big celebration!
- 6) see if anyone wants one :-)

I continue to be completely smitten with [Scott Kidd](#) as a collaborator. He's a consummate professional. As someone whose career was as a generalist—with the skill of professionalism at the core of that—I truly appreciate that core when I encounter it. I am bragging on him all the time...even offering him as a case study for what really works well. Thanks again for connecting us.

Janet Riehl,  
[Riehl Life: Village Wisdom for the 21st Century](#) for connections through the arts, across cultures and generations.

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-- **The Morning Nudge** --

When your pen won't budge, read The Morning Nudge. Sign up for free daily inspiration and motivation for your writing. Go to: <http://www.workingwriterscoach.com>

## Pitching Yourself to Bloggers

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If you're trying to pitch yourself to bloggers you may have found dead silence at the end of your email exchange. Why? Well, let's face it. The top bloggers in any market probably get a ton of email. Most of it fairly useless. I know this for a fact because I get pitched all the time for reviews, interviews, all sorts of things. Ninety-percent of the emails are useless form letters, ninety-nine percent of the pitches are from people who don't even read my blog.

In a world where bloggers are quickly replacing media, it's amazing to me that pro-media pitchers don't get that regardless of the person you're pitching, the same rules still apply. Let's do a quick run through in case you're unsure.

1) Customize, customize, customize: I delete every email that starts off with "Dear Sir or Madam." First off, I hate the term "madam" and second, my picture is posted right on my site. If you can't tell from my photograph what sex I am, we have bigger problems than a generalized pitch.

2) Personalize: ok, I know this is repetitive but let me clarify: personalize the pitch. Talk about their blog, a recent posting, how long you've been reading. Now don't gush on and on like you would bragging about Junior's first baby steps but showing that you know who the blogger is and what they blog about is important. We love it when you read our stuff and when you tell us what we talk about, we love that even more.

3) KISS: Keep it simple. Very simple, short and sweet. Don't meander on through pages and pages of your pitch. If I have to scroll through an email to find the point of your message I probably won't read it. State your goals right up front, in the first paragraph. Don't bury your reason for targeting them somewhere in paragraph four. Chances are the email will hit the trash bin before the reader hits paragraph four.

4) Don't be a stalker: if you haven't gotten a response from the blogger there's probably a reason. They are either too busy, haven't gotten to it, filed it away for later or aren't interested. Yes, you're allowed to follow up, but only once. Any more follow ups and you become a pest. No one likes a pest.

5) WIIFM: don't forget the "what's in it for me" factor. What's in it for the blogger? Hint: bloggers love scoop and exclusivity so if you have something no one else does, by all means tell them. If there's another reason for sharing this with them then by all means tell them.

6) Figure out what you want: See #5, keep it simple but also don't just email a blogger with a 'whatever you're willing to do' type of message. Ask for what you want, if it works for the blogger, and if your pitch is good, it's likely you'll get it.

7) Don't send attachments unless you're asked to. I don't think this needs any further clarification, but keep in mind: unless someone says "Yes, please send me more info" don't load their inbox with attachments. Not only is it rude, but I've found that attachments often end up in my spam filter where they stay till the spam filter is emptied, often without even seeing the email or associated documentation.

8) Mention your blog: bloggers love other bloggers. Let them know you have a blog, include a link to it, possibly even to a recent post they might be interested in.

9) Add a link: bloggers love incoming links. If you're pitching particular bloggers, you should have a link to their blog on your site. No exceptions.

10) Ask good questions: if you're pitching a blogger for an interview but they don't do interviews, you've just wasted a valuable communication. Don't assume that because you contact them about an interview, "I know you don't do interviews," that they will make an exception for you.

Remember that much like pitching the media, it's all about relationships. The more you can cultivate relationships with bloggers, the better your online campaign will be. Also, consider that future campaigns will also be affected by relationships you build now. Media may come and go but bloggers tend to own their market and stay put, having a solid contact is always a good place to start. Regardless of the campaign.

*Penny C. Sansevieri, CEO and founder of Author Marketing Experts, Inc., is a best-selling author and internationally recognized*

*book marketing and media relations expert. Her company is one of the leaders in the publishing industry and has developed some of the most cutting-edge book marketing campaigns. She is the author of five books, including *Book to Bestseller* which has been called the "road map to publishing success". To learn more about her books or her promotional services, you can visit her web site at [www.amarketingexpert.com](http://www.amarketingexpert.com). To subscribe to her free ezine, send a blank email to: [subscribe@amarketingexpert.com](mailto:subscribe@amarketingexpert.com)*

### **Do You Want to Get More Mileage out of Your Book Marketing Dollars?**

WITS publicity packages are affordable and effective ways to market your book. Yvonne Perry offers you the benefit of the knowledge she gained from her own book marketing experience. Choose from publicity packages containing book trailers, article marketing techniques, online media releases, author interviews, book reviews and more.

Our writing packages are a great deal for anyone needing online publicity. See [www.writersinthesky.com/author-publicity.html](http://www.writersinthesky.com/author-publicity.html)

### **Virtual Assistants Excel in the Publicity and Marketing Niche**

We all realize how virtual assistants have revolutionized the way we work today. Most businesses now count on their virtual assistant the same as they used to count on their secretaries, only so much more. VAs are a prized and respected part of their client's team, and unlike secretaries, who often were taken for granted, virtual assistants are praised for their professionalism and skills. Most businesses today can't imagine where they would be without their VA. And as the potential for success in a virtual assistant business continues to explode, so does the need for good virtual assistants.

Today's virtual assistants need to take pride in their business and also learn as much as they can about their niche, which is the specialty they have chosen. One niche I highly recommend is to offer publicity and marketing services to clients. This is an area that is growing in leaps and bounds as more and more authors, businesses, and other professionals realize the need to market their business to get good publicity. A business can expand tremendously when hiring a virtual assistant to help them spread the word about their products or services. Also, authors today aren't aware that once they write a book, that's when the real work begins. They need to get the word out about their book in order for it to be successful. That's where a good publicity virtual assistant comes in.

Publicity and marketing is thrilling to say the least. There's such a great rush when your client gets recognized in national magazines, or a TV station wants to do a segment on them and you helped them achieve this success. Or better yet, when your efforts start resulting in substantial increased sales for them. Clients will not only keep using your services, but will also tell others about this new positive addition they have to their business. And best yet, you too get to feel that satisfaction as you are helping them achieve their goals.

One of my most successful tips is learning how to effectively use any publicity that a client receives. When clients get national attention in a magazine, newspaper, or TV segment, or even on a popular website, it's important to make sure that everyone is aware of this. A press release should immediately go out to announce their accomplishment. This release should be added to their website and also should go to all their local papers, radio stations, and TV networks. Media loves to highlight a success story of their locals, so make sure you get this out there as soon as you can. And you don't have to wait for the publicity to happen. If your client lands a major TV segment, you can start sending this press out beforehand in order to get more media when the event happens. You just want to make sure the client is fairly confident the segment will air. Also, don't worry if the segment gets bumped back, that often happens as breaking news takes priority. This can almost be a blessing, as then you get to do more publicity before the airdate.

It's also important to follow-up with the reporters and let them know how much you appreciate the acceptance of your quotes for an article. When you go the extra step to show them your appreciation, they remember you when the next article comes up and they need help with more expert advice. Many reporters work for multiple magazines so one good ally can lead to lots of media exposure. Always keep your PR hat on. Learn to take any situation and turn it into good press for your clients and your business as well. Stay on top of current events and see if you have anything to offer. Whenever a story hits the press that any of my clients would have a connection to, I'll send it right away. Having press releases already prepared for clients on their business is always a great help. How do you know about these events? Sign up for Google Alerts under the topics of interest and then whenever a story is written, you can follow-up with your press release or article to the reporter. It works! I also use ProfNet from PRNewswire, which allows me to get daily leads from major news outlets. You can also consider PRLeads.

It's also important to learn how to write a good press release and article and know where to send those. Make sure that your press releases and articles are newsworthy and also something that interests the readers. When I write a release, I always think would I read this release? Would it interest me? If not, I doubt your target audience would be reading it either. Plus, be careful not to sound too promotional. You can easily get your message across without sounding like an ad.

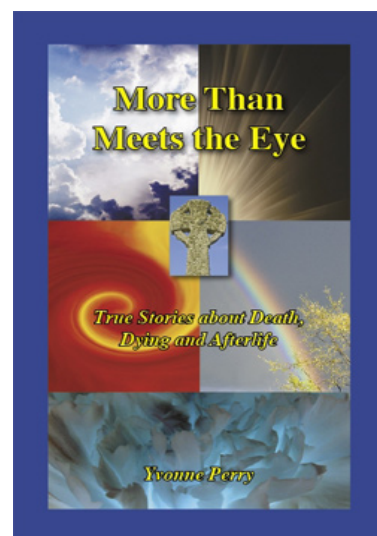
Publicity is a great niche for virtual assistants. To learn more stop by my site at [www.virtualwordpublishing.com](http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com) or contact me for a free 10-minute call on PR tips or my free PR Informational Package.

*Diana Ennen is the author of numerous books including Virtual Assistant - The Series, Become a Highly Successful, Sought After VA and accompanying Workbook; She specializes in publicity and book marketing and is president of Virtual Word Publishing <http://www.virtualwordpublishing.com> and <http://www.virtualassistantstartups.com>.*

## **Are You Afraid of Dying? Do you need comfort after the loss a loved one? Here's hope!**

*More Than Meets the Eye: True Stories about Death, Dying and Afterlife* was authored by Yvonne Perry for people who are facing challenges presented by bereavement. In the book you will find:

- Information to alleviate the fear of death
- Comfort for caregivers, friends and family of a person who is near the end of life, or has recently passed
- Understanding for those who have had a near-death experience and lived to tell about it
- nsight from Dr. Aaron Milstone, Medical Director of Vanderbilt University Medical Center's Lung Transplant Program about why physicians are ill-equipped to deal with death and are unable to comfort dying patients or their families
- Why people sense the presence of their loved ones near them during the funeral, graveside ceremony and in the days following
- Reasons we should address end of life issues with family members.
- Understanding emotions regarding sorrow, grief, loss and guilt
- How to tell if death is about to occur for a critically ill patient and how to assist a loved one in gently departing
- Dealing with the emotional devastation of a loved one's suicide and signs that indicate someone may be suicidal
- Discussion about euthanasia



There's also a legal copy of a Living Will, also known as an Advanced Health Care Directive included in the book and on Yvonne's website [www.deathdyingafterlife.com](http://www.deathdyingafterlife.com) where you may read more or purchase the book.

## **OCTOBER POEMS**



## REAL LIVE WOMAN

I'm not an avatar; I am not a cartoon.  
You can reach out and touch me, when I walk into a room.  
So if you're a good ole boy, then I'm your girl.  
I'm a real, live woman in a virtual world.

I'm not a simulation, and not part of a quest.  
Don't need imagination; what you see is what you get.  
So if you wanta dance, we can give it a whirl.  
I'm a real live woman, in a virtual world.

If you give up your 'scaping; I'll give up my spacing.  
We'll get over our fantasies.  
We'll make all of the living, make all of the loving,  
Just as real as real can be.

There's a time for a wish,  
There's a time for a dream.  
There's a place for real love.  
Come and find it with me.

Jan Bossing © 2008, Joelton, TN

## Humpback

Oh, great lumbering peaceful giant  
Hovering high over oceans floors,  
Cooing the resonance of fond contentment,  
Ne'er a complaint or tone of resentment,  
Knowing no boundaries or doors.

Fair neighbor to all of your seafaring mates  
Who abide with good comfort in spite of your size.  
No enemies threaten except Ahab's kin  
From otherworld trappings again and again,  
Seeking to make you their trophy and prize.

Lord of the oceans, Titan giganticus,  
Hope lives for all as long as you reign.  
Give us your peace so we may know our fate.  
Teach us to live without sorrow or pain.

Dennis S Martin

<http://www.iwritesome.com>

<http://iwritesome.blogspot.com/>

## Wonderland

Follow into wonderland.  
I know Alice wouldn't mind  
The company of one more fool  
As she winds through her fantasy.

Riding on her magic mushroom  
Hiding behind Cheshire grins,  
High tea parties,  
Birthday wishes,  
Getting large, then small again.

Bashful dormouse taking cues from  
Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum Dum,  
Bash heads with the Queen of Hearts  
Until your tale is a conundrum.

Land of wonder  
Isle of pleasure  
Transport to another plain,  
Transitory sanctuary,  
Only fantasy remains.

Feeding souls the breath of freedom  
From the humdrum daily plan.  
Respite sought but for a moment,  
Peace abides in Wonderland.

Dennis S Martin  
<http://www.iwritesome.com>  
<http://iwritesome.blogspot.com/>

### **Unknown Path**

By Gail Livesay

Unable to sleep,  
I watched as fluffy white clouds  
covered the stars sleepy heads  
and tucked them into bed.

The sun appeared upon the horizon  
and burst forth in brilliant color  
to keep watch over the day.

Trembling and afraid,  
I bowed my head to pray  
for the unknown path I must travel today.

Well, I heard a kind voice say,  
“Fear not.  
I am the light in the stars at night  
and the Son of the day.

I will gently fold you in my arms  
at the end of this day.

### **Growing Old Together**

By Gail Livesay

Affection is given.  
A contagious thing, caught unaware.  
Companionship,  
every day rituals shared

Love is nourished and grows,  
a passion that is kindled  
and must be banked to withstand life's storms.

Growing old together with quiet happiness.

**Nothing**  
Nothing  
Springs Into Life  
And  
Forms Another Symbol  
Of God

Nothing  
Creates Itself  
On A Blank Page  
And  
Becomes A Work  
Of Art

Nothing  
Shapes Space  
With Dark Matter  
And  
Consciousness  
Fills The Earth  
With Mystery

Nothing  
Becomes Itself  
And Earth Moves  
To The Music  
Of Eternity

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<http://halmanogue.blogspot.com/>  
[hal@shortsleeves.net](mailto:hal@shortsleeves.net)

## WORDS

Vocabulary on a wheel...  
Mumbled words spat out in a spiel,  
Yet very rarely are they real.  
Understated... over-mused...  
Is it comprehension – or compromise?  
Better hope they're big enough in size!  
So often stated,  
That they are underrated...  
And so, false meanings are created  
Try to sound sincere,  
Yet holding back words in fear,

From being too often jeered.  
So many sums lead to so many substances.  
Hard to force yourself to take the chances,  
And all hell breaks loose if there's wrong glances.  
Despite it all the truth is not truly heard,  
Because of the wrong combinations of words...  
An ironic wheel of confusion is needlessly churned

~ excerpted from the book *Towards Understanding* by Lillian Brummet (www.brummet.ca)

## OCTOBER BOOK REVIEWS



### ***The Sage Age—Blending Science with Intuitive Wisdom***

Author: MaAnna Stephenson

ISBN: 978-1-933449-63-0

Publisher: Nightengale Press 2008

Genre: New Science/Spirituality

Reviewed by Yvonne Perry for [Writers in the Sky](#) (9/08)

I had the pleasure of editing this book, and I have to say I've never read anything like it. If you are looking for a feel-good new age book, this is *not* your book. If you are looking for scientific facts to support some of the reports and findings of the new age community, read on.

Scientists reading this book and wanting to know why energy workers and intuitive practitioners inaccurately use terms such as light, vibration, and aura will be surprised to learn that there is scientific support for what the intuitive tries to explain by using a spiritual language. It has been confirmed by experiments that show the subtle energies of the aura surrounding all living things hold the key to breakthrough understandings in biology and chemistry.

If you are a believer in psychic phenomena, you may be pleased to find that there are scientific terms, theories, and ideas that while they do not support such things as life after death, spiritual dimensions, or the ability to transfer energy, they make it impossible to disprove them.

Some of the greatest breakthroughs in science have come from controversy where one party decides to disprove the other only to find out that the theory they shunned was correct. It could be that their language and terminology was clouded and one term meant something entirely different to the other. Perhaps one called it light and the other called it frequency, but they were both speaking about the same thing.

One party not being able to explain to the other has been a problem between the scientific and new age community for years. Those on the spiritual side have a hard time understanding why everything has to be proven. Where's the faith in that? they ask. And yet scientists can't prove some of the things they accept as common truth; things that are now being proven incorrect as new pieces to the mystery of the universe begin to unravel through the exploration of quantum physics, atom smashing with the new large Hadron Collider at CERN, simultaneous dimensions, and string theory.

History and the Church have influenced societal beliefs and scientific research. If science attempts to bring forth information that rocks the foundation of religion, it will be fought with tenacity. Just look at how the religious, right wing minority has prevented stem cell research in America. Perhaps in our present age—the sage age—we are better prepared to examine ideas and theories without fear of punishment or rejection. This is the only way to learn the truth about anything—do the research, form a theory, and see if it holds up against the research others are doing.

Psychics or physics? Which is correct? Both and neither—depending upon which side you are on and what terms you use to describe your experience. The author doesn't lean toward one side or the other. Being both a shamanka (female shaman) and an electronics expert, her expansive new work combines knowledge from the physical sciences and the intuitive arts to present an unbiased perspective that harmonizes these diverse disciplines into one body of knowledge. This book is sure to open the dialog and get both communities talking—hopefully *to* instead of *about* one another.

Read more or purchase at [www.sageage.net](http://www.sageage.net).

### ***The Savory Secrets of Dodi's Home Cooking***

Author: Howida (Dodi) Elhalogy

ISBN: 978-1-4327-2557-0

Publisher: Outskirts Press, Inc. 2008

Genre: cooking, food, culture

Reviewed by Sarah Moore for [Writers in the Sky](#) (9/08)

I always take a little time to skim through cookbooks while at my local bookstore. I like discovering new ingredients, or perhaps just new ways to use already familiar ingredients. I enjoy taking a moment to envision the great dinner parties I will host and the compliments I will receive on the unique and delicious menu I prepared. Above all, I love to stare at the beautiful pictures of the final product as created by the author. While my limited culinary skills may never allow for an exact visual replica of the dish as it's intended, the colorful presentations provide something to which I can aspire. The new cookbook *The Savory Secrets of Dodi's Home Cooking* by Howida "Dodi" Elhalogy exceeds all of my prerequisites for a great addition to anyone's kitchen collection.

Mrs. Elhalogy grew up in an Egyptian village as the daughter of the province's mayor. Since her family did a lot of entertaining on their large estate, Mrs. Elhalogy learned at a young age to prepare meals for special events and eventually mastered the art of Middle Eastern cooking. She decided to pull together her family's recipes into this beautiful cookbook as a way of preserving a cultural tradition and of introducing a new audience to the amazing flavors and textures found in the dishes of the Middle East.

I was first struck by the beauty of the book. Mrs. Elhalogy uses rich colors of yellow and orange on the cover, along with a photo of garlic, onion and cilantro (I'm already sold ... you cannot do better than those ingredients for a great-smelling kitchen!) to draw her readers into the culinary treasures inside. Once I turned the pages, I found page after page of beautiful pictures highlighting the table presentations that can be created with her recipes. When necessary, there were even "action photos" showing how to proceed correctly with certain steps in the recipe. I am a cook who hesitates to try a new recipe unless I can see the intended end product, so the pictures that accompanied each recipe were much appreciated.

The recipes themselves provided explicit step-by-step instructions. I have tried to work from other cookbooks that take certain steps in the process for granted, inevitably leading me to make a critical error. Not so with the recipes written by Dodi. The recipes develop methodically from the initial washing of ingredients to the necessary garnishes. I feel confident that, even though I would be working with some food that is unfamiliar to me, Dodi has provided enough instruction to ensure my success. And, just in case aspiring cooks of Middle Eastern cuisine still have some concern when working through her recipes, Dodi includes a glossary of some of the more unusual ingredients, along with their alternate names and descriptions. This component of the Helpful Hints section, along with the recipes' Arabic translations on each page, provide an opportunity to learn about the individual foods while you are bringing them together for a meal.

As I read through each recipe, I was struck by an even greater opportunity that this book provides than just creating amazing food. A primary way of learning about a culture is through its traditional foods. I think back to "Culture Days" as a young child at school, when we would bring in a meal from the country of our choice. Learning about food opens the doors to other conversations, and this truth continues into adulthood. Why is a particular ingredient a staple of the diet in certain cultures? What are the most common cooking methods and why are they used? What are the standard customs practiced when eating a meal? I believe that by discussing these questions and other topics that may evolve from the conversation, we can gain greater appreciation and understanding for individuals from around the world. The recipes in *The Savory Secrets of Dodi's Home*

*Cooking* provide an excellent catalyst for just this purpose.

My husband and I have long considered Middle Eastern cuisine to be among our favorites. I already have tried several of the recipes, including the Tabula Salad and Koshary, to rave reviews around my dinner table. I look forward to wearing out the pages of *The Savory Secrets of Dodi's Home Cooking* as I teach my own children the great Egyptian traditions that Dodi learned in her own youth and now, thankfully, shares with all of us. For those who are interested in expanding their culinary horizons, or perhaps simply want to enjoy the beauty of a well-planned cookbook, this offering by Howida "Dodi" Elhalogy is a must-have addition to your home library.

### ***Hard Times and Great Blessings***

Author: Kenneth F. Worth

ISBN: 978-1-4327-2308-8

Publisher: OutskirtsPress.com 2008

Reviewed by Sarah Moore for [Writers in the Sky](#) (9/08)

How many people have fascinating life stories, are even encouraged to share their experiences through the written word, but never follow through with the task of compiling a memoir? Author Kenneth Worth is one man who listened when others told him that he had a story worth sharing, and the result is the captivating memoir titled *Hard Times and Great Blessings*. In this short, but detail-rich, book, Mr. Worth relates a life filled with some moments to which almost any reader will be able to relate and other events that most can only begin to imagine.

Kenneth Worth was made an orphan two days after his eleventh birthday, when his mother killed his father and then took her own life. Worth and his brother were both asleep in the house when this tragic crime occurred and, even though they somehow slept through the sounds of the shots being fired, they were the ones who found their father lying in bed with, as Worth describes it, practically no head remaining. Obviously a tragic scene for two boys to witness, Worth does not spend much time reflecting on this day. The reader is left to wonder why Worth's mother felt compelled to commit such a violent act. Was there mental illness? Untold abuse? Through the noticeable absence of such details, Worth lets the reader know that he did not allow his life to be consumed by the questions surrounding that day. Like Worth himself did, the reader must move on.

What Mr. Worth does focus on is the importance of relationships in his life. He writes with genuine emotion when sharing the love story that developed between him and his wife, Ruth. As he describes it, the two are joined at the hip and have been since their courtship started when the two were both teenagers. Now married for forty-eight years, the commitment between Kenneth and Ruth that remained through multiple job changes, personal illnesses, and family deaths is a testament to true love and partnership. Beyond his marriage, Worth also expresses his delayed appreciation for the grandparents who raised him following his parents' death (he admits to a lack of gratefulness at the time), pride at the accomplishments of his two adult daughters, and respect for the in-laws who became surrogate parents and led him to his faith. Although Mr. Worth lost his mother and father at a young age, and in some ways that relationship can never be replaced, he certainly understands that he has a life richly filled with people who love and care for him.

Among the details Mr. Worth shares about his life, I greatly enjoyed the memories that he associates with the cars he has owned over his life. (He shows a particular affection for models developed by Ford.) He fondly remembers the car he was driving when taking his pregnant wife to the hospital, the one that got him to a new city as he searched for a home for his growing family, and several others. I found that the inclusion of these cars, down to the make, model and color, added another way in which readers could relate to Worth's story. I always smile when I see a Ford Escort that reminds me of my high school boyfriend, remember the crayons that melted in the back of my dad's 1978 Honda Civic, and cringe when I think about the car I was driving when rear-ended by a drunk driver. Don't many of us associate cars with events in our life—a uniquely American mindset?

Through his military service in Vietnam with a young bride left at home, administrative civilian positions that took him to many areas of the country, the recent diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease, and his wife's own health problems, Kenneth Worth acknowledges the constant strength that his Christian faith has provided. He takes time throughout the book to remind the reader that God is always working in his life, even when the circumstances seemed bleak. Worth focuses on the blessings he has received and encourages his readers to do the same. A man who lost his parents to violent deaths when he was just a child certainly could find reason to go through his days filled with resentment, but instead Kenneth Worth serves as a model of how an optimistic outlook can improve one's life. What a great lesson for every reader of his book to learn!

Through *Hard Times and Great Blessings*, first-time author Kenneth Worth shares an amazing life story that inspires and

encourages. I certainly hope that Mr. Worth plans on writing more in the future, as he mentions so many events in his life that could each be worthy of its own publication. And, perhaps Kenneth Worth's decision to share his life story will encourage some of his readers to do the same.

### ***The Pond***

Author: Tamera Lawrence

ISBN: 978-1-4327-2474-0

Publisher: Outskirts Press, Inc. 2008

Genre: Mystery/Thriller

Reviewed by Barbara Milbourn for [Writers in the Sky](#) (9/08)

First-time author and mystery/thriller aficionado Tamera Lawrence has taken a true story told to her by her mother and put her own spin on it.

A boy drowns in a pond near his home in rural Pennsylvania—an innocent, nearly friendless boy. Twenty-five years later the first chapter begins across the road when the drowned boy's only friend, Mike Adams, returns to the area with his wife and seven-year-old daughter to live in the house he grew up in.

It's a grand old estate. His mother died there and left it to him, her only child. His wife has put her own personal stamp on it which meets with everyone's approval—or maybe not. Things swiftly turn creepy when objects fall, break, move, or splatter for no apparent reason. It might just be overactive imaginations triggered by the silence or the emptiness of the countryside. Incidents come and go and the pleasant family dynamics unfurl between this small-town dentist husband and his loving, helpful wife and daughter as they try to get comfortable with rural life and their neighbors.

The neighbors across the way are friendly, particularly Fanny, who Mike has known from boyhood and who is the area's premier pie baker. Everyone knows Fanny and her husband for her pies and hard work and for their outreach as foster parents during the time Mike was a boy. One of his old friends, and now dental patient, was one of the children they fostered.

As in any good story, the plot starts twisting. Things pop up in attics, and bedrooms, and barns. People aren't always as they appear to be. A clue is uncovered here, a voice may heard there, and the chills begin to roll. You turn the lights up brighter if you're home alone and reading in the dark.

Tamera Lawrence has spun a prickly and entertaining tale. She's pulled the reader in to her native state and introduced them to a sparse, but diverse cast of characters and events that evokes a sense of dread and hoped-for resolve. *The Pond* is a good first effort. Enjoy.

### ***The Sitting Swing: Finding the Wisdom to Know the Difference***

Irene Watson

Loving Healing Press (2008)

ISBN: 9781932690675

Reviewed by Tyler R. Tichelaar for Reader Views (8/08)

Childhood trauma. Honesty about one's personal faults. A dramatic recovery program. These elements all add up to make Irene Watson's "The Sitting Swing: Finding the Wisdom to Know the Difference" an eventful, meaningful, and poignant tale of one woman's struggle to overcome her repressive family background, the anger that arises from her treatment in childhood, and her own deepest inner faults, so she can become whole, successful, positive, and ultimately a resource of help to others.

The story begins when the author, Irene Watson, attends Avalon, a recovery center. As a practicing therapist, Irene goes to Avalon to learn more about addictions and codependency. She wants to help her clients, but she has no idea how the experience will help her personally. When she arrives at the center, she soon realizes she will be spied upon by cameras, the counselors are aggressive and in her face, and she has issues she did not want to admit before. This unexpected situation causes her to question why she has come at all. The narrative then flashes back to Irene's memories of her childhood to explain what ultimately brought her to Avalon.

Irene begins telling her story by detailing her family background. Her parents and grandparents were Ukrainian immigrants to early nineteenth-century Canada. Their culture and language make Irene isolated when she begins to attend an English-speaking school. She tries to melt into the crowd by befriending the other children, but her family continually stands in her way when she

tries to have a “normal” childhood.

Irene’s biggest struggle is with her over-protective and irrational mother. Irene’s brother, Alexander, died before she was born. The loss of this child and her mother’s sense of guilt over his death cause Irene to live a protected life. The memoir’s title refers to the swing Irene could barely move because of the rose bushes surrounding it. This forced confinement is a metaphor for her life with a mother who denies her playing with other children or even allowing her to be herself.

As Irene reaches her teenage years, the narrative becomes quite frightening since the very real possibility exists that Irene could have become a juvenile delinquent, and some of the angry actions she contemplates taking toward the narrow-minded people of her town could have had irrecoverable consequences. Fortunately, Irene had one friend, Margie, to confide in and who helps her see the irrationality of some of her proposed actions. I found this section painfully honest because it suggests how badly children need attention and role models and the consequences to a society that mistreats its children. Eventually, Irene finds the strength to stand up to her mother when she falls in love and gets married. However, even when she has moved out of her parents’ house, the trauma of her childhood continues to haunt her.

Irene’s experiences at the Avalon Center are told with equal frankness. She finds herself forced to confront her deepest shortcomings, realize she must forgive her mother, and take responsibility for herself, rather than blaming her past. She also finds the courage to make changes to her marriage. The final chapter of the book is not a warm and fuzzy conclusion but rather a very honest and realistic summary of how she has grown from the frightened and repressed little girl she was into a mature woman.

*The Sitting Swing* is an inspiring story. Readers will empathize with Irene, and they will be motivated to begin their own spiritual journeys of recovery. While the path is not easy, Irene is proof that serenity is achievable. More than anything, readers will be impressed with Irene Watson’s honest voice and her straightforward colloquial writing style that makes us realize we are a lot like her, and consequently, if she could recover from her past, then anything is possible for us as well.

This revised edition of *The Sitting Swing* also includes a new afterword and appendices to provide additional resources for people seeking to recover. Anyone, whether a recovering addict or co-dependent, or victim of abuse, will find strength in this narrative. *The Sitting Swing: Finding the Wisdom to Know the Difference* is highly recommended!

### ***Iraq Through a Bullet Hole: A Civilian Returns Home***

Issam Jameel

Modern History Press (2008)

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Reviewed by Dr. Michael Philliber for Reader Views (8/08)

What would it be like to return to the home of your early years, only to find that a war has changed the face of almost everything as well as the quality of life of most of your extended family? Issam Jameel recounts this exact experience in his small, 198-page paperback called, *Iraq Through a Bullet Hole: A Civilian Returns Home*. In this book he relates the sights, sounds and situations he encountered during his travel back into his home country, Iraq, in 2005, after having been away for twelve years.

Jameel describes, in a diary-like fashion, his nearly three-month stay in Iraq from June through August of 2005. Beginning with his nerve-wracking entrance from Jordan into Iraq, to his explosive exit, Jameel relates the personal insecurities and fears he faced day by day. Included in his narrative are the tense conversations he regularly had with his family over his conversion to Christianity, their perceptions of the presence of the American military forces, and the constant threats from assassins and bombers.

In *Iraq Through a Bullet Hole*, Jameel shows in a brutally honest fashion the deconstruction of the infrastructure in Baghdad since the fall of Saddam, as well as the splintering of once peaceful communities into hostile religious factions. He also gives a personal, eyewitness picture of the effect the new environment had on his kinfolk, especially how his nominally religious family had turned toward radical and strident forms of Islam as a way of giving meaning to their daily struggles. The anger and hurt that many of his relatives had comes through clearly. Disappointments, loss of security, fear, worry and empty future fill almost every page of Jameel’s hard-hitting story.

The book really has no ending since the conflict in Iraq still continues until this day. The reader coming to the conclusion of the book will most likely be left with a sense that when an ending finally does arrive, it will probably be tragic. This ill foreboding seems to flow from the writers own saddened and troubled heart.

Though Jameel writes in English, it is quite obvious that this is his second language. And yet he communicates his story

intelligibly for the average reader. *Iraq Through a Bullet Hole* will give the person who reads it an insider's view of how the war has affected the common person in Iraq.

## The Writing Life: This Election Season Literacy Should Be a Campaign Issue

By [JJ Murphy](#)

Former President Lyndon Johnson said, "A book is the most effective weapon against intolerance and ignorance."

I agree.

I turned off my TV set a long time ago. With a Masters degree in Broadcast Journalism, I know the difference between journalism, entertainment and satire.



I do treat myself to the occasional Internet download from "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report," which is where I saw the image of a Republican Party primary delegate holding a "Raisin McCain" sign. I laughed and cringed simultaneously. That sign needed either an apostrophe or a letter "g" after the "n" in Raisin.

Are we really that proud of becoming increasingly illiterate? I won't digress into my disgust at the name calling and posturing, instead of serious discussion, about what each candidate proposes to do to solve our nation's current problems.

I remember reading Eldridge Cleaver's controversial *Soul On Ice* in high school. My parents were horrified at some of the ideas that came up at the dinner table. They presented their opposing points. They did not forbid me to read the book, or insist that the book be banned from the library. How could I possibly gain an insight into the world of people I'd never met without reading their books?

I am horrified to learn that Governor (and vice presidential nominee), Sarah Palin, fired a librarian who refused to censor or ban library books. When I was growing up, education was the most important investment our local, state and federal governments could make. Schools set up field trips, published student literary magazines and newspapers, supported a debate team and a drama club, as well as intramural sports.

In my lifetime, I've watched as reading skills, and the resulting joy in reading, have declined. A 10-second "sound bite" does not provide the same opportunity for deep thinking that you find in the written word.

As we enter the last phase of this election season, the only issue that really matters to me is respect for the English language. In an ideal world, all ideas are available for consideration and discussion. As a writer, I feel a tremendous urgency to advocate for placing value on the written word, spelling, grammar and the joy of reading. I'll support the candidates who support our writers, librarians and champions of the written word.

Writer and naturalist JJ Murphy, <http://www.WriterByNature.com>, offers creative nature curriculum, wild food recipes, fiction, poetry, articles and writing services for individuals, entrepreneurs, small businesses and ecologically aware companies.



Jessica Dockter with L.E.E. Design is the graphic designer for the Writers in the Sky Creative Writing Services team.

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- Use Times New Roman 11 point font.
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- No colored text box (jpg, bmp, etc.) ads. The article must be content rich.
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