



STRATEGIC MARKETING

How Do You Get Your Books Into Bookstores?

by Joe Vitale

Yolanda Movsessian, the Community Relations Coordinator for Borders Books at Meyerland Plaza in Houston, gave a brief but insightful talk at the June 28 HP&AA meeting. Here are the highlights:

- 1) Bring a book to her. She will look at it to see if it looks professional, or if it looks like it was done on a kitchen table. She will also look inside the book to see if there are any glaring typos. (She was going to carry a cookbook once, but she peeked inside and was shocked to find a typo or misspelling on just about every page). She added that she would never judge a book by its subject, only by whether she thought it would sell or not. Poorly produced or edited books won't sell.
- 2) If she likes the book, she'll set up an author's event. She said autograph parties don't bring in people, but mini-seminars and author readings do. "Do whatever it takes to bring your book to life," she stressed. "Keep people from snoring."
- 3) If the book sells fairly well, she'll contact the national office for Borders and urge them to carry the book nationally, or at least regionally.

(please see page 4)

Letter from the President

It's hard to believe that summer is dwindling away, but a few mornings lately have reminded me that there is a cooler time approaching. Perhaps it may even become less hectic around here. I keep hoping...

We had a very pleasant meeting at Borders Books in Meyerland, with **Yolanda Movsessian** of Borders as our guest speaker. For details, see **Joe Vitale's** column. FYI: Yolanda has just recently left Borders, moving on to bigger and better (?) things. I know we'll miss her, but we wish her the best.

I've been waiting for feedback from you about what you would like to see more (or less) of in the HP&AA (and in the newsletter), and, so far, have been quite impressed with the economy of response. To simplify matters, we've included a mini-survey on page 3 of this newsletter. Fill it out, or we'll send the survey police after you.

Also, be sure to let us know about your successes with getting your works "out there." We'd love to brag more about the wonderful things our members are doing. As a matter of fact, we are instituting a "brag session" into our monthly meetings, where any member can have the spotlight for a few* minutes. Call me at (713) 661-1232 to schedule your presentation. And be sure to bring your book(s) with you to the meeting. (By the way, if you're considering selling your book to a trade publisher — and are dreaming of a huge advance — you won't want to miss **Marilyn** and **Tom Ross's** cautionary tale, beginning on page 2.)

I'd like to personally say "welcome aboard" to the association's newest board members, **Ed Pankau** and **Linda Credeur**. Ed, who will serve as Vice President, is a nationally recognized private investigator and security consultant who has been deeply involved in bringing to light many of the major white-collar crime cases of the last decade, including the Savings & Loan debacle, and Teresa Rodriguez' highly publicized tiptoe through the tulips. He wrote the very successful book, *Check It Out!*, and has become increasingly active in the publishing business. I'm certain he will bring a unique color to our group. Linda, our new Events Coordinator, is a writer, publicist, publisher, and accomplished speaker; it's a sure bet that her enthusiasm, creativity and flair for organization will make every HP&AA "do" an unqualified success. (But again, *your* feedback is essential; see Linda's message on page 4.)

And finally, after much internal debate, I have decided to "pass the gavel" to Joe Vitale, who will act as Interim President of HP&AA until the next elections. I trust that you'll all give him your full support in his position as President. This has been an exciting experience for me, and, while I will continue to serve on the Board, I think someone else deserves a little excitement, too. Have fun, Joe! For the rest of you, see you in print!

Ron Kaye

* "A few", in this instance, is defined as three or less. We all know what windbags those *other* writers can be when given the opportunity to promote themselves — unlike *us*, of course.

BREAK OUT THE POCKET PROTECTORS!

Be sure to mark your calendars for our next meeting, to be held **Thursday, September 5th** at the **Houston Engineering and Scientific Society**, 3121 Buffalo Speedway. Networking begins at 6:30, and the meeting proper (well, okay, as proper as it gets!) begins at 7:00. We are planning an exciting, informative meeting, so be sure to attend, and bring a copy of your book(s), as well as plenty of business cards. Our featured speaker will be . . . well, you'll just have to come and find out, now, won't you?

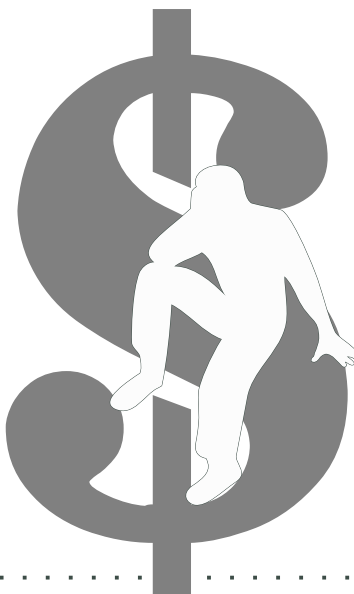
Sorry; slide rules prohibited, and professed victims of alien abduction will be asked to beam themselves back to the mother ship.

IS THERE A BIG FAT ADVANCE IN YOUR FUTURE?

by Marilyn and Tom Ross, excerpted from *SPAN Connection*

Self-publishing sure isn't what it used to be! These days it can be your ticket to big bucks from a big publisher. Many of the mainstream presses now go scouting for material among self-publishers, and in some cases, they end up offering the authors eye-popping advances. James Redfield got \$800,000 from Warner Books for **THE CELESTINE PROPHECY**. HarperCollins gave Marlo Morgan \$1.7 million dollars for **MUTANT MESSAGE DOWN UNDER**. Richard Paul Evans received a \$4.2 million dollar advance from Simon & Schuster for **THE CHRISTMAS BOX** (with the stipulation that he write a prequel).

Most self-published books bought by trade publishers don't come close to these figures, but, say **MARILYN** and **TOM ROSS**, there is still serious money to be made this way. Marilyn and Tom are the publishers of the information-packed monthly newsletter **SPAN Connection**,



which is the official publication of the **SMALL PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA**. (If you haven't joined **SPAN** yet, why not? See the end of this article for more information.) The Rosses are also the authors of a very successful self-published book which they sold to a trade publisher for a "nice" five-figure advance. Does this sound like your dream? Well, hold on there — if you think you're home free once your book has been grabbed up by a mainstream house, think again. As the authors' experience indicates, the real work begins **after** the publisher says "yes." In this piece, excerpted from the July 1996 issue of **SPAN CONNECTION**, you'll find invaluable advice on the pitfalls and promises of publishing contracts.

Our advice: Don't sign anything before you read this article.

— Editor

Many frustrated authors today find themselves in a catch-22 situation:

they can't attract an agent and they can't get a publisher to look at their manuscripts. We counsel them to consider this formula: Self-publish your own book. Make it a quality product. Sell the heck out of it. Establish a track record. Then approach an agent or publisher. The result will be the difference between night and day.

When we came up with the idea of doing a book about our experiences of moving from southern California to a small Colorado town, we queried several publishers. Two were very interested. But their terms were nonsense: we were looking for at least sirloin steak and they were offering hot dogs. So we self-published **COUNTRY BOUND™! TRADE YOUR BUSINESS SUIT BLUES FOR BLUE JEAN DREAMS™** in 1992.

After selling over 10,000 copies we wanted to devote our time to other projects. In our case, the first publisher we approached took the bait. And we're pleased about that because the reason we went to them originally is we know they do a dynamite job of developing special sales and do strong ongoing publicity. These factors were every bit as important to us as the money.

What did we do to woo them? We sent copies of all our reviews, press clippings from newspapers and

magazines about us, plus stories on the subject written by us. Naturally, we also sent a book and indicated the number of units sold. They could immediately see they had promotable authors and an attractive, proven product.

NEGOTIATING A WIN / WIN CONTRACT. Once they said "yes," the real work began. Before any contracts flew back and forth we negotiated what the advance would be. They came up; we went down. The book ultimately sold for a nice 5-figure advance. Where they usually pay royalties based on 10% of net, we got it up to 12.5% on the first 10,000 and 15% thereafter. We asked how they intended to market the book and they provided a detailed Proposed Marketing Plan. This reassured us they were serious about what they would do to fuel the sales flames we had lit.

When the contract arrived we were aghast. This was the fourth book we had sold to trade publishers, so we were not novices in knowing what to expect. But some of their expectations really stung. They wanted to hold the copyright in their name. They wanted the granting of all electronic rights for a paltry 5% compensation to us. They would allow us to purchase our own book for a 40% discount and only for promotional purposes. We swallowed hard and reminded ourselves that a contract is a negotiable instrument.

The real zinger was the following statement: "If royalties have

not been sufficient to repay the advance within 3 years after the publication of the Work, then upon demand of Publisher, Author shall repay to Publisher the portion of the advance not yet repaid." This totally unglued us!

We reminded them this was a proven book. The only reason it wouldn't have earned back its advance was if they neglected to properly market it. Then they suggested they could extend the time to 5 years! We explained that only made it worse; we would want the rights back long before then if it hadn't earned back the advance. They stammered that they had never removed that clause from any contract. We made it clear there would be no contract with us if it remained.

(please see next page)



PRESSING MATTERS

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We welcome your comments, suggestions and contributions. For additional copies, or a copy of the HP&AA mission statement and by-laws, please send S.A.S.E. to

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BIG FAT ADVANCE? (continued from previous page)

After tearing the contract apart and putting it back together again in our favor, we sent it off and held our breath. They balked (but after several more exchanges), here are the concessions we ended up getting:

- The copyright in our name.
- The right to mutually negotiate our payment on an individual basis for electronic rights.
- An author buy back ranging from a 50% discount to 71% depending on quantity.
- The right to resell books to nontrade markets. (This is a crucial point you need so you can continue selling your book to certain markets you've developed.)
- The deletion of the advance return clause.
- A stipulation that the title would not be changed without mutual agreement.
- One half the advance paid upon signing of the agreement; the balance upon submission of the manuscript, instead of the usual one-third, one-third, one-third.
- A clause giving us the right to sell off our existing inventory until their new edition comes out. (Very important; you don't want to eat all the present

- Fifty complimentary author copies instead of 10.
- A clause stipulating that any major revisions would require an additional advance to be negotiated. (Watch this; most contracts pay you nothing for the weeks of revision time required.)
- Deletion of the clause requiring us to give them options on our next works. (This is really silly. If they do a good job, we would naturally approach them with a new project.)
- We added a point regarding adjudication of disputes to bring in the American Arbitration Association.
- We also added a clause to protect ourselves in the event they go bankrupt.

Did we get everything we wanted? Not by a long shot. We didn't expect to. That's why we were so picky in going back to them initially. It almost backfired on us, however. They are used to dealing with authors who are eternally grateful to even be offered a contract. They aren't about to question half of it. Our knowledge of the industry was an anomaly. But because there was mutual respect and a willingness to compromise we were able to cobble together an agreement that gave us each what we most needed.

Now we have cash flow to devote to a new product and more time to develop it.

(Although selling your self-published book isn't for everyone), "selling out" may be the smartest thing you can do — especially with conventional publishers so hungry for proven self-published product.

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SPAN, The Small Publishers Association of North America, is a growing nonprofit professional trade association for self-publishers and independent presses; for serious authors who realize they must promote their own books; and for vendors serving the publishing industry. SPAN's stated mission is:

"To advance the image and profits of independent publishers through education and marketing opportunities."

Want to know more? Write to:

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e-mail: SPAN@span-assn.org**

We need your feedback! Your answers to the questions below can make a real difference to the HP&AA. We're here for YOU, so please, let us know what you want.

Is anybody out there???



The First Official HP&AA SURVEY

Use the form provided, and/or separate sheet(s) of paper. Please print or type. Mail to: HP&AA Survey, P.O. Box 300792, Houston TX 77230-0792. Or you may fax your reply to (713) 999-1313. Thanks!

1. What sort of events would you like to see at HP&AA (conferences, workshops, etc.)?

2. Who are some of the speakers you'd like to hear at our meetings?

3. What services do you need the most as an author or publisher?

4. Would you like to be on the board of HP&AA? If so, in what capacity?

5. What is your biggest challenge as an author or publisher?

(Marketing by Vitale, cont'd)

Yolanda added that you have to be creative in your marketing. She gave an example of a travel book publisher who joined with a travel agency to put on a seminar about travel. Both the publisher and the agency benefited.

It was a short but delightful talk by a charming woman, with simple advice too often unheeded (or even considered) by authors.

Joe "Mr. Fire!" Vitale

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KUDOS & THANKS

◆ **CONGRATULATIONS** to HP&AA pres **Joe Vitale**, whose new book, **Cyberwriting**, is just out from AMACOM Books. (Don't miss his autograph party at River Oaks Book Store on Thurs., Sept. 12 from 5 to 7 PM. There'll be free refreshments and live music. Call Linda Credeur for details.) Joe has just been signed by the same publisher to pen **There's A Customer Born Every Minute**, about the marketing techniques of P. T. Barnum. This one has "bestseller" written all over it! If you know any bold, brash, Barnum-like marketing tales worthy of this book, Joe wants to hear about them. You'll get credit in the book if your story is used. So shoot your stories to Joe (his numbers are listed above).

◆ Many thanks to outgoing board member **John Martin of Bold Creative Services ((713) 690-2653)**, who assisted in defining the structure of HP&AA, and graciously donated printing and mailout services for our first two

PUBLISHING POINTS...
by Ron Kaye

While writing a book can be a rewarding, if challenging, experience, it's only the first step. After all, one would assume that you wrote your book with the intent of someone (preferably lots of people) actually buying and reading it. If you're like most authors, you are convinced that simply *everybody* who hears about

your book will want to go out and buy a copy. I hate to be the one to pop your bubble, but the truth is, you need to establish your "target market" if you want your book to sell. That's why one of the first steps I take with a new client who's working on a book is to present them with a thorough questionnaire (a sort of obstacle course, if you will) that begins by helping them define their market.

Just how do you establish your target market? First, ask yourself — and answer honestly — what benefit the reader can realize by reading your book. If your answer is overly broad, such as "The reader's life will be changed," or something equally grandiose, get a second opinion! Once you have determined the real benefits your book offers, ask yourself, "Who would consciously seek those benefits, and where are they likely to shop?"

When you have those answers, do a little shopping yourself, to see what catches your eye. You'll come away with a better idea of how to market your book, and you'll have a better chance of seeing it "take off."

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This & That

from the Events Coordinator

by Linda Credeur

WITH SO MUCH TALENT AND KNOWLEDGE IN OUR MIDST, I have decided it will be logical and wise to tap the well that's right under our noses. I'm speaking of you, the members, and what you have to offer the rest of the group.

Be brave! Let me know ASAP if you would like to be a featured speaker at a future HP&AA meeting. Don't worry; if you don't feel brave, I may be calling you anyway. You can reach me at (713) 939-0680, or fax (713) 939-8908.

If you have an idea for a program, please share it. And it is not too early to be thinking of the holidays, so if you have ideas, I welcome them. See you at the next meeting — and thanks!

"It is as easy to dream a book as it is hard to write one."

— Balzac

"When in doubt, make a fool of yourself. There is a microscopically thin line between being brilliantly creative and acting like the most gigantic idiot on earth. So what the h - -, leap."

— Cynthia Heimel

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