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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

This month's edition of Writers in the Sky Newsletter is a bit different from our usual issue. I'm taking a chance in hoping that you might like to know more about the WITS team members. By having them share a client project or by writing an article about the craft and business of writing, you can see what goes on inside our company and get a better idea of the skills each team member offers.

[Writers in the Sky Creative Writing Services](#) is able to write articles on politics, science, current events, art, literature, music, entertainment, spirituality, medical topics, legal issues, and many other subjects. We ghostwrite books for authors who either do not have the time or the skills to put together such a large project, and we help them with book publication. We also provide editing and proofreading for authors whose books are heading toward querying or self-publishing. We are able to assist authors with book reviews, podcast interviews, press kits, biographical sketches, back cover blurbs/synopsis, media releases, and article marketing. We are also an outsource for companies and individuals needing business writing, marketing text, Web text, résumés, and newsletter text.

In this issue, Taryn Simpson writes about working from home in comparison to working in a corporate setting. She shares her recent project board and shows the variety of opportunities her freelance writing career offers her. Taryn may be reached at Taryn@yvonneperry.net.

Sarah Moore writes about her decision to become a freelance writer and how she is balancing her busy career with her role as the mother of a two-year-old. I might add that I waited two years until Sarah was able to join our team. I knew she had excellent writing and editing skills and the potential to be a savvy businesswoman. As our podcast coordinator, Sarah evaluates queries/books, schedules guest appearances, and handles the publicity for Writers in the Sky Podcast. Sarah may be reached at Sarah@yvonneperry.net.

Our team's chief editor, Barbara Milbourn, shares an experience she had with her Natalie Goldberg writing group. Her article "Between the Lines" deals with the two stories that occur simultaneously in a book: the story the author thinks they are telling, and the story the reader reads between the lines about the author. Barbara may be reached at Barbara@yvonneperry.net.

Joe Nolan shares a bio he wrote on Otis Redding for a magazine called *Culture Grits*. He became involved with *Culture Grits* when he answered an online ad looking for writers for a new culture magazine about Memphis, Tennessee. Joe contacted the publisher and suggested a series on the history of Memphis soul music. Much to his delight, she was excited by the idea. "This opportunity allowed me to be a part of the founding of this online publication, one that has evolved into a shiny new site, with advertiser support and a bunch of new content," says Joe. "This is one of the reasons why beginning writers should sometimes do work for free or less than they would normally accept. If it means writing about a fascinating subject, and working with great folks on a wonderful project, the effort can really pay off." He may be reached at Joe@yvonneperry.net.

Next month, we will hear from our other team members Jessica Dockter, MaAnna Stephenson, and Al Desetta. All Writers in the Sky positions are currently filled and we have people on a waiting list.

Yvonne Perry

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Between the Lines

By Barbara Milbourn

My Natalie Goldberg small writing group chose “between the lines” as one of our prompts for next Saturday’s call. It got me thinking. Don’t some types of writing have you reading two stories at the same time? There’s the story the author thinks they are telling, and there’s the story the reader reads between the lines about the author.

This is especially true and often distracting in biography and memoir when the reader is told by the author what to feel and believe. Readers are smart; they form opinions without being told.

The first time I experienced this was several years ago in Austin. My friend Lesley and I were die-hard Martha Stewart fans. Then, as probably still now, one either loved Martha or they couldn’t stand her. We both loved her and from our respective homes on Sunday morning we would watch her show and call each other during commercials.

In 1997, a male author wrote an unauthorized biography of Martha Stewart. Being a Martha devotee, I looked forward to learning more about her. Somewhere in the first few pages I stopped reading with a single, focused eye. I was dislodged, jolted out of story, disbelieving what I was being told. Thinking that I would settle in, I continued but with reluctance. I did not want to turn the page. Every paragraph seemed laced with malice and ugly innuendos. I was force-feeding myself sentences that could only result in the development of unkind conclusions about my dear diva if I chose to believe them. I’m no Pollyanna; I can take dirt, but something was wrong.

As much as I began to question the truth of what was being written, I wondered what on earth was wrong with this author. Had he gotten up on the wrong side of the bed day after day until the book was finished? Did he have some personal score to settle? Did he know the real Martha and was he hell-bent on showing the world her warts? I didn’t know, but I didn’t care. I’d stopped seeing Martha and started seeing how much I didn’t like this guy; I didn’t trust him, didn’t believe him, and didn’t want to choke down another angry, mean-spirited word.

The same can be said when writers want their readers to sympathize with them. Disdain and empathy are viable emotions readers are eager to feel if approached without thoughts of being herded. Tell the reader a story as straight and true from the heart, experience, or imagination as possible. Then get out of the way so they stay where you want them—in story. If you do, a door will open and the reader will walk in and pass the Kleenex.

Let that space between the lines speak to the reader in such a way that they say back to you, “Oh! We didn’t notice you, but be assured we are on the train with you, fastened to your hip, all the way to the end.”

Barbara Milbourn is a freelance writer and Grammatika-certified editor focused on mechanical and substantive editing, proofreading, and copyediting for fiction and nonfiction. She is a frequent host on Writers in the Sky podcast, a member of Tennessee Writers Alliance, and an active participant in a weekly writing group with other Natalie Goldberg students. Barbara is able to serve as editor, interviewer, writer, book reviewer, or writing coach to those needing assistance with a book.

Barbara@yvonneperry.net

WITS Podcast Schedule September 2008



September 5

Tamera Lawrence, author of *The Pond* is interviewed by podcast host, Barbara Milbourn. *The Pond* is a twisty little mystery/thriller partially based on a true event as told to the author by her mother. Twenty-five years have passed since eight-year-old Carl Weber drowned in Gray’s Pond and now his best friend has returned to the area with his wife and daughter to reside at his parent’s estate. Strange things begin to happen. Tension builds with each odd occurrence, and the reader gets closer to the edge of

their seat as the mystery unfurls. As a young girl Tamera loved to read and aspired to become a writer. Somewhere between raising six children and helping her husband run his business, she accomplished her first work and is on to the second. In the interview Barbara and Tamera will discuss the book's content as well as how Tamera became a businesswoman as a result of her book and the writing process.

September 12

Barbara Milbourn served as copy editor and proofreader for Linda Ballou's book *Wai-nani: High Chiefess of Hawai'i*. Barbara and Linda will discuss the writing process of the book, its content, and briefly how an author works with an editor. *Wai-nani* is an historical novel couched in magical realism set in pre-contact Hawai'i. Wai-nani's character is inspired by the favorite wife of Kamehameha the Great, who was responsible for ending the 2,000-year-old Polynesian kapu system. Linda Ballou is an author and businesswoman who did it right. Careful and diligent at every turn, she began by living there—experiencing it first-hand—and went on to years of careful and voluminous research of the period and place, people and language, plants and land and sea. Then she willed her poetic travel writing talent to pull it together and bring it back to life. In her *thinking place*, she sat with it and when she was ready to bring it out of her drawer she went on the hunt for the right editor, the right publisher, the right illustrator. That team in place, and the work nearly complete, and knowing the job wasn't done yet, the ultimate businesswoman went to work on marketing. The book was released in June, and the business of it goes on.

September 19

We will be running Yvonne Perry's interview on *Conscious Discussions* with Lillian Brummet (<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/ConsciousDiscussions>), on the business aspect of freelance writing. Lillian is a radio talk show host and is an environmentalist, successful author, and businesswoman. Yvonne is an author, experienced freelance writer and editor, who operates a writing and editing business, publishes a newsletter, manages a blog, and provides a podcast for authors.

September 26

Sarah Moore will interview Dennis Snow about his book, *Lessons from the Mouse*. Dennis is a writer, consultant, and public speaker who uses his twenty years of experience with the Walt Disney World Company to share how organizations can create “walk through fire” customer loyalty. Using Disney as the premier example of service excellence, each chapter develops a specific lesson with relevant examples from diverse industries and discussion questions to generate strategies for creating outstanding customer service.



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 http://www.yvonneperry.net/Writing_Packages.htm#Publicity_Packages

Soul Series: The Man from Macon - The Otis Redding Story Part I

by Joe Nolan

Otis Redding

Born on September 9, 1941 in Dawson, Ga., Otis Redding and family moved 300 miles north to Macon when he was three years old. Unlike many cities in the Peachtree State, Macon had been spared the ravages of Sherman's march to the sea during the Civil War. However, by 1944, Macon showed the scars of the quieter cruelty of stalled urban renewal, and the impact of 30 years of the Great Migration, in which large sectors of the South's African American population left their homes for economic opportunities in cities like Detroit and Chicago. The decaying downtown facades, and the old men sitting on the steps of the abandoned railway station, spoke to the lost promise of a city where “progress” had simply marched past.

Upon their arrival in Macon, the Redding's made a new home for themselves in the Tindall Heights Housing Project in West

Macon. Officially known as Bellview, the residents at the Project all referred to their neglected neighborhood as “Hellview.” Otis’ father, Otis senior, like many black men in the neighborhood, worked at the nearby Robbins Air Force Base. However, due to a chronic battle with tuberculosis, Otis senior was an inconsistent provider. During one prosperous period, the family—including Otis’ mother, Fanny, his baby brother, Rodgers, and four sisters—was able to purchase a humble home of their own. However, after a devastating fire, the family found themselves moving back into the Projects at “Hellview.”

By the time Otis reached the tenth grade, the pressure on the family had become so great that he decided to drop out of high school in hopes of helping to support his siblings.

“My father was ill, he had TB, and he was in the hospital more than he was home; my mother was working, and it was just a burden. I can remember when Otis left school he went out on the road with Little Richard’s old band, the Upsetters, and he would send home twenty-five dollars a week. That was a lot of money in those days. - Rodgers Redding, from *Sweet Soul Music* by Peter Guralnick

However, Otis soon found that the path of a musical artist is strewn with many stones, and he had to find other means of making a living when he couldn’t find a club gig or a road job. As a teenage dropout, he took whatever work he could find. He spent a stretch working around rural Georgia with a well-digger. He also ground out a paycheck as an attendant at various gas stations. But no matter how he busied his body earning his daily bread, Redding’s mind was always restless and preoccupied with thoughts about music.

Sources:

- Peter Guralnick’s *Sweet Soul Music*, Harper and Row, 1986
- James Dickerson’s *Goin’ Back to Memphis*, Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1996
- Michael Haralambos’ *Right on: From Blues to Soul in Black America*, Drake Publishers, 1975
- Respect Yourself: The Stax Story*, documentary film, produced by Tremolo Productions, Concord Music Group and Thirteen/WNET New York, for PBS’ Great Performances, 2007
- The Otis Redding biography at African Genesis
- Otis Redding at Wikipedia
- Otis Redding Biography at History of Rock
- Otis Redding Biography at the Otis Redding official website

Joe Nolan is a poet, musician, and freelance journalist in Nashville, TN. Nolan writes about visual art for the journal, *Number*, published by the University of Memphis. Find out more about his projects at www.joenolan.com.

NETWORK WITH US!



Grammar tips from The Red Pen Editor gives helpful information to improve your writing. For example: Do you know when to use who vs. whom? Is it all right to use alright? Get answers to these and other grammar tips delivered weekly to your inbox. Click to be added to Karen Reddick’s [Weekly Grammar Tips Mailing List](#).

If you are interested in new networking approaches for writers? Check out our club: <http://www.squidoo.com/groups/publishingclub>. Gary Eby <http://twitter.com/qlcoach>.

method of teaching writers how to craft query letters that get them what they want—an agent, a publishing contract, and shelf space at Barnes and Noble.

To help writers get published, she's offering (for a limited time), a complimentary, 31-page Query Workbook that can be accessed at www.getpublishednow.biz

Find a Job You Love, and You'll Never Work Another Day in Your Life!

By Taryn Simpson

No truer words were ever spoken. And, I can verify that I haven't "worked" in several years since I became a freelance writer. I can say that I truly love my job. I meet interesting and friendly people all over the world. And, I do mean all over the world! I co-authored a book titled [The Mango Tree Cafe, Loi Kroh Road](#) with a client in Beijing, China!

Things in the freelance world tend to ebb and flow—it's just part of it. Not too long ago, I was up to my eyeballs in projects and loving every minute of it. Lately, I have been producing all types of work and I enjoy the variety that the writing provides.

What have I been working on?

- * Memoirs
- * Fictional thrillers
- * Newsletters
- * Attending meetings and taking notes
- * Creating trailers
- * Writing for Ideas, Goals & Dreams, and Parkinson's Hope Digest magazines

What type of communication is gaining popularity with individuals and businesses?

Newsletters! Most people assume that a newsletter is simply a communication that is mailed out at the end of the year to catch friends and family up on the latest from home. Not so! While using the newsletter for keeping in touch with *family and friends*, it also serves as a useful business tool.

Do you provide a service or product? The newsletter is the perfect vehicle to touch base with your customers on upcoming sales, events, etc.

Do you work for Corporate America? Again, a newsletter is the perfect mode for keeping your employees abreast of the latest company news, benefit options, discounts and other company or wellness events.

Do you hate attending meetings? Never fear! I have been attending meetings for a busy executive and writing detailed notes for him. I'm here to make your job easier, whether it's writing a book, newsletter, or policy manuals!

Books. I have been thoroughly enjoying writing books lately. My clients are the most interesting people I have ever met! Some have a longing to write the great American novel while others want to have a book written simply for the fun of it. In any event, I can help you with your project!

Self-Publishing? I can help you see your book in print! I use Lulu.com to self-publish books. This means an ISBN is assigned and once your book is uploaded to their system, anytime someone orders your book, Lulu prints on demand and ships to your customer. Your book also is listed with *Barnes & Noble* and other online book retailers. They have a royalty tracking system and they are user friendly! I can also help you copyright your work. Ask me more about this service. Whatever your needs may include, I am here to help. Taryn@yvonneperry.net

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 http://www.yvonneperry.net/Writing_Packages.htm

Finding Balance When Working from Home

By Sarah Moore

I jumped into the world of freelance writing several months ago after spending the first two years of my daughter's life at home being her mom. My husband and I decided that I would need to work again, and the time felt right to pursue my long-held dream of earning a living through the written word. If I was going to work and possibly take quality time away from my child, I wanted her to see that Mommy was doing something that she loved and that was of value.

I am still working through the challenges of working while caring for an energetic daughter who desires (demands) a lot of my attention. I try to write while she is napping, but that precious activity seems to be disappearing from her daily routine. And, there are always the other household responsibilities that need to be met. When do the bathrooms get cleaned? What do I do first – finish the article with the fast-approaching deadline or chop the onions for dinner? Have I still not made that appointment with the vet for our family dog? Nap time is always the most imperative hour for effective multitasking. And, I will admit with a healthy dose of guilt, that cartoons become my temporary assistant if Catherine wakes up before my to-do list has met with sufficient progress.

Most of my writing occurs after the sun goes down. Once Catherine is in bed and my husband and I have had a few moments to discuss our respective days, I settle in with my laptop at the kitchen table and get to work on the latest project. I am thinking about relocating to a place at which the potato chips and ice cream are not within arm's reach but, overall, the working environment is perfect for me. My uniform is a sweatshirt, jeans, and a baseball cap. I can email a completed article at 1:00 in the morning without disturbing a soul. And, when my work day has come to an end, my pillow is no further than a hallway's walk away.

There is not a day that goes by that I do not realize how fortunate and blessed I am to be Catherine's full-time mommy while also pursuing a dream that brings me so much professional fulfillment. Freelance writing from home may require careful scheduling, squeezing work into every possible free moment, and more frequent calls to my husband to bring home take-out dinner than I would like, but I think it's the best job in the world!

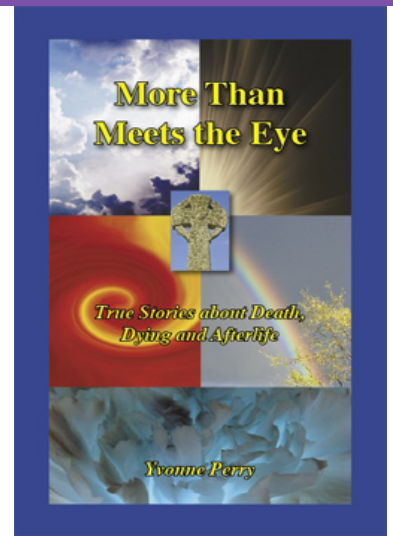
Sarah Moore is the author's assistant for Writers in the Sky, providing bios, press kits, book reviews, and other media-related book publicity for authors. She is a regular host of, as well as the coordinator for, WITS podcasts.

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
- Insight 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.yvonneperry.net/books.htm where you may read more or purchase the book.

SEPTEMBER POEMS



One Man Show

By Gail Livesay

I awake to the sound of a sweet chorus.
the birds sing
greeting the new day.

Sunshine dances on my widow,
inviting me outside.

I see he is back,
racing from bush to bush.

Quick as a flash,
he's up a tree,
nestling in the bright buds.

With the skill of a trapeze artist
he leaps upon the telephone wire.
He pauses for a moment as if to say,
"Do you want to play?"

I applaud the little squirrel
for his one man show.

SEPTEMBER BOOK REVIEWS



Lessons from the Mouse: A Guide for Applying Disney World's Secrets of Success to Your Organization, Your Career, and Your Life

Author: Dennis Snow

ISBN-13: 978-1-932021-29-5

Publisher: DC Press (2008)

Genre: business, customer service, training

Pages: 134

Reviewed by Sarah Moore for Writers in the Sky (8/08)

When families visit Disney World, their attention is focused on the majesty of Cinderella's castle, the cultural experiences available at EPCOT Center, and the kids' eager dash to hug Mickey Mouse as he walks down Main Street. Guests can forget that Disney World is an intricate corporation employing thousands of people who must pay attention to every detail of the park's operation. Without fanatical focus on customer satisfaction and an organized business model, Disney World could not be the fantasy destination for millions of tourists every year. In his new book, *Lessons from the Mouse*, Dennis Snow shares his experiences as a former Disney manager and trainer. Along the way, he provides the readers with wonderful advice that can be applied to any business or organization.

Snow develops each chapter of his book to serve perfectly as a training session for staff meetings or corporate conferences. Each lesson presented by the author begins with a memorable heading, my favorite being Lesson 3 and "What Time is the Three O'Clock Parade? is Not a Stupid Question." (Read the lesson and you will learn that the questioner really wants to know when a parade will reach his particular vantage point.) Snow usually then dives right into specific examples from personal employment experiences at Disney World. In one chapter, the introductory story may be the way in which Snow delicately shared the bad news that Space Mountain was closed for repairs while another lesson may begin with the reminder he received from a guest to smile when doing his job. Snow also makes a point to take the lesson of each chapter and extend it beyond its Walt Disney World roots. Usually though the clear layout of bulleted points, Snow shares how his lessons can be applied to airlines, hospitals, sandwich shops, collection agencies, and many other industries. Finally, Snow ends each lesson with a distinct set of questions which members of any organization can discuss in order to apply the key points of the chapter to their specific needs.

Snow has an engaging and conversational tone to his writing. I easily can picture him leading a discussion in an auditorium filled with professionals. Therefore, I was not surprised to learn that Snow maintains a schedule of over one hundred speaking engagements every year. Readers quickly will quickly sense the passion that Snow has for superior customer service and the effect that it can have on the success for any organization. As someone who often laments the lack of common courtesy amongst one another in public settings and the seemingly increasing absence of work ethic in our service industry, I found myself nodding in agreement with each piece of advice made by Snow in this book. The lessons should be common-sense essentials for a successful business but, as Snow the author indicates through his examples, a basic discussion of these customer service details is long overdue in both boardrooms and break rooms.

Prospective readers should not be turned off by an assumption that *Lessons from the Mouse* is simply yet another self-help training manual for those in the business world. While the lessons are undoubtedly important to prospective corporate leaders, Snow's approachable style keeps the context engaging and relevant for any reader. I found myself relating to many scenarios described by Snow, if only from the perspective of a customer. Haven't we all gotten frustrated when a cashier cannot be bothered to stop her personal conversation while ringing up your groceries or we cannot place our trash in a fast food restaurant's bins because they are already overflowing? If you have left the house and interacted with a fellow human who is somehow employed in a service capacity, you will be able to relate to this book. And, perhaps you will be challenged to think about how your own attitude may be affecting the quality of your outcomes.

What can you learn from a mouse? When that mouse has been delighting and entertaining hundreds of millions of people for decades, – it turns out there is plenty to learn. Readers of any professional background will appreciate and enjoy the advice dispensed by Dennis Snow in *Lessons from the Mouse*. As a consumer, after reading this book I immediately took notice of the level of customer service I received from local businesses and recognized its impact on my overall satisfaction. Concerning my own work, I am now consciously striving to apply every lesson to my communication with clients. I am confident that each reader will find unique ways to use *Lessons from a Mouse* in their own lives. Whether you are a physician or a mechanic or a cotton candy vendor at Disney World, Mr. Snow's book is filled with relevant material and should be a must-read for new employees in any field.

How to Shit Money

Author: Dottie Randazzo

ISBN-13: 978-0-6151-8886-7

Publisher: Creative Dreaming (2008)

Paperback or Hardcover

Reviewed by Gordon Randall for Writers in the Sky (8/08)

We all go through life with some sort of focus on money. Money is the tool we use to assign value and worth to everything under the sun. We all need it to function in modern society, yet money comes relatively easy for some and extremely hard for others. There are multitudes of reasons for this; from birth status, to self-indulgence, from addictions or simply making poor choices.

However, underlying all of these reasons, as Dottie Randazzo poignantly states in her new book "How to Shit Money," is the way you feel about money. Your relationship with money was established as you grew up. Your beliefs about money are based upon your observations and experiences. Randazzo states it is those beliefs that subconsciously control the flow of money in your life.

The title of the book may seem off the cuff. Funny to some, offensive to others; after all, how many people do you know who actually?... well, you understand. The author explains her metaphor as something that is commonplace—that happens routinely. Money is that way, and it is referred to in so many different words that carry both positive and negative connotations. Those words give power to the object they are describing and in this case it is money. As the late great George Carlin would have said, "Money is good shit."

Randazzo does an excellent job of providing thought-provoking questions regarding your relationship and beliefs about money. Her statement, "You can't fix what you can't identify" is repeated throughout the book to help you ground and center so to speak. This is not a sit down, read it, and you're done book. The questions she asks often require deep introspection.

"What is the one thing that you learned from your family regarding money that you want to let go of?"

"Was money ever given to you conditionally based upon how well you behaved, what you accomplished, your school grades, or just to keep you out of trouble?"

"Is your identity attached to money?"

Dottie gives some excellent tips about attitude regarding money. She says that when you are thankful and grateful for what you have, the Universe will send more! If you are complaining about what you want, have, or don't have, you are not being grateful for what is already in your life. Appreciation accelerates manifestation.

If you are the type of person who is interested in self-improvement when it comes to working with money, then this book is for you. If you are the kind of person who knows there are money issues in your life that you have been unable to acknowledge, then this book is for you. If you're subconsciously yearning to gain control of your financial lifeI think you get it. Now go get this book, digest it, and start shitting money!

Recipes and More from a Bygone Era

Compiled by: Betty MacKulaski

ISBN: 978-0-9819172-2-1

Publisher: Published by Westview, Inc. (2008)

Genre: historical documents, cookbook, education

Reviewed by Sarah Moore for Writers in the Sky (8/08)

I was asked to write a review of a book in which the only original writing by the woman whose name is printed on the front is the introduction. Beyond that, the book contains dozens of scanned recipes first written by a homemaker around a century ago. At first glance, such a task seemed nearly impossible. How do I critique “Add ½ cup of butter and stir until frothy”? Do I write, “Surely that woman must have realized the effect such an ingredient would have on her cholesterol?” Or, perhaps I could compliment the quality of her penmanship. After spending just a few minutes reading the pieces of history found in *Recipes and More from a Bygone Era*, however, I realized what a precious piece of crafted love I had in my hands.

So much of our family history is made in the kitchen. Generations of (mostly) women have gathered around the stove to pass down recipes and family history. In *Recipes and More from a Bygone Era*, Betty MacKulaski shares a cookbook that she discovered tucked away in an old bread box at an Illinois antique store. While the exact date of the book’s creation is not known, the glimpse into menus that were prepared before microwaves and drive-thru windows is fascinating. The homemaker who created this book so many years ago (my guess is very early 20th century) obviously put countless hours into making it a treasured keepsake, even if it was only intended for her own use. Not only are there the expected handwritten recipes on pieces of lined paper, but also related pictures and articles clipped from magazines that add to the reader’s enjoyment.

I particularly enjoyed the insights into this woman’s personality offered by her recipe scrapbook. For example, in preparation for the baking of an Old Time Pumpkin Pie, she instructs, “First you wash your face and then your hands. Put on your cook apron and get your stew pan.” She then goes to explain the entire cooking process in the form of a poem ... what a great way to teach a recipe to young people! She also shows a sense of humor by cutting out drawing of pigs to surround her favorite ham recipes and finding pictures of women in high fashion magazines and inserting them in a decidedly unglamorous kitchen setting.

As a former history teacher, I embraced the rich primary source to be found on every page of this book. There are clipped drawings of women who have hair carelessly swept up and who are wearing simple checked dresses as they diligently stir the contents of a bowl. The smile on the face of the happy homemaker was a crucial accessory. There are the intricate recipes for creating jellies and jams, as well as homemade candies, for which time is rarely made in our modern kitchen. She also includes several articles that had little or nothing to do with the art of cooking. I learned how to “reduce flesh about the hips” (comforting to know this has been a problem throughout the generations), stop nose bleeds, and use water enriched with bran on my nice wood work. Like reading the Declaration of Independence or the journals of a Civil War soldier, cookbooks such as the one preserved by Ms. MacKulaski provide us a window into another time that never can be captured in a textbook.

We cannot be certain if the woman who put together this cookbook enjoyed the daily need to feed her family. Maybe she loved every minute of being a homemaker and felt blessed to have the opportunity to care for a family. Or, perhaps she dreaded the repeated dinner preparations and would stare out the window thinking about other opportunities the world had to offer. Either way, I absolutely loved the way in which she found joy in her work. By putting recipes to rhyme, pasting amusing cartoons involving the animals she was cooking, or simply including pictures in the margin to make her own use of the cookbook more enjoyable, this woman kept her duties fresh and personal. I felt connected to her as I read through the recipes and hints (sometimes helpful, sometimes amusingly sarcastic) on each page, and was reminded of the need to embrace the fun of any situation.

I share Betty MacKulaski’s love of antique stores and unexpected insights into the lives of “ordinary people” from a previous time. Without even trying any of the recipes (yet!), *Recipes and More from a Bygone Era* already has become an important part of my book collection. I feel as if I got some insight on this anonymous woman and I really think I would have liked her. I certainly hope that Ms. MacKulaski will take the time to publish any future treasures that she discovers during her hunts. I know that I will pour over each new page with the fascination that I know she did upon opening that bread box.

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!

A Matter of Revenge (Five Star Mystery Series)

I. Michael Koontz

Five Star (2008)

ISBN 9781594146749

Reviewed by *Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson* for Reader Views (6/08)

I. Michael Koontz's "A Matter of Revenge" follows John Apparite, an extremely successful and resourceful Superagent, through a series of missions set in 1956, the ruthless time of Cold War. Moving seamlessly from New York to London, followed by the French countryside, the divided city of Berlin and then to Belgium, Apparite is not only dealing with the dangers of his missions, but also with the matters of his heart and mind.

John Apparite's last mission was not a success, to put it mildly. Not only does he blame himself for the death of his best, and possibly only real friend, Agent J; but also for the fact that due to his decision to save somebody's life he allowed his nemesis, the

Soviet assassin Viktor, to escape. Drowning his sorrows in beer, sitting in New York City, Apparite does not manage to stay out of trouble; and it takes a quick action by his supervisor, the Director, to get Apparite out of town and back into the spying game.

Thwarting assassins and dispatching a couple of bad boys along the way, John Apparite makes his way to the hub of the spy activity, the city of Berlin. On the train ride there he meets a young lady, Christiane, who lives in the Soviet-occupied East Berlin and actually works for Russians at a strategically important telephone exchange. John and Christiane have a whirlwind romance, during which John persuades her to bring him some sensitive documents from work, in exchange for which he will help her to defect to the West. Unbeknownst to Christiane this is actually part of a larger plot, one designed to bring the downfall of Viktor, the hated and feared Russian assassin. Will John Apparite manage to finally kill his biggest enemy and revenge the death of his best friend, and if so, at what cost?

Super fast-paced, filled with scenes of great fights and imaginative weapons as well as fast-acting poisons, this is a well-researched and surprisingly realistic-sounding spy story. While I found the romantic interludes a bit less convincing than the rest of the story, overall I really enjoyed reading I. Michael Koontz's "A Matter of Revenge." It is extremely well researched and filled with great details on the Cold War era as well as very compelling as a story of a struggle between one agent's duty and his desires.

If you are one of those readers who enjoy intense, violent, fast-paced and very American spy stories, I have no doubt that "A Matter of Revenge," by I. Michael Koontz, will rank high on your list. If in addition to that you happen to be a boxing or baseball fan, you'll find quite a bit of additional enjoyment in the references to those two sports as well.

Rhythm Can't Keep Time Sometimes Love Just Ain't Enough

Deondriea Cantrice

Outskirts Press 2008

ISBN-13: 9781432722968

\$11.95

Reviewed by Yvonne Perry for Writers in the Sky (8/08)

What causes some relationships to fail while others flourish? Deondriea Cantrice has done her homework and she knows the answer. She hits the dating nail on the head with her down-to-earth writing style as she attempts to teach and inspire her readers. Using a fictitious love story as the backdrop, she demonstrates what works and what doesn't when it comes to answering the age-old question: What is the most important thing in a loving relationship?

The urban setting deals with characters who love to party in the bar scene, struggle to keep friendship in the workplace, and manage to hold down the fort in single-parent homes. She explores the virtues of friendship on a deep level where honesty, trust, and having great sex matters! Deondriea is not shy about physical pleasure. She leaves the bedroom door wide open while Sheridyn and Sterling enjoy steamy love scenes.

The author's use of colloquialism may help her target audience of young African-American women relate as it puts the story into a situation where it can offer the change that most nonfiction books attempt to bring forth. It was a unique experience for me as a Caucasian woman to look in on the lifestyle of the brothas and sistas and better understand a culture with which I was not familiar.

Ms. Cantrice's characters are real personalities we can all relate to. Most of us have had a Sabrina—someone to whom we wish we'd never said, "Look me up when you're in town." They're the kind you can't take in public without them making a scene and embarrassing everyone with them. Funny thing is they don't even know when they have stuck their own foot in their mouths. And, we probably know a few jealous people like Jessica. These "friends" rarely realize it is their own foolish behavior that is actually driving away the person they would like to catch and spend time with. No, she's too busy judging or criticizing to notice her own flaws or realize that she is not being true to herself.

The author's overall point is that in order to have a relationship with someone else and find Mr. Right, you have to have a healthy relationship with yourself and know what you are looking for in a partner. To be happy, you need to know what makes you happy, and then seek the person who has the character traits, attitudes, values, and goals you desire and above all who knows how to be a true friend. Otherwise, you can't keep time and dance well together no matter how good the music may be.

Short Sleeves Insights: Live an Ordinary Life in a Non-Ordinary Way

Author: Hal Manogue

ISBN: 978-0-9778130-3-2

Publisher: H.T. Manogue
Reveiwed by Ange in the UK

Hal Manogue's work is based on the idea that our thoughts create the reality we experience. What you believe, you experience; what you experience, you express; and what you express, you become. The goal of his poetry and essays is to get that message to as many people as he can.

"I'm not trying to change anyone's belief system, but I am trying to bring awareness to a life that has been covered by the fragmentation of our consciousness," says Hal. "Everyone will make the choices that suit them at this point in their now and that's okay. We still can be united in our diversity and understand that we create what we live. My **dream** is to fully connect with other aspects of myself; to understand that my waking consciousness is really the unconscious part of my consciousness and I have the ability to unite these aspects into a free-thinking spirit in human form. I do this in peace, with appreciation and by offering my universal service to all life."

Hal's wonderful book, *Short Sleeves Insights*, arrived at my home today. I could not resist but to begin reading immediately. I was taking the children on a day out to play land, so it was perfect timing. As they jumped, bounced, and played all around me, I immersed myself in Hal's beautiful words.

All the noise and screams of play faded into the background. In fact, I don't think I even noticed any noise! I was taken to a quiet yet precise place of connection. I cannot express how awe struck I was. Such a wonderful book I have never before encountered. I kept stopping to repeat the words that danced upon the pages. I looked around at my world, my reality, and I considered and contemplated the wonder as each little being that toddled slowly by me, or raced past in excitement of freedom. As a mother held her newborn closely in her arms, her face reflected her inner peace and love. Each corner of existence sang to another tune.

The beautiful poetry, the words, so possible in their entirety, felt as though I was climbing Everest and about to peak over the top. As I was carried back in time, I swear my ancestors smiled and chuckled as they observed me. I felt I could have met with them as all their experiences and endeavors flooded into my consciousness.

I absorbed the wisdom as Hal so eloquently guided me and created a landscape of possibilities and wonders among the work of great spirits whose beauty he delicately weaved and illuminated with his unique and brilliant gift. I swam amongst the waters of wisdom, weightless and surrounded by my inner life force. All this, not accompanied by trumpets or orchestral announcement, but within a peaceful and pleasant presence.

As I read each page I almost felt as though Hal's creative expression knew me— perhaps the me that I am unfolding or discovering. Its content was like a winding road which reached out far beyond my sight and invited my travels to continue on.

In 9, Hal wrote: "What if there is another life waiting for me to show it something; another reality where I am the only one in the presence of a multitude of probabilities." This is profound and wonderful. The sharing of his inner knowing, joy, and wisdom is a gift from the store of universal miracles. It has and is lighting a path that was once cloudy, misty, and rough underfoot. As I search for my truth, Hal's truths are like signposts that help guide my way along the winding road which beckons me ever on into eternity.

Hal's love and intention gives inspiration and joy as he shares his knowing and peace with others. His heart is open and flowing with graceful text that is caring, compassionate, real, and connected. I hope Hal will continue to share through his writing and bring hope, peace, and learning to many.

Proof or Spoof?

Life After Death Some of the Best Evidence

Author: Jan W. Vandersande Ph.D.

ISBN: 978-1-4327-2549-5

Price: \$14.95 US

Publisher: Outskirts Press (2008)

Reviewer: Yvonne Perry

Is there really life after death? It sure seems that way. Even before reading this book, I believed life continues in the spiritual world. After reading it, I feel less inhibited to talk about my own experiences. I've never been in a séance, much less have I seen trumpets flying around the séance room, but I have seen ghosts, angels, and other bodiless energy forms.

Do you ever feel as though you are being watched? What if you actually *saw* or *heard* the entity? Vandersande's book, *Life After Death*, gives many accounts of his sessions over an eight-year period where he personally witnessed such things as ectoplasm and direct voice through trance mediums and channelers. All his experiences are described in detail and with supporting strange-but-true photos.

Materializations of deceased entities are probably the most impressive evidence for life after death. He talks about materialization during sessions he calls sittings or séances in which the medium is usually in trance. This is not hard for me to believe, and probably a pretty acceptable idea to those who have lost a loved one and felt their presence near them thereafter. I have awakened during the night on more than one account to see a bluish-grey figure hovering over my bed. Things have been known to move from one place to another in my house. Thanks to Jan, I now know that these phenomena are due to spirit entities manifesting themselves. Such occurrences were so common in my life that I wrote and published a book about it in 2005.

Vandersande's book is appropriately subtitled *Some of the Best Evidence* for life after death. The thing that captivated me about this book is how the medium or channeler was able to give exact details about a person or situation that let the seeker know that their deceased loved one was indeed speaking or communicating (in the case of a channeler) through them. There was no other way such intimate things could be revealed. The author considers alternative explanations for these psychic phenomena such as telepathy and ESP but to me, it would be just as hard (if not harder) to believe in telepathy or ESP as it would be in life after death. I've had readings/prophecies that were as effectively true.

He talks about a few frauds in this field, but there can be a fraud in any walk of life. Fortunately, this did not keep Dr. Vandersande from investigating the topic in depth and forming his own opinions. His beliefs are supported by his experience, which I would expect from a scientist such as Vandersande. We all want proof that our experiences are real, but we don't to be rejected by those whose beliefs are different than ours. I think that is where many religions lead people astray; they tell people what to believe rather than teaching them to explore and accept their own truth.

I enjoyed this book and found the stories fascinating especially the ones where the medium was able to give personal details that he or she could not have known in the natural realm. I think that one of the most helpful spiritual gifts a person can have is to be able to provide comfort and emotional healing through prophecy or by providing readings that give specific and accurate information to let the inquirer know it truly was the spirit of their deceased loved one speaking.

Is this book and psychic phenomena proof or spoof? You must decide for yourself.



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