



SelfPublisher News

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Brooklyn's Unique Gallery Goes Underground

An Interview with Bryan Reilly

By Milton Stern

For years, starving artists have had galleries for displaying their work, and now a writer in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, has created a venue for the starving writer — Unpublished Underground.

Unpublished Underground is for writers who wish to display their work, and their door is open to all who are willing to expose their work to criticism or accolade. Writers provide their manuscripts, which Unpublished Underground prints and binds with a cover before putting them on display.

They do charge an annual membership fee of \$75. After all, one cannot expect a gallery to pay the rent just on its looks. The fee includes:

- Printing/binding/physical display presence for 2-3 copies of the member's work
- A bound copy of the author's material — sent back to the author
- Promotion of the author's material with a synopsis and bio on www.unpublishedunderground.com
- Complimentary food and beverages at events and readings

Recently, Bryan Reilly, owner of Unpublished Underground, sat down for an exclusive interview with *SelfPublisher News* Executive Editor Milton Stern.

Reilly is an unpublished fiction writer who lives in Manhattan and has always worked in a gallery-enriched neighborhood. He concentrates on short fiction as he “hones his craft.”

“I worked in corporate America doing credit and collections work,” Reilly tells *SelfPublisher News*. “I was laid off and used the severance package to open this gallery.”

His first inclination was to open an art gallery. “Then I thought I am a writer, so why not open a writer's gallery,” Reilly says.



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The Editor's Desk

Proof or Edit? That Is the Question

By Milton Stern, Executive Editor

As many of you know, I am also a self-published author, and my next book, *On Tuesdays, They Played Mah Jongg*, is due to be released in October. Having worked in publishing for more years than I care to admit, I know the benefits of having a good editor and a good proofreader. I also know the difference between a proofreader and an editor.

Whenever I go to self-published author forums, chat rooms or blogs, I see discussions about hiring an editor or having a friend proof a book, but rarely if ever do I see a distinction between proofing and editing. This lack of knowledge about the difference between proofing and editing spells doom for many self-published authors.

For those, who do not know, a proofreader checks for errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. In addition, a proofreader checks the table of contents and front matter of a book, checks each page of the book for formatting errors and scans the overall look of a book to be sure there are no problems. Proofreading is not easy, and in almost two decades in this business, I have only met a dozen really top-notch proofreaders. I happen to be one of them and have been told so because I can find a bold period in a page of six point type.

However, one should NEVER proof his or her own work. If you proof your own work, the most embarrassing error will end up in the final copy. Believe me. I know from experience. I once wrote a press release about \$1,400,000 in government funding. The actual figure was \$14,000.

There are hundreds of good proofreaders, and many can be located just by asking around. Be sure to find one who has actually proofed something. Your Aunt Selma, who used to proof everyone's wedding invitations, is the last person who should proof your book. Some of the best proofreaders are other authors, especially ones who have not read any of your work. If you do not want to pay for proofing, work out a trade, where you proof each other's work.

An editor, on the other hand, checks for content, consistency, story structure, and most of all, believability. That is right — believability. Even if you are a fantasy author, your story must be believable, and that believability comes from consistency and story structure.

Over the years, I have worked with a dozen top-notch editors, too. You won't believe this, but I have been told I am an excellent editor.

However, one should NEVER EVER edit his or her own work. If you edit your own work, the silliest plot development, which makes the readers roll their eyes, will end up in the final copy.

There are hundreds of good editors, and as with proofreaders, many can be located just by asking around. Again, be sure you hire or ask someone who has actually edited something. Asking your Uncle Walter, who used to edit your father's appliance store ads, is not a good idea. In fact, do not ask a family member to edit your work either, especially if your characters are based on your family! If you are still stumped about how to find a good editor, other authors make good editors, too. Again, if you cannot afford an editor, barter.

Why am I droning on about proofreading and editing?

I have been writing and rewriting *On Tuesdays, They Played Mah Jongg* for the better part of the last two decades — you heard me correctly. The book started as a screenplay, then became a play, and this past year, I decided to turn it into a novel. As a result, I added four characters to a story I knew inside and out and lived with for 20 years.

Fortunately for me, the best editor I have ever known is also the Managing Editor of *SelfPublisher News*, Sharon Grove Gillespie. I asked Sharon to read the book for content and to tell me what few corrections I thought it needed. After a month, she sat down with me outside — to avoid a scene — and said, "I hope you don't have a heart attack when I tell you what I want you to do."

Sharon then outlined for me the major structural changes, changes in characters, changes in the focus of the main and sub-plots, and the changes in the timeline that needed to be done to make the book more believable and the character she hated more likable. I would say dislike, but she really hated one of the characters. I listened, and when she was done, she was surprised I was not upset. I told her that the reason I hired her was to edit, and she did exactly that.

I spent most of the next five days restructuring and rewriting the book as per her instructions, and Sharon was right. The book is now believable, and the character she hated is now likeable. The best part is that the timeline is no longer confusing. More importantly, due to the changes in the characters, the emotional response I wanted readers to have at one point in the book, finally evoked the response in me.

As you can, see there are many lessons in my column this month. The most important lessons are: Don't be married to your copy! Be open to change! And, whatever you do, do not ask Aunt Selma and Uncle Walter to proof and edit your work!

Spotlight on Experts

Ezine Publisher Wants You to 'Ask the Experts'

An interview with Francine Silverman

By Milton Stern

Do you have a question about marketing or publishing? Do you have other questions regarding your manuscript, novel or publication? Now, you can ask the experts — for free.

Francine Silverman is the author of two travel guidebooks, *Catskills Alive* (2000 and 2003) and *Long Island Alive* (2003), both published by Hunter Publishing.



Book Promotion Newsletter, Silverman's interactive bi-weekly ezine, has close to 1,500 subscribers, including authors, publishers, publicists, editors, ghostwriters, and book coaches (www.bookpromotionnewsletter.com). *Book Marketing from A-Z*, a compilation of the best marketing strategies from 325 of her top subscribers, was published this year.

Book Promotion Newsletter contains feature articles written by subscribers and has included topics such as marketing tips, publicity from a publicist's point of view, and self-publishing. The ezine also contains promotional coups from readers, criticisms, wonderful websites, and more. It is an interactive e-mail, and readers are encouraged to share their marketing experiences. The newsletter advertises itself as "a good way to showcase your work and read how other authors market theirs."

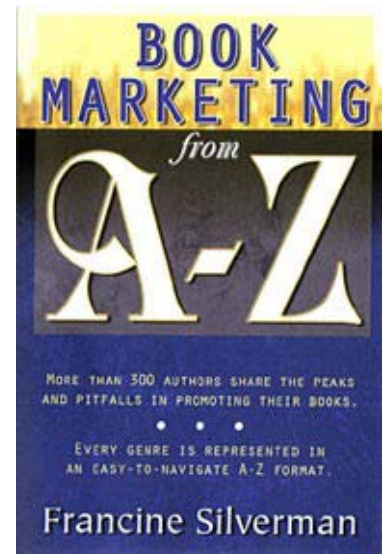
Recently, *SelfPublisher News* Executive Editor Milton Stern sat down with Francine Silverman to discuss *Book Promotion Newsletter* and her new service, *Ask the Experts*.

"I started the newsletter because I had two guidebooks out, *Catskills Alive* (second edition) and *Long Island Alive* (first edition), and I wanted tips on marketing my books," Silverman tells *SelfPublisher News*. "Right from the beginning, I sent authors questionnaires, and the one question that everyone answered alike was 'What have

you learned after publishing your first book?' For everyone, the answer was 'You have to promote it yourself.'"

According to Silverman, the book industry reports that 78% of the titles published come from small/self-publishers. With combined annual revenues of less than \$50 million, these publishers have limited publicity budgets, and their authors are expected to do their own promotion.

Silverman had enough material from the questionnaires — most of it wonderful ideas for marketing one's books — that two years to the day she started her ezine, she published a compilation of marketing tips in alphabetical order. *Book Marketing from A-Z* was released in March 2005 and is available from all online booksellers. "I am disappointed that POD books are difficult to get into the book stores," Silverman says. The book has already received rave reviews from over 35 book reviewers and is selling well.



"Be their publisher Random House or Author House, authors soon discover that book promotion is their responsibility," Silverman quotes from the back of her book. "There are so many authors, and only six major publishers," she says.

"Every genre is represented on many diverse subjects and alphabetized from advertising to POD to zoology," Silverman says.

Silverman made good use of networking as a marketing tool with authors providing links to her book in their newsletters and on their websites and vice versa. Authors who run their own online bookstores also feature her book. *SelfPublisher News* agrees that link exchanges are a great tool for driving traffic to a website, and they cost nothing.

After publishing *Book Marketing from A-Z*, Silverman realized she had a lot of experts subscribing to her ezine, so she looked around for someone to put up a web page where people could get marketing tips right from the source. With the help of Maureen McMahon, who lives

in Australia — quite a distance from Silverman who lives in the Bronx — *Ask the Experts* was born in July 2005.

Maureen McMahan hosts *Ask the Experts* on her website (www.maureenmcmahan.com). McMahan is an author of romantic suspense novels, *Return of the Gulls* and *Shadows in the Mists*, to name a couple.

“Isn’t the Internet great?” asks Silverman. “I have connected with a wonderful woman in Australia who is hosting the site.” One can post a question, and in three to five days get an answer from an expert. All questions are fielded through Silverman, who forwards the question to the appropriate expert. Once the expert answers the question, Silverman forwards the response back to the questioner. The service is free of charge. “Now authors with books to promote may ask questions of nearly 150 author experts whose specialties run the gamut from romance to foot surgery,” she says.

Silverman hopes that she will be able to collect enough questions and answers to publish a second edition of *Book Marketing from A-Z*.

Ask the Experts: www.maureenmcmahan.com/bookmarketing.html

Underground, continued from Page 1

Unpublished Underground is located in the most artistic neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York — Williamsburg.

Reilly says, “There are about 40 galleries in my neighborhood, and I have the only writer’s gallery out here.” *SelfPublisher News* is hard pressed to find a writer’s gallery anywhere.

The gallery opened in May 2005, and their showcase on July 29 featured 11 writers. “We are always looking for more writers,” Reilly says. Showcases take place the last Friday of each month. Although most of the writers come from New York, he has writers from as far away as Alabama and Florida.

The gallery is open every day except Mondays: Tuesday–Friday, 11:00 am–7:00 pm; Saturday–Sunday, 12:00 pm–8:00 pm.

At his July showcase, there were 40 guests, and five of the featured writers were there to greet people. There were also four representatives from various magazines in Manhattan and one literary agent. “All of those representatives removed material at no cost to them,” Reilly tells *SelfPublisher News*. Reilly provides three copies of each piece at a showcase, and although he is unable to print “on-the-spot,” he does replenish the inventory the following day. All printing and binding is done on-site.

The books stay on the shelf for one year. One copy is propped up on a plate holder, and there are two other

copies underneath on display as well. “Once the three are gone, I replenish,” Reilly says.

The July showcase was the third showcase. People do trickle in during the week. “Foot traffic is heaviest on the weekends, and I am located in an area, where people constantly are walking by,” Reilly says. They also have a sign prominently displayed at street level.

To get the word out, Reilly advertises in local papers like the *Village Voice* and on the Internet. He has distributed press releases and even has a listing on Craig’s List. “I also do guerilla marketing, handing out post-cards at local cafes,” Reilly says.

Although running Unpublished Underground is his full time job now, Reilly is still able to work on his writing, while sitting at the front desk. “I am doing everything myself, the printing and binding, and I have all day to myself. I am the only employee,” Reilly tells *SelfPublisher News*. “When people come in, they see the desk, and I am at the desk. I am not hiding in the back.” Unpublished Underground has no entrance fee.

“There are a few quotes on the walls from famous writers to romanticize what we do,” Reilly says. “During the shows, I have an overhead projector, which I use to spotlight blurbs from the manuscripts.” The writers choose the blurbs that are rotated throughout the showcase.

Unpublished Underground has no limits on what they will accept, but they try to keep everything under 300 pages. They do not censor either.

Reilly says he would not be adverse to highlighting authors with opposing views at the same showcase. “This democratizes the process as does self-publishing.”

Unpublished Underground will also accept bound books from self-published authors in addition to unpublished authors. “A self-published author sending in books would be great. I would definitely be into doing that,” Reilly says.

“It is funny how when you start a small business, the idea you had when you started will not be the same six months down the road,” Reilly says. “It is an evolving process. You cannot be married to your original idea. In fact, as Robert Louis Stevenson said, ‘There is but one art, to omit!’”

Authors who do not reside in New York can also send materials as Reilly is in charge of the displays. “But, if an author comes in and points out a preference of where he wants to be, I would be open to that,” Reilly says.

The self-published author can supply the gallery with 10 or 20 printed copies, and Reilly would contact the author during the year if additional copies are needed.

Unpublished Underground LLC is located at 65 Hope Street, 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11211. For more information: www.unpublishedunderground.com or info@unpublishedunderground.com.

Authors in the Spotlight—

The Click-clacking on the Keyboard May Wake You

If you walk around a certain neighborhood in Orlando, Fla., late at night, and you peer through the only lighted window on the street, you may see Michael T. Owens typing away. On second thought, please do not peer into windows in strange neighborhoods, just take our word for it.



With a background in advertising and writing, Owens has published two novels. His first book, *Pick-Up Lines* was about a man's search for a dream girl, which leads to more trouble than anything else. His second book, *A Dream Come True*, follows the lives of three 20-year-olds as they leave Orlando and head for glitzy Los Angeles to chase their dreams.

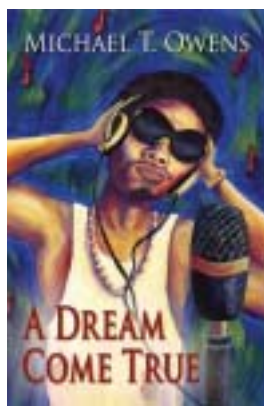
"Usually my topics vary, but they center around relationships and how outside forces affect them," Owens tells *SelfPublisher News*.

As with most self-published authors, Owens wanted to be in control of the creative process. "Taking an idea from a concept to an actual book is one of the most exciting, most fulfilling things I've [ever] done — I love that feeling," he says. "I also like taking full responsibility if my work fails or succeeds."

Owens believes in hiring the best professionals an author's budget will allow. "I hired an editor and a graphic/book designer, and I may seek to hire a publicist in the near future," he tells *SelfPublisher News*.

He also says he is at the beginning stages of promoting his second book, so he has not spent much money, but he is looking "to gain maximum exposure at cost-effective prices."

"Having the industry think your work is inferior simply because it's self-published [is frustrating for self-publishers]," Owens says. "Thankfully, some self-publishers are experiencing great success. This keeps hope alive for the rest of us."



He held an eBay auction for advertising space in *A Dream Come True*, which gained Owens some national media exposure, including coverage in *Yahoo News* and *Adweek Magazine*.

Owens says, "Always listen to your readers," and don't "try to follow trends or what is hot."

People do not understand "the amount of time and energy it takes to bring a quality book from an idea to the market. It might seem easy, but it ain't!" Owens tells *SelfPublisher News*.

"I write for fun! My goal is to consistently entertain readers and make them want more!" Owens says. "I also want to help increase the amount of minority readers and creative writers."

A Dream Come True © 2005, ISBN 0976858908, Fiction, Michael T. Owens, Montage Publishing International, www.michaeltowens.com

Southwestern Writer Takes Years to Edit

For a quarter of a century, Stacy Cochran has been writing for a living in Phoenix, Arizona, taking three to six months to draft his books and two to three years to edit them, and he has written a dozen books.



Cochran's latest book, *Amber Page and the Legend of the Coral Stone* is the first in a completed series of comic-book style action-adventure novels. He has also written *The Kiribati Test*, an award-winning collection of science fiction short stories and a literary novel called *The Band*.

He says his books have had commercial success, and when asked how much he spent to market his books, Cochran tells *SelfPublisher News*, "That's personal information."

His books were self-published because he "couldn't find any other way to get [his] books published," yet he is represented by Winifred Golden of the Castiglia Literary Agency, who apparently has been in contact with traditional publishers with no apparent luck.

"People in the business don't take [self-published authors] seriously, even if you've worked harder to produce a book than writers who have traditional publish-



ers who pay them lots of money,” Cochran says. “Money really drives serious acceptance in this business, even though most people would like to think that publishers are above that.”

Cochran says his websites and selling his books on Amazon and other online stores have added to their success, but he will not divulge his worst marketing

idea. “I’m not giving that blunder away!” he tells *SelfPublisher News*.

Peter Straub, who co-wrote *The Talisman* with Stephen King once told Cochran, “No matter how many awards you win, Stacey, you’ll always have to carry your own suitcase.”

Cochran was once told by a teacher in college not to seek out an agent, just keep publishing his work in literary magazines and an agent will find him. “That was pretty bad advice,” Cochran says.

Cochran appeared on a panel at Bouchercon, the world’s largest mystery convention, which was held in September.

Amber Page and the Legend of the Coral Stone, © 2005, Young Adult, Lulu Press; *The Kiribati Test* © 2005 ISBN 1411613589, Science Fiction, Lulu Press; *The Band* © 2005 ISBN 1411607589, Stacey Cochran, Literary/Mainstream, Lulu Press, www.staceycochran.com and www.amberpage.com

She Has Time to Share Her Advice

Have you ever wanted to buy a timeshare? Clermont, Fla., resident and part-time timeshare salesperson and consultant Lisa Ann Schreier can help.

If the word “timeshare” brings to mind a slick salesman in a lime green leisure suit with a white belt; if you have sat through tedious timeshare “pitches” while on vacation and left more confused than when you began;



and if you have always wondered what the truth is about timeshares, how resorts work, what salespeople are trained to do and how to get the best deal, then her first book, *Surviving A Timeshare Presentation ... Confessions from the Sales Table*, is for you.

Shreier has written two books on timeshares, and the focus of her books is consumer education about the oftentimes mystifying and confusing world of timeshare sales and marketing practices and separating fact from fiction.

She estimates that more than three million Americans attend timeshare presentations or “pitches” each year, which has enabled the public and her specific audience to find her books.

Shreier works with a publicist on a regular basis and she has spent “roughly \$10,000” to promote her books. She self-published her first book to maintain control. Her second book is *Timeshare Vacations For Dummies*, which is part of the “For Dummies” books series by the publisher of the same name.

“The constant follow-up work and the constant effort to get the book carried in traditional and non-traditional venues” is the most frustrating thing about my self-published book, Shreier tells *SelfPublisher News*. She says that “speaking and exhibiting at the Chicago Adventure and Luxury Show” was the worst idea she had for promoting her book.

Being an industry insider, Shreier “had to learn to disregard people in [her] industry who just didn’t understand what [she was] doing, why [she was] doing it, and [who] continually try to undermine, make fun of and sabotage [her] efforts.”

Surviving A Timeshare Presentation ... Confessions from the Sales Table © 2004, ISBN 1932863125, Consumer Education, Vacation and Leisure, Travel, Lisa Ann Schreier, Insight Publishing, www.timeshareinsights.com

Yoga Therapist Offers a Solution to Stress

Yoga therapist and President of the Yoga Health Institute in Modesto, Calif., Richard L. Parenti, hopes you will find a solution to stress in his latest book.

Your Solution to Stress is the first of its kind “How to Meditate” book that reveals in detail a special Yoga mantra meditation technique that





will reduce your stress while providing you with a genuine platform for your continued spiritual growth, according to Parenti. “It is easy to read and simple to implement with step-by-step instructions [presented] in a way that a [layperson] can fully understand along with a personal rou-

tine to follow that will ensure [an individual’s] success,” Parenti tells *SelfPublisher News*.

Parenti says that this particular meditation technique was authorized by Swami Veda Bharati, “who is to the Yoga world what the Pope is to Christianity.”

In 2004, Parenti was invited by Swami Veda to attend a 40-day silent retreat in India at his ashram. “I had actually only known him for about five minutes when this offer was made. I thought he was nuts. But something inside me said this is for real. So I accepted all the while feeling tremendous amounts of fear,” Parenti tells *SelfPublisher News*. “I went to India and was initiated with a secret Yoga mantra into the Himalayan Yoga tradition from which all authentic Yoga comes from.” Upon his return from India, he wrote “Naked Before God,” an article about his personal experience of doing a 40-day silent retreat, which remains, unpublished. He sent the article to Swami Veda, who said, “Write a book.” So he wrote *Your Solution to Stress*.

“[However], before I wrote this book, I conferred with Swami Veda and asked if there were any Yogic injunctions against revealing this technique to the public, and his answer was ‘Go for it,’” Parenti says.

While living in San Francisco in the 1980s, Parenti was walking in the Marina when he met Norman, a 78-year-old, retired, advertising agency owner from New York, who had published 12 books. “He had a beautiful spirit and loved writing,” Parenti says. “He loved the way I was jotting notes down as we walked and talked.” Norman read what Parenti had written and offered to help him organize his thoughts more cohesively.

According to Parenti, Norman always said, “Write one hour a day ... I don’t give a damn what you write — be it a headline, your name, a sentence, a business plan, anything — just write! And maybe one day someone will take notice of what you write. But first and foremost write because it feels good to you.”

“So out of habit, I write because it makes me feel good,” Parenti tells *SelfPublisher News*, and he has been writing for 25 years, self-publishing three books.

His first book was *How to Put Profits in Your Pocket*, a restaurant guide on how to open and manage a successful restaurant, which sold 250 copies. Parenti’s second book *Yoga & the Spiritual Drunkard* sold 800 copies.

Parenti self-publishes because he has the intention “to teach 1% of the world authentic meditation techniques.” He says, “The only way I know of doing that is by self-publishing. It gives me a way to reach an international market of 519 million people who use the Internet that otherwise would not be available.”

He hired a web master to design his website where his book would be sold, and Parenti asked his best friend, who owns a direct sales marketing company, how to attract people to his website in a “gentle but interactive way that will help them to make an intelligent decision to buy the book without pressuring them to buy.” So far, Parenti has only spent \$119 on a press release, which is how *SelfPublisher News* found him. He also looked to an author who also self-published a self-help book for marketing advice.

Parenti plans to contact traditional publishers because he feels “this book has great value for the planet, as stress is a worldwide epidemic, according the World Health Organization.”

“Write the truth from the heart with passion. Write only what you experienced and let the editors correct your spelling,” Parenti tells *SelfPublisher News*. “All my writing comes from direct experience and is written with the purpose of enhancing a person’s well being no matter who they are.”

Your Solution to Stress © 2005, ISBN # 0966400712, Self-help, Richard L. Parenti, Yoga Health Institute & I-Magik Printer, www.solutionstostress.com and www.yoga-ehealth.com

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**Go to
www.selfpublishernews.com
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When a Jewish Boy Meets an Indian Boy, It's Kismet

Chicago native, Matt Rauscher, can only write at night and never before 11:00 pm. "Sometimes I'm up until 4:00 or 5:00 a.m., but for some reason, I can only do creative things overnight," he tells *SelfPublisher News*.



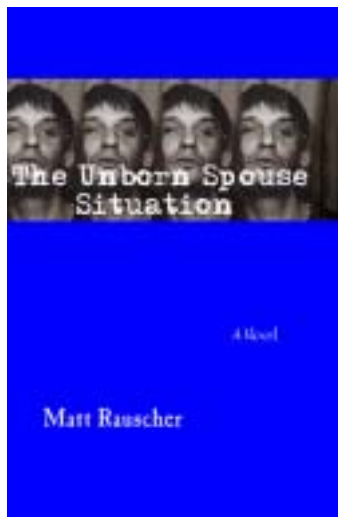
Rauscher made his first attempt at writing in the sixth grade. "I didn't get very far, but I've always wanted to write novels as opposed to short stories," he says.

His first book, *The Unborn Spouse Situation*, was born from a conversation he had with a friend. "A friend of mine told me about some people we knew who had just gotten married, and she said they were Muslim and in an arranged marriage, Rauscher says. "I was really surprised. I had heard of arranged marriages happening in other countries, but I didn't know it went on among college graduates in the Chicago suburbs. And, none of my Indian American friends had ever mentioned it ... I started thinking how something like that would affect me, and I instantly decided to make the love interest in the book Indian."

Rauscher loves to write about complicated relationships, and this story gave him the perfect opportunity. "I have a gay, Jewish male and a heterosexual, Indian male, and I put them together to see if anything will develop," he tells *SelfPublisher News*. "I also wanted to write about the Midwest, and the complexities that exist there — so I set the story in Normal, Ill., which is a real town."

It gets cold in Chicago, so after two years of standing by the mailbox reading rejection letters, Rauscher decided to go inside and self-publish his book, and he did it all himself.

"Very unexpectedly and very quickly, I did manage to get an agent's attention — one of the first people I queried. He sent my book to all the major publishers, and I got a lot of compliments in my rejection letters, but the book is gay themed



and written in a raucous style," Rauscher says. "People seemed sort of afraid of it."

"Other authors have told me that I chose the worst time period in human history to sell a gay themed book," he tells *SelfPublisher News*. "By 2004, people in the industry were openly saying, 'Oh, nobody's doing gay fiction these days.'"

Rauscher says a major local paper in Chicago will be reviewing his book, and he is hoping that word of mouth after the review will help market his book.

"Toni Morrison said on [a TV show once] that if you start at the ending, then the characters will get there, even if it's not the route you thought they would take," Rauscher relates.

Someone once told Rauscher to "write a book about POWs because that will sell."

One of his friends said of his book, "There is a story there underneath ... the 'onslaught of penises.'" But Rauscher says, "There's something in this book for everyone."

The Unborn Spouse Situation © 2005, ISBN 1411629205, Gay Fiction, Matt Rauscher, www.lulu.com/mattrauscher

From Self-published to Publisher

Hypnotherapist and new age teacher, Dean Montalbano, has made the leap from self-published author to CEO of Leaping Lizards Publishing.

His latest book is *The Ogham and the Universal Truth of the Trees*, which he describes as "a beautifully illustrated, fun filled exploration of the Ogham, the ancient tree alphabet of the Druids.

Montalbano has written about 48 books, including audio books. In the beginning, he self-published his books because it was more economical. Now as CEO of his own publishing company, he benefits from his own editors, designers and marketing mavens, but he still spends a "few thousand" dollars to promote his books.

"[The most frustrating thing now is folks who don't understand the difference between [my once being] self-published, [and the fact that now] I am CEO of a publishing company," Montalbano tells *SelfPublisher News*.

His publishing company puts out *Our Open Minds*, a newsletter Montalbano uses to promote their books, but he says that print ads in retail magazines are a poor marketing choice.

“Everyone will have opinions, just like everyone has, ahem, a nose. Often they can’t help sticking theirs into yours. So, do what you believe in and learn to have a thick skin,” Montalbano advises authors.

Montalbano says that his book “is not there to be critiqued.” It is to be shared, “for people to think about and have fun ... a lot of folks want to argue about everything!” he tells *SelfPublisher News*.

The Ogham and the Universal Truth of the Trees, © 2005, ISBN 1932086919, New Age, Dean Montalbano, Leaping Lizards Publishing, www.LeapingLizardsPublishing.com and www.TruthOfTheTrees.com

Dodging a Comet on a Shoestring

John Benjamin Sciarra is an Animal Research Technologist at Pfizer Global Research and Development in Groton, Conn., and was formerly the Curator of Exhibits and Husbandry at the Mystic Aquarium in Mystic, Conn., for ten years.



His latest book, *Shoestrings — No Time For Dinosaurs*, is about 14-year-old Kyle and his 12-year-old sister

Teresa, and another girl, named Sonja. The children find themselves in a world that existed 65 million years ago just as the comet that caused the dinosaurs’ extinction is about to hit the earth. The children accidentally step into the time capsule as it is in the process of being transported by a bizarre device that was invented by their fathers. In the prehistoric world, the children find a dinosaur called a Bambiraptor — a cross between a reptile and bird (that really existed), and they make it their pet. Thanks to a shoestring, the children narrowly escape the comet’s fiery aftermath.

“Now, I’m in my late ‘teens’ (57 but still a kid at heart),” Sciarra tells *SelfPublisher News*. “I have been writing novels and newspaper columns for the last three years.”

Sciarra has published two books including, *Noah’s Diary*. “I have also ghostwritten an historical novel for a doctor and have a sequel to *Shoestrings — No Time For Dinosaurs* completed, a children’s book about my experiences training a 2,000 pound Steller sea lion

(*Samson, The Steller Sea Lion and Friends*) and have another novel, *Beachmaster*, three-quarters of the way done,” he says.

“I started *Shoestrings* in January 2005, and it was published in July 2005,” Sciarra says. “*Noah’s Diary*, however, a complex adult novel, required a lot of research and took me two years. The historical novel I ghostwrote was based on memoirs, and it took me six months to turn it into a novel.”

Noah’s Diary was published by iUniverse in 2003, and although it “received some fine literary attention,” Sciarra “found too much resistance from the larger book chains to deal with POD.” He says that *Shoestrings* “is moving much more quickly, and the reception has been dramatically different.”

“Of course, much of that [success of *Shoestrings*] might be due to the success of the *Potter* books,” Sciarra tells *SelfPublisher News*. “But hey, I’ll piggyback that success any day.”

Sciarra “played the game” and sent out a number of queries to agents and publishing companies but received the usual form responses. “I can’t blame them for not giving careful attention to all of the queries they receive every day,” he says. “The agents and publishing companies are only going to respond to a very minute amount of manuscripts. They can’t have looked closely at *Shoestrings* [because] no child, [who] has read it, didn’t come away absolutely enthralled with the book.”

“The only way the traditional publishers are going to pay attention is if you have a measure of success,” Sciarra tells *SelfPublisher News*. “I intend to have that success with *Shoestrings* and ... then we’ll talk.”

Sciarra teamed up with several people from the Connecticut Authors and Publishers Association (CAPA) of which he is a member. “This group has many talented people from every walk of the publishing industry,” he says. “I found a qualified and excellent editor, a computer wizard to format the book into printable form, and advice on marketing from some of the top people in the country.” He also interviewed a number of illustrators until he “found a gem — a paleontologist who designs dinosaur models for museums and is a gifted scientific illustrator.”

He has been using every free form of publicity he can find, but he has also begun to spend a percentage of his sales on advertising. “We have committed 10% of the



gross sales to advertising and have spent around \$1,000 thus far on brochures, ads in magazines and other avenues of promotion,” Sciarra says. “We have developed a comprehensive and realistic marketing plan.”

He says the most frustrating thing about being self-published is a lot of work on the computer. “I’m getting carpal tunnel and becoming cross-eyed!” Sciarra tells *SelfPublisher News*.

Sciarra used the phrase “Hotter than Potter” in some of his marketing materials. “It’s definitely tongue-in-cheek, but these things tend to stick in people’s minds,” he says. “I also believe that *Shoestrings* can capture the minds of young people in this age group and achieve enormous popularity. I doubt anyone can really duplicate what Rowling has managed, however.”

He found the best piece of marketing advice in the movie *Finding Forester*, where Shawn Connery said to a young man he was mentoring as a writer, “Write. Don’t think. You can think later.”

Sciarra says the worst piece of advice anyone gave him regarding his writing was give it up and go to work. “I won’t tell you who said that, or she’ll divorce me,” he says.

“The money would help me to do this full time,” Sciarra says in closing. “So, I’ve become a student of marketing. Now, it is about the money, but only to the extent that I can take care of my family and do what I love to do — write stories.”

Appearance Schedule

Oct. 8, 1:00–4:00 pm: Waldenbooks, Crystal Mall.

Nov. 6, 12:00–3:00 pm: Children’s Museum of South-eastern Connecticut, 13th Anniversary

Shoestrings—No Time For Dinosaurs © 2005, ISBN 0976955504, Children’s Fiction, John Benjamin Sciarra, Wild Animal Publishing Company, www.johnbenjaminosciarra.com

She Wants Women to Reach Their Potential

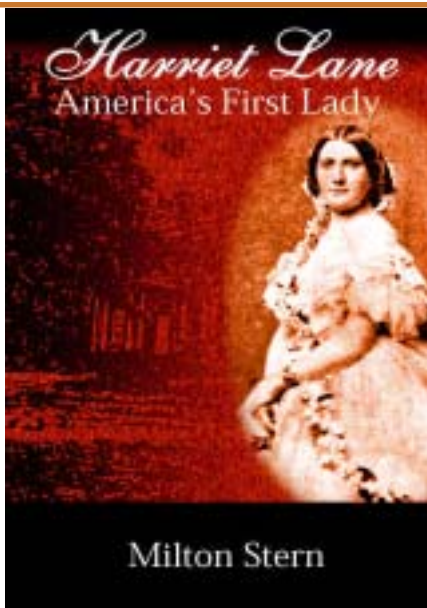
Ariana Dane, a certified personal trainer and writer in San Francisco, is tired of women living beneath their potential, and that is why she wrote *Joan of Arc Is Dead: A Wake-up Call for Women Who Sacrifice Too Much*.

Dane has been writing for seven years, and besides *Joan of Arc Is Dead*, she has written five screenplays.

One agent read *Joan of Arc Is Dead*, and although he thought it was great, according to Dane, he did not know how to market it.

Having the book contain questionnaires is Dane’s favorite marketing idea. “If a reader fills it out and loves the book and wants to pass it along,” she cannot because in order to fill out the questionnaire, her friend will need to buy her own, she tells *SelfPublisher News*.

Dane says, “It’s great to have an idea, grow it like a seed and watch it come to fruition. Even if this book does not become a bestseller or garner an appearance on the Oprah show, I feel proud that I was able to complete it,



The First Biography of the Most Fabulous First Lady

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Harriet Lane, America’s First Lady © 2005, ISBN 1-4116-2608-7, by Milton Stern, is available at all online book-sellers. www.harriettlane.net



publish it, and market it all on my own, despite the ‘nay-sayers.’”

Joan of Arc Is Dead: A Wake-Up Call for Women Who Sacrifice Too Much
© 2005, ISBN 1411634616, Self-help,
Ariana Dane, Lulu, www.Lulu.com/arianadane

He Is a Poet and All of Us Know It

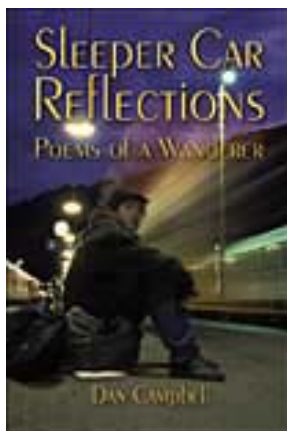
Dan Campbell is a character, and we mean that in a good way. Anyone who has worked with Dan learns to love his quirky humor, appreciate his disturbing, yet thought-provoking, poetry and tolerate his attempts to juggle oranges and other dangerous objects.



Before we go any further, you need to know that *SelfPublisher News* Executive Editor Milton Stern and Managing Editor Sharon Grove Gillespie both worked with Dan for many years, so it is difficult to highlight Dan without sharing our own insights. You will also forgive us for using his first name here.

Dan is an inspiration. He inspired Milton to write his first book, and that in turn has inspired Sharon to pursue her writing as well. So *SelfPublisher News* and the authors we highlight owe a debt of gratitude to Dan, for if it were not for him, this publication would not exist.

Dan served in the Peace Corp before moving to Northern Virginia to work as a librarian for a USAID contractor. Most of his weekends are devoted to writing, and he has been writing for six years.



His first book, *Sleeper Car Memories*, is a collection of poems reflecting Dan’s journeys to other countries and cultures, as well as the shadows of the human spirit. Several of the poems provide a hilarious viewpoint of human nature, while others show us how to look differently at life’s everyday miracles that are often ignored. Poetry should never be boring — it should

always be interesting and sometimes disturbing. This collection of poems definitely fulfills these criteria.

Dan has traveled the world, and he once vacationed in a monastery, earning him the nickname Rabbi from a co-worker. We never did quite figure that one out.

Dan is working on his second book, which will be a collection of short stories. “It seems impossible to get published as a poet if you are not well-known,” Dan says. This explains his foray into short stories, although we could swear he was writing one-act plays a few months ago.

He used his skills as a web designer and graphic artist to create his website and design his book, and he has spent \$0 to market it. This is not surprising to those of us who know Dan. He also did not send out queries or contact publishers because stamps are 37 cents. Even his mother had to buy her own copy.

“I am lousy at marketing and making the promotional efforts that are needed,” Dan admits.

Dan says the worst piece of advice he ever received was “the first draft is the best one.”

“My poetry is intense and sometimes disturbing and not the Hallmark card type of poetry,” Dan tells *SelfPublisher News*. “Poetry requires self-discipline and gallons of creativity.”

Appearance schedule:

Dan will be appearing nowhere at no particular time in the near future.

Sleeper Car Reflections © 2004, ISBN 1413715249, Poetry, Dan Campbell, www.publishamerica.com/books/4259

Mutiny on the Luminer

If aliens land in Snow Shoe, Penn., and abduct a full-time science fiction author, lets hope it is Michael Casher because he will keep them entertained and happy.

Casher has written four science fiction novels, and unlike most of the authors highlighted in *SelfPublisher News*, he is a full-time science fiction author. “I write, advertise or market my work seven days a week, anywhere from four to ten hours per day,” he says.





Casher has been writing for four years.

In his latest book, *Evermore*, the main character is Jack Rand, a 30-year-old nobody doing a nothing job in Evermore, Penn., a tiny borough in Pennsylvania's Allegheny Plateau.

How come aliens never meet more prominent people? But *SelfPublisher News* digresses.

Jack Rand meets Unim, a biped plant from the planet Zeta6. Unim is a sensational impressionist and, quite possibly, planet Earth's most vocal critic. What ensues is a textbook alien abduction that suddenly goes awry when there is a mutiny aboard the alien's starship, Luminer. Unim and his mutinous ally, Valyule, a human male from Hool, befriend and recruit Jack Rand and a young coal heiress in an effort to retake the starship and put a stop to the ambitious artificial-life experiments on-board that threaten the very sanctity of life itself.

"*Evermore* is also a serious but often humorous indictment of our contemporary Earth culture, an exposé of the things we covet and the values we fail to cherish," Casher tells *SelfPublisher News*. "The first segment of *The Evermore Trilogy* is a compelling read for think-a-holics, restless spirits and those seeking a little romance and a lot of comic relief."

Casher queried 47 agents in a two-year period, and the responses were that his work "did not meet their current needs or that they already had too many clients," he says. Casher had the same reaction from publishers who said his novels "did not fit their 'current list.'"

SelfPublisher News asks, "What the @\$% is the 'current list'? Is this the same list that enables traditional publishers to lose millions of dollars every year on books no one wants?" Sorry about that, we just could not help ourselves.

"People think [when you self-publish that] you simply 'didn't cut the mustard' in order to get published traditionally," Casher tells *SelfPublisher News*. "Therefore, [you] have nothing worthwhile to contribute to the world of literature or to the world culture."

Casher says his press release garnered the most attention but that posting free classified ads online only attracted spammers.

"A Penn State writing professor, Philip Klass (a.k.a., science fiction author William Tenn) once told me that I didn't need a college degree to write good fiction," Casher tells *SelfPublisher News*. "He said I was already good enough, and that I just needed to write. But I failed his creative writing course because I was also working full time and missed the final assignment deadline. Still, it was quite a compliment, coming from him."

Casher also says that a literary agent rejected his first three novels, packaged as *The Evermore Trilogy* and then told him that his kind of fantasy writing was just too hard to market. "In my opinion, he was simply afraid to take a risk," he tells *SelfPublisher News*.

SelfPublisher News asks its readers, of which many are science fiction writers who organize genre events and conferences, to contact Michael Casher about attending your events because he is a hoot!

Casher says in closing, "Fiction is real life without its mask. People who write fiction are not experts in the way things are. They simply tell a story of what might be. There, underneath the mask ... behind the lie."

Appearance Schedule: Casher says all his planned public appearances for the next six months will probably be in local supermarkets and hardware stores, as a customer. Joking aside, he is currently without the necessary budget and networking connections to secure venues for personal appearances.

Evermore © 2004, ISBN 1411619773, Science Fiction, Michael Casher, Lulu, www.lulu.com/michaelcasher

Injured Soldier Tells Her Story

PTRP stands for Physical Therapy Rehabilitation Platoon, and this is where Tomi Laine Clark landed with a fractured pelvis and other injuries after only five weeks of basic training, and it is where her memoir, *When I Come Home*, begins.



When I Come Home tells the story of a platoon full of privates with broken bones and nowhere important to be. The reader observes the interpersonal dynamics that develop between them and the increasingly wild antics in the barracks. As each day passes, everyone goes a little more stir crazy. Clark candidly shares her military experience in letters sent home to her lover: from enlisting with high hopes, getting injured, making

friends, making enemies, making decisions, and finally, being released after an interminable purgatory in PTRP.

According to Clark, “This quick read allows the outsider an insider view into Army policy, the psychology of isolation, and human nature under pressure.”



cards as marketing materials, a mass press release from PR Web and a mass emailing through Vertical Response,” Clark says. The press release gained the most attention, she says, and no publicity is bad publicity.

She tells people to “write what you love,” and “don’t follow the rules.”

Readers need to know that she takes “artistic license in altering certain facts in order to make ‘reality’ more real,” and not everything is literal.

When I Come Home © 2005, ISBN 1411634187, Memoir, Tomi Laine Clark, Lulu, www.lulu.com/tomilaineclark

Clark is now a student in San Francisco, and she has been writing since she was five years old, and besides *When I Come Home*, she has written poetry collections and several short stories and is presently working on another memoir. She also has a novella she has been writing for five years.

She chose to self-publish because she wanted more control over the production of her book in the hopes that it would gain the attention of other publishers “on her own terms.” Clark did work with a professional designer for the cover and formatting of the book.

Marketing efforts have cost Clark around \$200. “That includes the cost of the ISBN, several hundred post-

Offering Inspiration for a Fulfilled Life

As an associate minister and teacher at Bethel Baptist Institutional Church in Jacksonville, Fla., Christopher Williams, Sr., uses his experiences to inspire others to lead a fulfilled existence. He is also a bus routing assistant for First Student, Inc.

“With my schedule as busy as it is, I have learned to discipline myself to make time to write something ev-



Self-Published Artists' Network Newsletter

*SPANNing The Gap In The Publishing Industry
By Uniting Self-Published Artists*

*By Supporting Each Other We Help Ourselves
And Promote A Publishing Revolution*

You are invited to access a collection of self-published artists and their works via the SPANN through email. At present, this service is **free** to self-published artists and other subscribers. It is our endeavor to promote the self-published artist and her/his works. If you are a self-published artist, or know someone who is, please feel free to pass along this notice to other interested parties. The newsletter will include some of the following:

- ◆ A list of artists and their works
- ◆ Interviews with self-published artists
- ◆ Comments and suggestions from other artists
- ◆ More

We already have subscribers from across the globe. If you would like to subscribe to this revolutionary newsletter, please send an email to: ladyfogg@twcny.rr.com. Please indicate whether you wish to subscribe as a fan, an artist, or an advertiser.

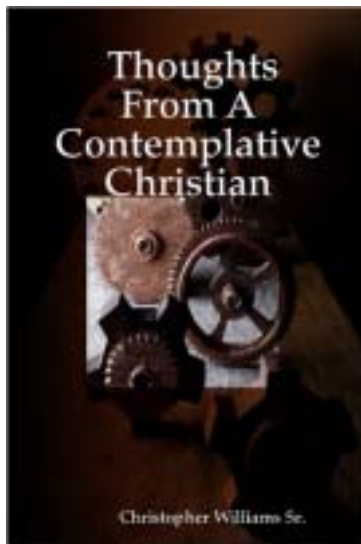
ery day,” Williams tells *SelfPublisher News*. “Also, when I have down time at work, I write and do research to get ideas for new writing endeavors.”

He has been writing for about five years and started writing at his first job in Jacksonville. “I had an e-mail group that I was sending inspirational devotional messages to, but then I stopped the e-mails for a while,” Williams says. “During that time, I was writing short stories based on Bible passages, poems, and opinion articles, none of which I submitted to anyone. It was just a time to develop my skills and do my best to perfect them. Then at the beginning of 2005, I started writing the e-mails again, and a lot of people joined the group. That’s when God let me know it was time to go to the next level and write books,” he says.

His first book, *Thoughts from a Contemplative Christian*, is a series of inspirational “lessons” from various passages in the Bible. “I wanted to show God’s people how to look at life from a spiritual perspective, even when we struggle, because the true reality of life is that we will have ups and downs,” Williams says. “We will struggle with trying to better ourselves to become all that God has destined us to be, but sometimes we have some attitudes and views of ourselves and of situations that we are in, which cause us to achieve less than the best. I desire for all to be excellent and successful in everything they do. So this book will challenge, inspire, motivate, and encourage anyone who picks it up and reads it,” he assures *SelfPublisher News*.

Williams is at work on a second book to be released in 2006 — *Touching Heaven: Spiritual Principles for Supernatural Prayer*. He is also debating whether to expand on the first book. “It’s highly likely that I will,” he says.

“I’ve always lived by the phrase my mother and father would tell me, ‘If you want something done right, then do it yourself,’” Williams gives as his reason for self-publishing. “Mind you, everyone cannot take up self-publishing. It is a task and a half in itself. You have to do all the legwork to make it visible, and you have to come out of pocket for a lot of things. But I just felt that would be the best thing for me to do, so I would always have my hand in everything.” He wanted the challenge,



so he could search deep within himself to see what he could accomplish.

“Self-publishing is a wonderful experience,” Williams says. “You just have to be persistent and not allow negative responses to deter you from reaching your goals.”

His mother is a proofreader, so he sent the manuscript to her. “I’m a very creative person, a fast learner, and I believe that I can do everything that I put my mind to, so I designed the cover and manuscript on my own,” Williams says. “I am currently in the process of marketing the book. I figured I’d start small at my church and work my way outward into the nation, and possibly the world.”

Williams has been working hard to get the word out about his book, by writing press releases, postcards, and flyers. “I am very grateful though because I have had people offer their assistance just out of their love for God and others, not even looking for monetary return,” Williams says. “That is a wonderful feeling.”

So far Williams has spent approximately \$400–\$500 on marketing. “I had to pay for my global distribution ISBN ... and [printing] the promo I designed on card stock.” He has also purchased several copies to send out for reviews.

Williams is not worried about what agents think of his book. “I don’t get concerned about things like that because I know that God is in control of this endeavor,” he tells *SelfPublisher News*. “I have had a few calls from some small-scale bookstores in Los Angeles, and they are looking at my site and the preview to determine whether they want to have me down for a book signing or not.”

“I’m trying to avoid as many middle men as I can, so that I can deal directly with those whom I need to do business with to get the book out,” he says. “I believe that if they can see and hear me, the one who wrote the book, and they see my character and integrity, that will touch their hearts and we can develop strong connections for future endeavors.”

His best marketing idea was designing the flyer for his first book and introducing his next book. “I gave some to my bookstore at church, and they put one in the bag of each purchase to promote the book,” he says.

“My pastor told me to never quit writing because that was how I would develop my gift,” Williams tells *SelfPublisher News*. “I took his advice, and now I can’t stop writing ... I also remember to keep my motives pure. I write for others, not for monetary gain or accolades. There are people who are hurting, misdirected, and lost, and they are looking for a word that will encourage them to get up and move on. That’s my focus, and it increases my determination to write.”

“My writing can be a little abstract and out in left field sometimes,” Williams says in closing. “I tend not to look at things the way everyone else sees them. I don’t like fitting in or accepting the norm. So if one hundred people are looking at a tree, and 99 people are looking at the tree in almost the same way, with a few differences of course, I will be the one who tries to find an original, innovative, and fresh way to look at the tree.”

Thoughts from a Contemplative Christian © 2005, ISBN 1411639367, Christian/ Motivational, Christopher Williams, Sr., Lulu, www.lulu.com/contemplative

His Daughter Wanted a Bigger House

In 1995, Biff Mitchell buckled down and actually finished a novel. “My daughter, [who was] five when I started, was a big driving force in keeping me focused on finishing the book,” he says. “In the evenings ... she would tell me to ‘go work on your book so we can buy that big house.’”



Mitchell lives in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, where he works as a marketing and sales director for a software development company. He gets up at 6:00 am to run or swim, and then writes as quickly as he can for an hour or two. “In the evening, I ‘lightly’ revise what I wrote in the morning and write some more,” he tells *SelfPublisher News*. “Every second weekend I spend a few hours writing.”

“I had the grades one and two spellers memorized before I started kindergarten,” Mitchell says. “I wrote short stories and poetry in college (where I got an honors degree in English literature). I wrote for magazines, newspapers, the government, radio, and private companies for most of my professional life.”

Mitchell has written ten books.

“One of my novels, *The War Bug*, was especially difficult,” Mitchell tells *SelfPublisher News*. “After a year and a half and 100 pages into it, I couldn’t go any further. I had too many lead characters, too many main and sub-plots and not enough feeling for where I was taking the story. I had to scrap the whole thing and start

over. I managed to salvage some of the plot, but I dropped nearly half the characters. I also had to drop one of my favorite scenes. That hurt.”

His fiction books are mostly futuristic satires in which he attempts to show the absurdity of the IT industry and the long-term dangers inherent in current technologies. His short fiction is mostly satirical or humorous. “I use short fiction to work out the themes and style for my novels. Plus, I like to have one or two short pieces on the go all the time,” Mitchell says. “It gives me something to work on for a day or to as a break from the longer work.”

Mitchell says, “My Poetry has been known to lower the intelligence of people foolish enough to read it.”

eMarketing Tools for Writers is his first nonfiction book. It explains how to use a few of the most popular and inexpensive or free Internet technologies to promote books. It relies heavily on links to resources to allow writers to quickly identify the tools that a writer might want to use and then research them further.

Mitchell says that before he started marketing his books properly, his sales were limited to a few copies. “Since I’ve wised up about the marketing, sales have increased considerably. I have some marketing campaigns planned for the fall 2005 that I expect will increase sales to the extent that I may even be able to work on my writing fulltime,” Mitchell says.

Mitchell chose the self-publishing route because he was told by a leading Canadian publisher that the time lapse between acceptance of a novel by the publisher to receipt of the first royalty check could range from two to three years, sometimes longer. “From my own experience, the waiting period from submitting a manuscript to the publisher, and the publisher even acknowledging receipt of the manuscript can be from six months to a year, or more,” Mitchell says. “This is also becoming true of many ebook publishers who, traditionally, have had turn-around times of a few weeks.”

Mitchell has a traditional publisher now, but he still self-publishes some of his work just for the quick turn-around and the added control it gives him over his work.

Before entering marketing and sales, Mitchell was a Level 4 Quality Specialist and editor. “This doesn’t mean that I recommend people edit their own work, but it allows me to prepare a somewhat polished script before I pass it around to friends for their comments,” Mitchell tells *SelfPublisher News*. “I have a graphic artist friend who has designed two covers for me. The rest I did myself. As for marketing, I do that on my own, following the advise (of course) of my own book on marketing. Almost all my marketing is done online.”

“The one thing I would advise in terms of physical marketing material (as opposed to Internet-based market-



ing) for any writer on a shoestring budget is to invest in a well-designed business card featuring the cover art for whatever book is currently being pushed,” Mitchell suggests. “Don’t be stingy with the cards. Leave them everywhere (bookstores, bulletin boards, libraries, reading groups, wherever you give

presentations, et al.). Make sure the card includes your website URL.”

Mitchell has spent about \$2,000 promoting his books, which includes bookmarks, business cards, paid press releases, website hosting, domain names, and special promotional activities, such as using eBay to promote a work-in-progress and entering a triathlon to do research for a book. “I also took [the] opportunity [of the triathlon] to turn the research into promotion for two of my books,” he says.

To promote the book he is currently writing, Mitchell posted an auction at eBay: the right to be a murdered character in the book. “I did some online media releases and sent emails around to forums and other sites,” Mitchell says. “I also emailed the release to local and national media. This resulted in interviews on radio stations across the continent and a full-page article in a local newspaper. Unfortunately, the book won’t be out for nearly a year, so it won’t benefit from most of the coverage. But it did boost traffic at my website, where I have information about my other books.”

Mitchell offers this tip about using eBay: read the instructions carefully and understand their rules. “My first eBay posting was cancelled by them because: (1) I included a link to my website (as opposed to a link specifically to the page where the murdered character auction was featured); (2) I mentioned other books I had for sale (they won’t allow you to push anything but the item you’re selling in the auction); and (3) I included a list of my publishers (which was deemed to be a list of keywords intended to manipulate the eBay search mechanism).”

One agent sent Mitchell a three-page response praising the book he had sent him and criticizing the publishing industry’s lack of interest in truly good work. “Several of the agents who got back to me tried to sell me editing services, or requested reading fees,” Mitchell says. “I would suggest that anyone looking for an agent

should check at Predators & Editors (www.anotherealm.com/predators/pubagent.htm) before signing on with anyone.

Mitchell has a novel published by independent publisher Double Dragon, two novellas published through Echelon Press, and two novels published by Jacobyte Books in Australia.

Mitchell was advised to write like crazy in the first drafts without stopping to edit. “Editing too early slows everything down and distracts you from the ‘big picture.’ You lose sight of where the story is going. It’s OK to do some minor editing and make notes for further revision later while you’re reading over your work-to-date so that you don’t end up going off in the wrong direction,” he tells *SelfPublisher News*. “But, the serious line-by-line editing and structural revisions should only be done when the first draft is finished.”

“Stop talking about writing that novel and start writing it,” he adds.

Wow, the Executive Editor of SelfPublisher News gave the same advice to the Managing Editor about her book.

Mitchell says in closing that “people need to know that my writing is weird.”

eMarketing Tools for Writers © 2005, ISBN 0973279958, Nonfiction: Marketing, Fictionwise; *Heavy Load (a Laundromance)* © 2004, ISBN 0973279915, Fiction, Fictionwise; *Surfing in Catal Hyuk* © 2005, ISBN 0973279923 (eBook) 0973279931 (print), Short Story Collection, Biff Mitchell, eBook Ad; www.biffmitchell.com

An Artisan Who Also Writes Through Time

Baylus C. Brooks is a stained glass artisan living in Live Oak, Fla., where she also works in sales.

Her latest book *Heirloom: A Time Travel Adventure!* is about a 19th century naval officer who is shipwrecked in Florida and is led to St. Augustine by local natives and then to Itchetucknee Springs to meet a mysterious man who is centuries old. The mystery man sends the officer, Stephen Hathorne, on a journey through time to secure his own existence, starting off a series of events that leads them all, including Stephen’s newfound love, Robyn, through dangers from many different centuries in an effort to save history and consequently, the world.

Brooks decided to self-publish because she did not like the idea that her “story would be cut up by an editor who didn’t know [her] or care about [her] work,” she tells *SelfPublisher News*.

She hired an editor and has spent \$400 to promote her book and finds advertising herself to be the most frustrating thing about self-publishing.

As with most if not all self-published authors interviewed by *SelfPublisher News*, Brooks agrees that the best marketing dollars are spent on press releases and preferably through PR Web. This is how *SelfPublisher News* finds most of the authors it highlights.

“Selling in local gift shops” was a poor marketing plan, according to Brooks.

“Someone once told me to ‘flesh it out,’ to add transition to the facts [when writing],” Brooks says. “That helped me immensely in finding the key to telling a story and making it interesting.”

Brooks says, “One person told me that they felt I talked too much about the characters ... too much detail.”

Brooks continues, “I said, ‘huh?’ Detail is what it’s all about. You can’t tell a story without the greatest detail to bring the reader into your world. They must not only read about it, but feel like they’re in it.”

“I think that people misconstrue the fantastic for the historical,” Brook says of her books. “I endeavor to be extremely accurate historically. To me, that makes the story more believable ... more alive.”

“I write the stories that I want to read,” Brooks tells *SelfPublisher News*. “My mind is so full of action and adventure! I want to explore the world and what it offers. When money limits my exploration, I make it up!”

Heirloom: A Time Travel Adventure! © 2005, ISBN 1411632664, Historical Science Fiction, Young Adult, Baylus C. Brooks, Lulu, www.delabrooke.com/heirloom.html



SelfPublisher News

Executive Editor: Milton Stern

Managing Editor: Sharon Grove Gillespie

To contact SelfPublisher News, email editor@selfpublishernews.com

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editor@selfpublishernews.com • www.selfpublishernews.com • 202-247-1149

In the News

Bards & Sages 2005 International Contest Winners

Bards and Sages (www.bardsandsages.com) announced the winners of its 2005 International Writing Contest, Aug. 15, 2005. The contest, which focused on the fantasy, horror, and science fiction genres, received over 200 entries from writers in 11 countries. A portion of the proceeds from reading fees was donated to the International Red Cross. And the awards go to:

Flash Fiction

First Prize: Ashley Tamerline, Philadelphia, Penn., *The New Guy*

Second Prize: Swapna Kishore, Bangalore, India, *The Face She Remembers*

Third Prize: Anthony Cooke, San Francisco, Calif., *Heroes*

Poetry

First Prize: Deanna Marie Emmerson, Ontario, Canada, *Reflexions*

Second Prize: Lynn Veach Sadler, Sanford, N.C., *Again—'Les Fleurs du Mal'*

Third Prize: Bob Quinn, Crimora, Va., *Pirates*

Short Story

First Prize: David Stephenson, Annapolis, Md., *The Glass Eye*

Second Prize: David Lawrence, Ontario, Calif., *Through the Data Storm*

Third Prize: Jerry Kline, Pittsburgh, Penn., *In the Beginning*

Novella

First Prize: Elena Clark, Charlotte, N.C., *Winter of the Gods*

Second Prize: Meghann McVey, Laplace, La., *Dragon's Ire, Phoenix Flame*

Third Prize: Ross Raffin, Los Altos Hills, Calif., *Netherlands Roulette*

Honorable Mentions

Melissa Herman, Colorado Springs, Colo., *The Cat Lady*

Jenue Brosinski, Hamburg, Germany, *The Lucky Card*

Mark Torrender, Watford, UK, *Them*

The winning entries will be included in the upcoming anthology, *Bardic Tales and Sage Advice*, due out in February 2006. For more information: www.bardsandsages.com/bardictales

Magazine Startup Kit

Magazine Launch.com announced the availability of "The 2005 First Steps Magazine Startup Kit." The kits are targeted to small- and mid-sized, organizational, and trade magazine publishers. Each startup kit contains financial planning worksheets, industry reference startup books, design tips, layout guides, an advertising and media kit, and planning tools as well as a full set of initial live phone consultations by participating industry professionals for startup recommendations specific to the magazine publisher's content. Startup Kit materials identify critical planning and publishing success factors.

Participants feel it is vitally important for magazine publishers launching new titles to face tough questions before launching their publication in order to avoid making costly mistakes that cause so many new publications to fail before their first launch anniversary. In using the Startup Kit, magazine publishers have an opportunity to gain valuable information from professionals with varied experience in both print and online areas of magazine publishing strategy. Due to the valuable consulting resources included, Startup Kit sales will be initially limited to 10 units per month. For more information: www.magazinelaunch.com

Florida Writing, Publishing Conference

Florida Writers Association is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization that supports and educates Florida's emerging writers of all age groups and income levels and promotes adult literacy. The three-day annual conference, which is open to members and non-members, welcomes writers in all genres from all across the nation to gain access to experts in the publishing industry. In 2004, the conference had more than 200 registered attendees. Early registration indicates that the 2005 Conference will surpass that number and will offer the attendees more to choose from, including: 35+ workshops and panel discussions; agent, publisher, editor interviews; manuscript critique; Royal Palm Lit-

erary Contest; gala banquet; gala reception and luncheons. For more information and registration: www.floridawriters.net

Audio Book Production for the Selfpublishers

Spoken Books Publishing introduced the first audio book recording, CD production, packaging, publishing and distribution service for self-published authors. Once a book is accepted for audio publishing, an editor will be assigned to personally work with the author. The book will be edited for "speakability," resulting in an audio script read by a voice professional chosen by the author and recorded in their own digital audio recording studios. "We record and manufacture all of our audio books in house, nothing is outsourced," said Tom Gregory, President. "We will distribute our audio books through all the significant channels to include the brick and mortar bookstores, the online book sellers and will have the audio available as a download. We anticipate paying significant monthly royalties to all of our authors."

Gregory further elaborates, "Spoken Books Publishing is now taking submissions for inclusion in our audio book publishing program and every book that is accepted will enjoy our attention to the smallest detail; from the recording and editing process, to the mastering, manufacturing and packaging to the front and back cover design. Self published authors should visit www.spokenbookspublishing.com for a complete explanation of how the program works including audio samples, pricing and submission guidelines." Spoken Books Publishing is a division of Infinity Publishing which in 1997 pioneered the publishing of books utilizing print-on-demand; and to this day is the only publisher in the United States that designs, formats, prints, binds, inventories and ships all of its books under one roof. For more information: www.spokenbookspublishing.com

Top POD Publishers Reveal the Dark Side

Self Publishing Basics Radio released a series of interviews with the nation's top POD publishers. The seven part series included interviews with the CEOs of iUniverse and Author House, the top two POD publishers in the country, as well as the former vice president for finance at the third largest POD publisher, XLibris. The interviews painted a revealing picture of an indus-

try slanted more toward selling books and services to authors versus selling books to the public.

While all of the nation's top POD publishers have sizeable sales staff selling services to authors, they have few or no salespeople devoted to selling the books they publish to distributors or to the public. Publishing Basics Radio found that the average number of books sold per POD title is less than 200, and half of those were sold to the authors for their own use.

The series also revealed that due to the economics of POD publishing and industry conventions, most POD published books never make it into major bookstores.

"The POD publishing industry has managed to convince potential self-publishers that this new form of publishing is somehow different than the much maligned vanity publishing [of the past]. But, what we found was clearly vanity publishing in a different set of clothes," said Ron Pramschufer, host of Publishing Basics Radio.

Rounding out the series were interviews with attorney Mark Levine, who talked about how to read the small print in POD publishing contracts, and Jan Nathan, Executive Director of the Publishers Marketing Association, who gave a conventional publisher's view of the POD industry.

WBJB Publishing Basics Radio is podcast weekly at www.WBJBRadio.com. Listeners can subscribe to the show at either the WBJB website or through iTunes. The show is also available to be Nanocast on other publishing Websites.

Ron Pramschufer, who is a 30-year veteran of the publishing industry, hosts Publishing Basics Radio. They describe his straight talking, no nonsense interviewing style as somewhere between Colombo and Bill O'Reilly.

To listen to this series go to <http://wbjbradio.com/series/pod.php>.

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Book Reviews

An Escape to the Future of Death and Life

Phoenix Tales — Stories of Death and Life © 2004, ISBN 1411620356, Gregory Bernard Banks, Anthology of Fantasy/Science Fiction Stories, www.PhoenixTalesBooks.com

by Milton Stern

First, I must tell you that I am not a fan of science fiction or fantasy. However, I do like the original *Star Trek*, but only because Lucille Ball, as President of Desilu Studios, gave Gene Roddenberry the green light to produce the series. Do you know they never once said “Beam me up Scotty” on the show? Then again, James Cagney never said, “You dirty rat.”

But, I digress.

When I decided I would read *Phoenix Tales — Stories of Death and Life* by Gregory Bernard Banks, I thought for a moment that I might not be the right person to review this book, but once I started reading his anthology, I could not stop.

The book jacket says, “These dark, thought-provoking, and sometimes humorous tales masterfully blend elements of science fiction, fantasy, and horror to delve into humanity’s never-ending struggle to master Death and achieve eternal Life.”

Banks’s short story, “Avatar,” which is included in the anthology is an L. Ron Hubbard’s Writers of the Future Semi-finalist.

Each story is written in just the right length to allow one to escape during a lunch break or while riding on a bus or train.

While I liked all the stories in the anthology, the ones I enjoyed the most were:

- “Escape Velocity,” which is about a man who lives in a nursing facility and thanks to modern science is not allowed to die. His only hope is escape, so he can finally die in peace.
- “The Sacrifice,” which is about a man who must “suck the youth out of people” to stay alive.
- “Touched,” which is about a genetically engineered little boy who is treated like a freak, but who with his mother finally finds happiness.

- “Living with Mrs. Klase,” which is about a woman with dementia who thinks she is Mrs. Clause and every day is Christmas.

However, my absolute favorite story was “A Cup of Time,” which tells the story of a man who is robbed of his youth and must travel with a Death Agent to recapture his youth before his time expires. This story has a great twist in the end that I will not reveal.

The stories are vivid, and the reader will stay engaged and never be bored. All of the characters come alive through Banks’s descriptions and dialogue. One will notice that all the women in the book are tall dark and handsome, and so are most of the men. Banks, through his writing, assures us that there are few if any unattractive people in the future. My guess is this is his way of giving us hope in a future where one is never allowed to die, children are programmed to know the answer to everything, and old men are allowed to steal your remaining years with a magic powder or spell.

There is only one criticism of the book. Some of the mathematics does not add up. For instance, in “Touched” the man whose genetic material was used to create the little boy died in 2052, yet later in the story, it is stated that the action takes place in 2024. For people like me, who like to add and subtract in order to figure out the ages of characters and the time span of events, this was frustrating.

If you liked the last 15 minutes of the final episode of *Six Feet Under*, you will love this anthology.

SelfPublisher News gives *Phoenix Tales — Stories of Death and Life* by Gregory Bernard Banks four pens.



Fix the mathematical errors, and it gets five pens.



Three Strikes—We're Out!

The Christmas Strike © 2004, ISBN 1411611632, Stephan Zimmerman, Political thriller, www.lulu.com/sonja

by Sharon Grove Gillespie

I'll be sending Stephan Zimmerman a bill for my services. Not for this review, but for my promotional efforts for *The Christmas Strike*, his political thriller about the United States having a very, VERY bad month of December. How bad? Well, one of the country's ambassadors is assassinated in a small African nation and hostages are taken by a rebel strike force; a presidential wannabe gets the bright idea to spur a nationwide labor strike to teach the current administration a lesson; a terrorist launches a strike against the United States using a weapon of such catastrophic import that planes crash, tractor trailers jackknife on the highways, and a 24-hour Wal-Mart closes because its registers won't work. The horror! The horror!

My promotional idea for this fun-filled opus primarily consisted of reading and holding the book in my hands or on my lap during my hours-long commute each weekday to and from my "other" job. Yes, I said *hours-long* — each way. I watched the faces of the people as they looked at the stark title, saw the picture of the U.S. Capitol, and craned their necks a bit to see if they could read some of the back cover. My conclusion? This book has curb appeal.

The title and the Spartan look of the front cover piques the imagination — and the fears that many of us still have about how secure our homeland really is. We have watched the wrath of nature, failing infrastructure, and determined terrorists take their toll on our lives, our property, our psyches. And, Zimmerman's book won't help you feel much better about it all. But it is a helluva good read to take with you as you travel farther on the road to paranoia.

There's so much going on in this book, that I could write a book to review it, but I won't, so we'll have to hit the highlights instead.

Early on, one of the main characters says to another: "Look, it isn't the end of the world!" How ironic that statement will be once *The Christmas Strike* kicks into gear and goes headlong into, well, I don't want to give away THE ENDing.

In *Strike*, the book begins with a rebel strike force engineering the assassination of the U.S. ambassador to Sao Tome and Principe, and the taking of hostages.

(In case you didn't know, there's gold in western Africa, not the kind you mine, but the kind you drill for. Didn't know that, did you? According to *The World*

Factbook of 2005, the islands of Sao Tome and Principe in the Gulf of Guinea are politically volatile, but potentially powerful, given the recent discovery of oil there. According to the *Factbook*, prepared by the CIA, that discovery is "likely to have a significant impact ...")

In *Strike*, as U.S. leaders come to grips with the powder keg that is now in West

Africa, a young Middle Eastern woman terrorist, seeking to strike against the United States in revenge against and punishment for the nation's actions in the Middle East, arranges for the purchase and transport of a vircator EMB to the heart of the United States.

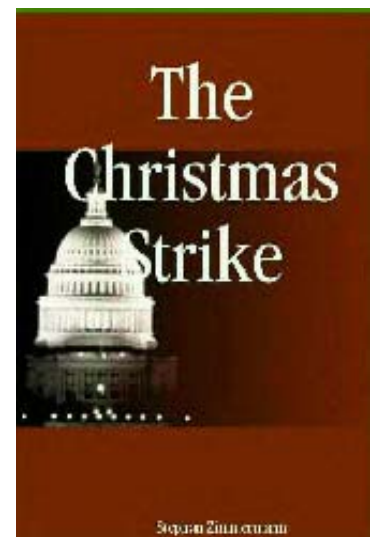
(In case you didn't know, there is a theory based on some accepted scientific facts that a weapon of terrible destruction could be made using a vircator — a virtual cathode oscillator. Using electromagnetic pulses, this non-nuclear, electromagnetic bomb (EMB) could be fashioned to go undetected, released in a central location, and wreak havoc, not by killing individuals or damaging buildings, but by disrupting the electronic infrastructure of a wide region. Computer-dependent operations would cause failures at a massive scale.)

In *Strike*, as U.S. President Sheridan Washburn begins to plan a covert military action to avenge the death of the ambassador and free the hostages, Senator Jack Cortland meets with select labor union leaders to drum up support for his plan — a strike of workers across the nation that could bring the current administration to its knees, put him in the spotlight as a sort of savior, and pave the way for his own run for the Oval Office. (In case you didn't know, some politicians are unethical.)

There you have it. Three strikes, and we in the United States are pretty much out of luck of surviving intact through the events that occur in *Strike*.

Zimmerman's book has been creating a lot of buzz recently, partly because of the subject matter and partly because of the promotional savvy of the author. He has released a torrent of press releases about his book, relating it to ongoing current events. He notes in one PR mailing that a news service recently reported that two major U.S.-based oil conglomerates had inked deals for exploration and development rights in West Africa.

In research for my review, I found a reference to Zimmerman's book on an online forum section of the



website of Arianna Huffington, political pundit and sometimes gadfly of current leaders. The PR notice reads that *Strike* “bears an uncanny resemblance to the official CIA 2020 report, released just two days ago.” The online name of the person who submitted the PR notice is listed as “sonja04.” Hmmmmmm, Sonja, say wasn’t that the lead character’s name in Zimmerman’s other political novel?

For the record, there is indeed a CIA 2020 report that was released in 2005, and it ain’t exactly light reading. Brave souls can find an online copy at www.cia.gov/nic/NIC_globaltrend2020.html. The report is called “Mapping the Global Future: Report of the National Intelligence Council’s [NIC] 2020 Project” — an unclassified report prepared by the NIC, which is affiliated with the CIA. Let me sum it up, the inhabitants of this planet are getting older, living longer, expanding their territories of operations, bumping into other nations’ purviews, and the United States might be losing its “Head Honcho” baseball cap somewhere down the line.

Zimmerman’s *Strike* is a work of fiction that plays off of the facts that documents such as the NIC report disseminate. I have to give the author credit for taking the initiative to tie his work of fiction into such reality, or was it vice versa? I’d probably do the same thing, especially if I had a book like *Strike*, which is well-written and disturbing in its premise that the United States is in deep trouble, both from internal frailties and external forces that are hell-bent on knocking that “Head Honcho” cap off sooner rather than later.

WHAT WORKED: Most successful writers and teachers of writing tell aspiring authors to “write about what you know.” Mr. Z knows a lot. His career and life experiences must have given him great fodder for his fiction. He was a refugee from Communist East Germany, which is the setting for his previous novel *The Sonja Factor*. He went to school in Berkeley, California, which is one of the settings for the *Strike*. He worked as a political columnist — one of *Strike*’s key characters is a political writer. He has been involved with international business and economics both professionally and academically. This familiarity with locales, professions, economies, etc., gives the book a solid feel to it.

He throws into the mix just enough real-world headline inferences to make his conjectures sound credible, and frightening. The book does not come across as sensational or salacious, even though there are some sexually-laced scenes — a wife is raped by her husband — and language, e.g., “a bare arm with a clenched fist crowning it looked like a swollen phallus.” (EEEEWWWWW! Now, how am I supposed to go to my next Springsteen concert and watch everybody punch their fists in the air during “Born in the USA” and not feel like I need a shower afterward?)

For the most, part the dialogue is plausible and well-written, except for the terrorists. But, more about that below. Zimmerman is good at setting the scenes and describing his characters’ actions and hidden motives.

WHAT DIDN’T: The story’s time frame is supposed to be after the George W. Bush presidency. However, there are some discrepancies here with references to events and time frames. For example, on Page 6, one character says: “The objective is to neutralize as much of the economic power of the United States as possible, in one decisive blow, far superceding the effect of the September Eleventh events of *several years ago*.” But, on Page 16, the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and the Pentagon are referred to as “*quite a few years in the past*.” Which is it? “Several” or “quite a few”?

There is a lot going on in this book, so much so that you find yourself looking back to make sure you know who is talking, where they are, etc. I know a lot of “he said” and “she yelled” can clutter your dialogues, but once in a while a little reminder of who’s talking couldn’t hurt.

SelfPublisher News Executive Editor butts in: I attended a conference where a famous author said, “Always say, he said, she said, so the reader does not have to work.”

Speaking of dialogue — sorry, I couldn’t resist the pun! The language, behavior and dialogue of the terrorists borders on stereotype, almost caricature at times.

IN THE END: In addition to my marketing and promotional services, I guess I need to also bill the author for my proofing and editorial work as well. On page 32, it should be Courtland’s; Page 378, “At least I got see my family ...”— better stick a “to” in there; and, please, please, it’s not “O.k.” and it’s not “O.K.”— it’s OK. There are some more I could point out, but that’s OK for now. Mr. Z, get thee to a proofreader before you send your final version to the movie producer(s) who likely will be expressing interest in the rights to your book!

Despite some time incongruence, a bit of triteness here and there, and a tad too much detail at times, this is an attention-grabbing book, dabbed with enough fact to make many of the situations believable; and filled with enough frightening scenarios to make the reader wonder: “What if...?”

SelfPublisher News gives Christmas Strike by Stephan Zimmerman 3.5 pens.

