

NINK

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The Immortality of Words

BY CAROLE BELLACERA

I'll never forget what someone said to me years ago upon my announcement that I'd sold my first novel. "Now, you'll be immortal." At the time, I didn't quite understand what he meant. Not until this very moment.

They call it Spout Springs, and as I sit here with my AlphaSmart, it occurs to me that this is one of the most peaceful places I've ever seen. It's a place that evokes a sense of the past. With every breeze through the gently swaying trees, every soft splash from the lily-covered pond, the old homestead seems alive with unseen presences. And I wonder if Janice Holt Giles herself is with me now as I sit under a shade tree overlooking the pond, and stare out at her old home on Giles Ridge in central Kentucky.

Janice Holt Giles was a novelist who moved to the Blue Grass State from Chicago when her husband—a Giles Ridge native—decided he wanted to come back home. Even in the '40s, it was a tough adjustment for the city-bred woman to move to a place without running water, electricity, or an inside toilet. But adjust she

did, even learning to love it. In fact, she wrote a book about it, *40 Acres and No Mule*, that told of her first years on "the ridge."

It's entertaining reading, full of humorous anecdotes about the "quareness" of the ridge folk and their disdain for the "furriner." But make no mistake about it. Janice Holt Giles came to love and respect the people of rural Kentucky, and she leaves no doubt in your mind that she considered herself one of them until her death in the late '70s.

But that didn't happen right away. In *40 Acres and No Mule*, she tells of how a neighbor cut her down to size by asking her why her husband was doing "women's work" when she saw him tending the garden. Determined not to shame her young husband, Janice got out in the garden one day while Henry was working in the fields, and she went to weeding like there was no tomorrow, clearing out a row of crab grass where the corn had been planted. Then she spied some wild morning glory vines in the cucumber patch and mercilessly cut them down. Can you guess what happens next? Well, I'll let Janice Holt Giles tell you in her own words:

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President's Voice

The Power of Networking

Ten years ago, writers were just starting to communicate with each other online. Before that, most of us wrote in virtual isolation, dependent on paper publications and local peers for any industry news or networking. This made it relatively easy for publishers and even our own agents to institute practices that weren't necessarily in writers' best interests, since we had no easy way to get the word out quickly or organize any sort of resistance.

Thinking along these lines, I dug into my files and managed to find the July 1996 issue of *NINK*, which included my very first "Online" column (anyone remember those?) The reason for that column was to bring all those Novelists, Inc. members who weren't yet online into the loop, so to speak. NINCLINK was brand new. To quote from that column: "As of June 1, 42 Ninc members are subscribed . . . and more of us are getting email addresses all the time." With so few of our members online, "Letters to the Editor" was our main channel of communication, and it took up three and a half pages of that newsletter.

We've come a long way since then, with more than two-thirds of our members subscribed to NINCLINK, and probably 90%-plus online in some capacity. And it's a good thing, since it's more important than ever for writers to network in a timely manner, to confront the challenges the industry keeps throwing at us. When agents raised their commissions from 10 to 15%, there was no organized outcry, since writers weren't regularly communicating with each other at the time. But when a few agencies more recently began inserting clauses giving themselves rights to commissions for the length of copyrights, the word spread like wildfire, and writer protests have so far kept that nasty bit of verbiage from becoming any sort of industry standard.

In recent months, a few other disturbing trends in publishing have come to my attention, and I'm hoping we can pool our resources, online and elsewhere, to keep any of them from becoming disastrous for working novelists. One of those is the large-scale entry into the e-publishing market of that 800-pound gorilla of the industry, Harlequin Enterprises. This alone is not bad news, of course. Additional markets and formats for our books are good things. What is alarming is that Harlequin pays only 6% royalties on books sold in electronic format, which is a fraction of the current industry standard. We all need to look to our contracts and scream loudly (through our agents, when appropriate) if we see any signs of a downward creep in electronic royalty rates elsewhere, and writers' organizations need to band together to protest this practice by Harlequin before the rot can spread.

Two other trends that concern me are payment-on-publication and joint-accounting clauses in writers' contracts. Neither of these are new, but they used to be reserved for those authors earning very high advances. Now they are increasingly appearing in contracts with five- and even four-

figure advances. It's time for writers to compare notes and protest (again, through agents when necessary) to keep these from becoming new standards that allow publishers to keep our money for unreasonable lengths of time. Advances have not risen over the years to keep pace with inflation or the cost of living (remember, I do that money survey on romance publishers every year), and in fact in too many cases they are even falling. We need to guard against practices designed to erode or delay our earnings further. It's hard enough to make a living in this business as it is!

Of course, networking isn't all about averting disaster. I'm continually amazed at the obscure research questions that are answered on NINCLINK by our knowledgeable members. The pooling of our brains there is an awesome thing. We share promotion ideas and late-breaking industry news, warn each other about shady agents and publishers, commiserate over lousy

copyedits, and discuss tax strategies. We've also come up with great ideas for improving this organization and the industry as a whole (if they'd only listen to us).

Then there's our annual conference, where we get to do all of this networking face to face, which is even more immediate and secure. Things are shared over a drink in the bar that might be too sensitive to post online. And then there are the enduring friendships made when we gather together. Online registration is open now, so I hope I'll see all of you in San Diego, as well as on the link. As many of you probably do, I dream of a day when storytellers like us are accorded the respect we deserve and can live well on the fruits of our labors. But only by working together can we ever achieve that dream. Subscribe to or become more active on NINCLINK, join us in San Diego, and let's make it happen!

— **Brenda Hiatt Barber** :)

LETTER TO NINK.....

Even in this online age—with Ninclink—we still welcome your letters. Submit to the editor via email or old-fashioned snailmail [see masthead on page 2]. Letters may be edited for length or NINK style.

Try to Remember...

I enjoyed Cindi Myers's September piece on changing genres, thought everybody sounded very wise and knowledgeable. But did I really say that in 1997 women's fiction was not a defined genre? If so, and I'll take Cindi's word for it, I must have been in an especially vainglorious mood. (No, I defined women's fiction in 1997! It all started with *me!*)

Either way, I've been cringing ever since, so please let me revise and say—maybe, possibly, it just could be that women's fiction wasn't quite as sharply defined a genre in 1997 as it is now.

Or then again, maybe it was. It's hard to remember, and I'm old.

Old but not (quite that) arrogant!

Patricia Gaffney

Agent Information Needed

Okay, everybody, the time is here. The invitations to the 2007 San Diego conference will be mailed shortly and if your agent isn't listed on the Ninc website's Agent Listing guide, they won't get an invitation.

Please, please, please ... take a few minutes out of your busy day and check to see if your agent is in our listing. Also, if you have changed agents and they are already listed but you're not on their client list, you can fix that by updating your Membership Profile. That link is on the Ninc Members Only main page under the Member Services heading.

If your agent is *not* listed in our Agent Listing guide:

This one time only, please e-mail Ginger Chambers (gingerchambers@sbcglobal.net) with the following information: Agent's name, Agency's name, address with zip code, phone number, Agent's current email address, and Agent/Agency website URL (if he/she/agency has one). Don't forget to include your name as it appears on the Ninc roster. ▲

Immortality of Words

Continued from page 1



When Henry came in for dinner, his face wore a peculiar expression. I couldn't tell whether something was hurting him, or whether he had swallowed his tobacco. He looked kind of sick.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Nothing," he said.

I dished up dinner and he washed and sat down at the table.

"How did your morning go?" I asked. "Lot of weeds in the tobacco?"

"Considerable," he replied.

I have grown more or less accustomed to the taciturnity of a ridge man, learning by experience that his silence is not always golden. When he has nothing to say, he says nothing. But occasionally when he has nothing to say he is pondering the best way to say a lot. With Henry I am sometimes quiet, waiting for whatever he is pondering. Sometimes I chatter on, knowing he will interrupt me when he is ready. This was a time when I chattered. "I don't think I'm going to mind taking care of the garden at all," I said. "It doesn't seem to be much of a chore. I didn't have a bit of trouble this morning."

Henry grunted.

"But a lot of that stuff we planted hasn't come up yet, Henry. The corn, and the squash and cucumbers, and I didn't see any carrots. And I thought you set out some peppers. But," I went on happily, "maybe they'll be up in another day or so."

"Not very likely," Henry said, over a mouthful of potatoes.

"Oh? Weren't the seeds any good?"

"Seeds were O.K."

"Well, why won't they come up then?"

"They were up."

There was a long silence while this sank in. I had a premonitory flutter in my stomach. "They were? Where?"

"Right where they were planted. You've cut them all down."*

That afternoon, Henry erected a sign in the garden that said "Off Limits to Jan." And there it was for all the ridge folk to see. For years later, ridge folk would jokingly ask her if she was still barred from the garden.

She also tells a funny story about a local radio interview she did after her first novel, *The Enduring Hills*,

came out. Her neighbor, Frony, was so impressed, she ran all the way down the hill to Giles's house, apron strings and bonnet tails flying. "I heared you jist as plain, an' hit went jist like you. All them words, an' oncet when you laughed I knowed jist how you wuz lookin'. But Lordy mercy, I wuz so skeered you'd fergit yer piece an' git yerself all balled up I was in a cold sweat time hit was over with."*

But *40 Acres and No Mule* isn't all sweetness and light. Ms. Giles talks about the terrible poverty, the poor education, and the lack of proper health care on the ridge. She tells the story of Sereny, one of the ridge women, who buried eight stillborn children, bringing only two into the world alive. So much hardship. So much tragedy.

I sit here now and think about these people who walked the earth so many years ago. Maybe right here where I'm sitting. I think about how wonderful it is that Janice Holt Giles's words live on—that I can feel her presence in this spot where I'm sitting today.

Think about it. She may have sat right out here in her yard, staring out at the pond just as I'm doing now as she wrote *40 Acres and No Mule*. She wasn't lucky enough to have an Alphie, of course. In fact, it wasn't until her first book was published, and selling well, that she could afford to buy a used typewriter. But the words she wrote live on today, almost as if she is right here with me, telling me her story in her own voice. I know what she was thinking. I know what her days were like. I hear the humor ringing in her voice. I feel the love she has for her husband. What a love it must've been to make her give up the only life she'd ever known to move here with him and start a new one.

I can hear the affection in her voice when she talks about Frony, the sadness when she mentions poor, tragic Sereny, the awe when she describes how Elmer, the well witcher, traipsed across the front yard with a Y-shaped stick, stopping when he felt the earth's downward tug on the branch, signifying the place they should drill for water. And he was rarely wrong.

I am in awe that I can sit here on her property in the spring of 2006, and feel Janice Holt Giles's spirit so clearly. And it's all because of words written in the winter of 1950-51. This is the power of writing. This is the awesomeness of the written word.

And it reiterates what we, as writers, already know. We are blessed.

Our words will live on long past our lifetimes. Later generations will read our stories and our articles,

and if we've done our job well, they will understand exactly how we felt—or how we want them to feel. What a miracle that is! And how lucky we are that we're the ones leaving behind this legacy of words.

It's unlikely that sixty years from now someone will come to my house in Manassas, sit down in my backyard near the lily pond, and read my autobiography about the years I spent here in the suburbs. If that does happen, I'm very much afraid it will be rather boring reading. My days aren't exactly full of excitement. That's why I write fiction. I won't be writing about a borrowed mule that takes off running down the dirt road, "skeered by a piece of paper." Or a sheriff, frustrated in his attempts to hunt down suspected moonshiners because every time he interviewed locals, trying to nail down their whereabouts, they told him the men in question had "gone to Cincinnati." It took a while before the sheriff figured out that "gone to Cincinnati," meant the location of their still.

No, I won't have any cool stories like that. Somehow, modern day life in the suburbs just doesn't have the same cachet. What am I going to write about? Looking forward to Thursday night's episode of "Survivor?"

Again, that's why I write fiction. So, maybe someday, someone not even born today will sit down with one of my books and read about what life was like in 2006. And because my words have painted a visual picture for that reader, she will feel like she knows my characters. They will come alive for her as they did for me, and will make her feel as if she is living their lives. She will no longer be sitting in Arizona or Rhode Island or where ever she is from. She will be in Hawaii with Amy or in Norway with Leigh or...maybe she'll be

right here in Spout Springs with my character, Lily, in the book I'm working on now—in the world I created with my words.

And that, as we all know, being the writers that we are, is truly awe-inspiring.

** 40 Acres and No Mule, copyright 1967 by Janice Holt Giles*

Bits'n'Pieces

Shout Out for Ninc Star Members

Peggy Webb

Congratulations Peggy!! Ninc member Peggy Webb has been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for her Harlequin Next novel, *Driving Me Crazy*. You go, girl!

Sherry-Ann Jacobs

Sherry Ann received the Romantic Book of the Year Award from the Romance Writers of Australia for *Pride of Lancashire* under the name Anna Jacobs.

INTRODUCING.....

The following authors have applied for membership in Ninc and are now presented by the Membership Committee to the members. If no legitimate objections are lodged with the Membership Committee within 15 days of this NINK issue, these authors shall be accepted as members of Ninc:

New Applicants:

Melissa Benyon (*Lilian Darcy*) Macquarie ACT, Australia
Alyson Velazquez (*Alyson Noel*), Monarch Beach, CA
Janet Wellington, Florence, OR

New Members:

Mary Balogh, Kipling, SK, Canada
Linnea Bernadino (*Linnea Sinclair*), Naples, FL
Laura Drewry, Yellowknife, NT, Canada
Diane Golling (*Diane Farr*),
Citrus Heights CA
Susan Lyons, Vancouver, BC, Canada
Sandra K. Moore, League City TX
Jesse Petersen (*Jenna Petersen*,
Jess Michaels), Bloomington IL
Jessica Trapp, League City TX

Ninc has room to grow...recommend membership to *your* colleagues. Prospective members may apply online at www.ninc.com.

Recruiting Your Publisher

BY BARRY EISLER

These thoughts originally appeared on MJ Rose's Buzz, Balls & Hype blog in August 2005.

It seems reasonably clear to me that a publisher can go a long way to making a book a bestseller if the publisher decides to make it happen. Make the book a sales rep pick; announce a several-hundred thousand copy first print run; talk the book up at BEA and elsewhere; include a letter from the head of the house in the ARC; devote a few hundred thousand dollars to advertising and in-store promotion; send the author on a big tour. The publisher might lose money in the process—I get the feeling that happens fairly often to first-time authors who get the treatment I just described—but the book will hit the *NYT* and other lists.

I say all this to emphasize that your publisher can do much, much more to make your book big than you can. It stands to reason, then, that the primary goal of your self-promotion efforts should be to recruit your publisher—that is, to persuade your publisher's people to promote you the way you want them to promote you.

The question is how.

Start with attitude: if your publisher's people aren't doing all you want them to, it's not because they're stingy or stupid or mean. It's because you haven't yet fulfilled your responsibility to demonstrate to them that it's in their interest to do more. Look, if you

knew a certain stock was going to go up ten percent tomorrow, you'd invest in it today, right? And if there were another stock that you knew would go up 15% tomorrow, you'd invest in that one instead, right?

The point is, everyone wants to invest in something that will give them the best possible return on that investment. If your publisher isn't investing much in you, it's because they don't know yet what a great return you'll offer them. It's your job to demonstrate to them that they'll get that return—that you're that winning stock.

You start by doing all the obvious, relatively affordable things: genre conventions; drop-ins in all the bookstores near where you live; etc. But what's missing from many of these efforts is a systematic focus on keeping the publisher informed. Does your publisher know what you're doing? Do you apprise your publisher of the efforts you make and the success you achieve? If you don't, you're missing an opportunity to demonstrate: (i) your confidence in yourself (investors are always persuaded by the confidence of other investors); (ii) your initiative—that is, your ability and willingness to work hard on your own, which is likely to increase the value of whatever the publisher decides to invest; and (iii) the substantive value of investing in you regardless of where the investment comes from (your efforts are paying off, so it's reasonable to as-

sume the publisher's would, too).

A few examples from my own experience:

For my first book, *Rain Fall*, Putnam sent me to only a few cities for signings. I'd been hoping for more because I have a lot of public speaking experience and was confident I could connect with booksellers and customers. But I didn't complain; instead I recognized they just didn't realize yet that they'd get a return on investing more in a tour. And for each bookstore I visited, I asked the bookseller to shoot me an email about how the event went—how many customers, how many books sold, my performance generally. These, of course, I forwarded to Putnam. I also visited a few territories on my own nickel, again keeping Putnam apprised of my efforts and the results. The tour was small but the results were good. That got Putnam thinking, "Hmmm, what if we sent him to a few more places?"

Early on, I decided there were a few hooks in the *Rain* books that might attract media. I half-jokingly thought of these as the "Three J's": Japan, Jazz, and Judo, all of which were prominent aspects of *Rain Fall* in particular. So I spent a lot of time contacting media and organizations that focused on Asia, jazz, and martial arts. I got some interviews, which I then supplemented by taking out ads at my own expense. I got a few speaking engagements. Eventually there were a few feature articles. It was all useful in itself, but again the pri-

mary value was in demonstrating to Putnam my efforts and successes.

I didn't have a panel at my first Bouchercon (Las Vegas), but I went just to get the feel of the whole thing, to meet booksellers and other people, and to have a beer with Victor Gischler 'cause I loved *Gun Monkeys*. I learned a lot and met a lot of good people. One of the folks I met was George Easter, editor of *Deadly Pleasures*. George wound up reading and loving the *Rain* books—so much so that he kindly featured me on the cover of his magazine. Again, that's great publicity in itself, but I also made sure to send a bunch of copies to Putnam and to tell them how it happened. I also paid for a bunch of reprints, which I distributed in the goodie bags at subsequent mystery conventions (Sleuthfest and LCC). I kept Putnam in the loop on all of it, and they were pleased.

For my third hardback (*Rain Storm*) and the paperback of #2 (*Hard Rain*), Putnam started paying bookstores for special placement. And each book tour was bigger than the one before it—about five cities for *Rain Fall*, ten for *Hard Rain*, 20 for *Rain Storm*, and a whopping 30 for the new book, *Killing Rain*. On each tour, I worked hard to keep Putnam's costs down, paying for meals and a lot of other things myself (remember, you have to demonstrate confidence in yourself, otherwise why should your publisher be confident?). For the latest tour, I told them I wanted to reduce air travel, do more driving, and eliminate escorts to help control their costs. They responded by sending me to more places (beware of what you ask for...). And on this tour, I felt like we were really getting some nice synergy: I visited many more stores, and most of those stores had the books prominently displayed, increasing the value of

the visits and of the impact of the displays. Which brings the conversation full circle to how to get the most impact out of your drop-in signings...

These are just examples. There are others, but the point is that the main value of all my efforts has been that Putnam has decided to match (or exceed) them. If Putnam hadn't increased its promotional investments, my own efforts

would have had a fraction of the impact.

So I would argue that your most important constituent will always be your publisher. It seems so obvious that I think a lot of people overlook it.

Check out more of Barry's marketing advice for writers at barryeisler.com

Bits'n'Pieces

Who Has Gone Where?

▶ Sixteen-year veteran Lyssa Keusch becomes the executive editor at Avon.

- ▶ Caroline Wood goes from film production (*The Luzhin Defense*; *Dear Frankie*) to the Felicity Bryan Agency to represent new fiction writers.
- ▶ Kelley Ragland moves up to executive editor of St. Martin's/Minotaur.
- ▶ Anderson Grinberg Literary Management becomes two agencies. Anderson Literary Management is headed by Kathleen Anderson with associates Liz Gately and Marcuse Silverman. Jill Grinberg Literary Management is headed by Jill Grinberg working with associate Kirsten Wolf.
- ▶ Paul Taunton is now an associate editor at Ballantine.
- ▶ Signe Pike has moved up to assistant editor at Random House.
- ▶ Selena James (from Pocket) will be executive editor of Kensington's Dafina Books, replacing Karen Thomas.
- ▶ Jill Schwartzman moves to Random House Trade Paperbacks. As senior editor under Jane Van Hehren, she will look for new talent writing for young readers.
- ▶ Kate Hamill goes from Random House to associate editor of adult trade at Harper.

Murder in the Grove — June 8-9, 2007

Interested in participating at this fast-growing conference for readers and writers of mystery, suspense and romantic fiction?

<http://www.partnersincrimeboise.com/murder.htm>

Go to "Invitation to Speak." Authors will be compensated for their efforts, and given some publicity on the web site.

New Leadership at BISG

The Book Industry Study Group has named Michael Healy the new executive director. A fifteen year veteran of the publishing industry, he has been with Nielsen Book Service U.K. for the previous seven years. When he begins in mid-October he plans for BISG to play a major role in defining new standards in the digital age, while strengthening current standards.

"Bits" Compiled by Sally Hawkes



San Diego ~ 2007

March 15, 16, & 17 — The US GRANT Hotel

Good news.

Our publishers' net revenues rose 5.9% from 2004 to 2005 and are projected to increase more than 3% a year over the next five years. (More info at www.ninc.com, *Book Industry TRENDS 2006*, under "Check it Out!") So what does this mean for the future of popular fiction? Join us in San Diego for an in-depth roundtable on this very topic with Kate McCallum, a writer and TV producer that we tracked down through the World Future Society.

Learn the latest about contract negotiating skills and strategies from Anita Fore, Esq., head of the Authors Guild legal department. Participate in Laura Resnick and Lynn Miller's workshop on Method Acting for Writers. Sign on for Eric Maisel's pre-conference workshop on how one goes about maintaining a creative, authentic life in the midst of life's day-to-day demands.

Worried about losing your writing momentum if you take this much time off? Then plan on ducking into our story collage room

where you can cut and paste plots to your heart's content.

Concerned about the cost? Your registration fee includes tea and coffee all three days, dinner and the Dessert Buffet on Thursday, breakfast and afternoon tea on Friday and breakfast and luncheon on Saturday. I'm told there are a number of affordable eateries just across the way at the Horton Plaza. The \$180/night is less than half the US GRANT's usual rate and Eve Gaddy (evagaddy@cox.net) will be glad to pair you up with a Ninc roommate to make it even more affordable. The hotel offers complimentary airport transportation and the Amtrak station is 8 blocks away. (By the way, our room rate is good for three days before and three days after for those who like to add a writing retreat onto their conference.)

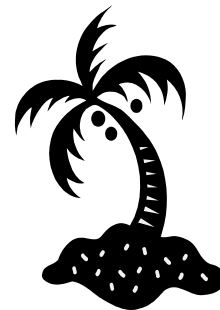
What to do with Traveling Companions? Sign them up for the Traveling Companion's Adventure. For \$55, they'll have their own Desert Buffet and get a Passport to Balboa Park that includes admission to 13 different museums as well as a 3-day tripper trolley/bus pass to San Diego, the harbor, the zoo, etc. More than enough to keep them occupied while we tend to business.

There is no other writers' conference like Ninc's. The level of professional exchange and the focus on both the business and the creative side of writing is unique in all the world.

But as wonderful as this conference is every year, it will be even better with you there. I hope you'll join us.

**Pat Roy, Pat McLinn,
and the Conference Committee**

P.S. A thousand thanks to all of you who have signed up. We appreciate your vote of confidence and look forward to seeing you all in San Diego.



**Member's
Early Bird
Registration
— \$295**

**Ends on
October 14,
2006**

**Regular Registration
Begins Oct 15—\$325**

The registration form is available online or within your September issue of *NINK*.

Cruising through the Blogosphere

COMPILED BY JANELLE CLARE SCHNEIDER

I am very much *not* into the blogosphere. While I enjoy few things as much as a humorous rant from a comedian, reading endless diatribes by people who have more opinions than talent just rubs my fur the wrong way. It takes me days to get myself sorted out again. Not long ago, our intrepid *NINK* Editor, unaware of my anti-blog prejudice, asked me to do an overview on the blogs which could be beneficial for us as writers. I must have read the email before my morning latte, because I agreed. I've ended up pleasantly surprised at what I found. There's a wealth of helpful stuff out there, and much of it comes packaged in really interesting writing.

Agent blogs:

misssnark.blogspot.com

What listing of industry blogs would be complete without this one? Jack Oceano from Associated Content (www.associatedcontent.com) calls her "the funniest, most entertaining, and most informative blogger on the internet today." Considering the overwhelming number of book-related bloggers out there, this is saying a lot!

knightagency.blogspot.com

The Deirdre Knight agency blog is interesting because the posts are by several different people. The seven agents with DKA, as well as five authors keep the blog lively. Industry-

related topics are mixed liberally with personal experience accounts of one thing and another. I found the most intriguing aspect to be the announcements of upcoming "chats" with industry professionals.

arcaedia.livejournal.com

Agent Jennifer Jackson strikes a very nice balance between personal information and industry commentary. Next time I have to write a query letter, I'm referring back to her entry on the subject. (She also has a food blog, which now has its own bookmark in my overloaded "favorites" file.)

Agent007.blogspot.com "The best books take us places we've never been, but show us deeper truths we've always known. The best writers expose our universal secret thoughts," writes Agent 007. Her most recent post is March 12, 2006, but this bit of wisdom led me to dig through her archives for other gems.

agentobscura.livejournal.com Agent Nadia Cormier, of Firebrand Literary, offers daily peeks into her world, with both the mundane and the thought-provoking.

pubrants.blogspot.com

Agent Kristen Nelson describes her blog this way: "A very nice literary agent indulges in polite rants about queries, writer, and the publishing industry."

bookendslitagency.blogspot.com This is an excellent site to suggest to an aspiring author who wants to know what you'd recommend

they do to get published. The archives have a large selection of topics, everything from why agents want a book finished before they represent, to writing for the "Dummies" series, to what to do when your agent won't return your calls. The Sept 4 post on writing for multiple houses is of particular interest.

agentsoutlook.blogspot.com

Even though this one made it into Jack Oceano's "top ten" list of "Blogs about Writing and Publishing," I didn't find anything in it that would cause me to recommend it. He offers lots of opinions (nothing wrong with that), but little in the way of practical advice. Oh, and he hates Miss Snark and ChickLit.

Booksellers' blogs:

www.fresheyesnow.com/fresh-eyes-a-booksellers-journ/

Robert Gray has spent 13 years as a bookseller. He doesn't post daily, but his entries are an eclectic mix of industry commentary, book reviews, and opinions on whatever is on his mind.

writtenerd.blogspot.com

A New York bookstore employee and self-confessed "book nerd" offers his thoughts on books and bookselling. (I'd never heard the term "street date," much less how it impacts booksellers, before.) He seems to bring in thought-provoking guest bloggers, as well, to augment his own daily posts. ▶

Blogosphere

► **www.anthembooks.com**
“Our goal,” states the opening page, “is to find other independent booksellers who are passionate about books.” My belief is that we are in a new renaissance for independent bookstores. It’s fueled by a knowledgeable and community-minded customer base, the growing power of the booksellers’ Book Sense program, and industry awareness about the unique value of independent bookstores to publishing. A link in the upper right corner takes you to the daily blog.

Editor blogs:

alg.livejournal.com Editor Anna Louise Genoese (from Tor) thinks like I do, which makes her blog a joy to read (at least for me). I was delighted to learn about editor’s block, and that she also refuses to watch any movie starring a certain actor who is also on my “rotten person” list. Her posts are very stream-of-consciousness, which means you can find wisdom about one-dimensional heroes mixed in with comments on the disappointing lack of pistachios in her breakfast muffin. (I didn’t know anybody made breakfast muffins with pistachios in them, and I want to know where I can find one.) I might just check in on this one regularly.

www.sarahweinman.com
Sarah Weinman is an author and editor who writes a daily blog entitled “Confessions of an Indiosyncratic Mind.” *USA Today*, in a feature on literary weblogs, proclaimed Confessions, “a respected resource for commentary on crime and mystery fiction.” If you’re curious about what’s happening in the literary world, and like following links all over the Web, this one’s for you.

www.evileditor.blogspot.com
Jack Oceano (Associated Content) calls this one “a great blog for writers looking to query agents or small presses.” The core of it seems to be

that aspiring writers send their queries to him, and he tears them apart. It seems mostly aimed at unpublished writers.

www.thepublishingcontrarian.com Publisher/Editor/Author Lynne W. Scanlon opines about the latest bestseller, how to network yourself into an agent or publisher’s favor, and any number of other publishing-related topics. The blog also provides a link to her website, where she offers her consulting services in various stages of the writing process, including making a pitch to an agent or editor.

Writer Blogs:

allkindsofwriting.blogspot.com This is by published author “Melly,” who writes about anything and everything, including her decision to visit (and stay in) northern Israel during the most recent war with Lebanon. I found her insights about science, science fiction, writing, and life, to be interesting enough to keep me surfing her blog for over half an hour.

complicationsensue.blogspot.com Alex Epstein has written a book entitled *Crafty Screenwriting: Writing Movies that Get Made*. This blog seems to be primarily a promotional tool. That said, it’s a promotional tool that made me take a second look. He has some practical advice about screenwriting, and some thoughtful analysis of current TV shows and movies.

girlondemand.blogspot.com (POD-dy Mouth) An author, who has chosen to remain anonymous, gives her opinion on the best and worst of POD. At the very least, this blog is an entertaining way to procrastinate.

readingunderthecovers.blogspot.com Freelance author and book reviewer, Bella Stander offers this blog as “a commentary on publishing, writing, and a bunch of other stuff.” Her blog is somewhat entertaining, but I found her site **www.bookpromotion101**

.com/bp101/ to be of more practical value. Her Author Behavior Guide provides common sense instructions and information on how best to present oneself in TV interviews or for pictures. She also offers a consulting service, which provides individual authors with assistance in developing a marketing plan.

www.barryeisler.com/writers.php Author Barry Eisler offers valuable insights about craft, getting published, marketing, and moderating a panel. The marketing link offers five excellent articles on the sales cycle, drop-in signings, recruiting your publisher, the writer as entrepreneur, and packaging your book. While he does have a blog, it is mostly political opinion and analysis.

Misc blogs:

thewriterslife.blogspot.com
Companion blog to the website www.thewriterslife.homestead.com, this one covers almost every aspect of the writing life. Interviews with experts, advice to new writers, marketing suggestions, encouragement for dreary days, this one seems to have it all. There’s even a “subscribe” feature on the website so you can automatically receive the day’s blog entry in your email box. Just what we need, more email, right?

theshiftedlibrarian.com Librarian Jenny Levine talks about the impact the NetGen (internet generation) is having on how libraries work. Her articles provide interesting insights into the NetGen’s expectations, and their potential impact on the world in general. Two links are of particular interest: “About Jenny” and “Why You Should Fall to Your Knees and Worship a Librarian.” The latter connects you to an entry for the blog for “Librarian Avengers”. While the “Worship” entry (and attached comments) are highly entertaining, I found the more recent entries to be considerably more ho-hum. Once finished reading “Worship,” I’d recommend using

the back arrow to take you back to the Shifted Librarian.

www.successful-blog.com

Liz Strauss has worked for over 20 years in print, software, and online publishing. In this blog, she shares the lessons she's learned in her years of business, helping bloggers as well as entrepreneurs figure out how to define and market themselves. While this blog is about marketing in general, as opposed to specifically about authors or books, I picked up ideas which would apply to any author's marketing efforts.

www.bookdwarf.com I couldn't find any info on this site as to who this blogger is, but opinions abound. I'll let her speak for herself: "I believe there is room for actual negative criticism in the book world without delving into snarkiness for the sake of snarkiness. The belief that negativity "ruins" reviews frankly seems lame. No one wants to get trashed in a review, but there is such a thing as healthy criticism. Maybe I just hate all this be-nice crap." I wonder how she and Miss Snark would get along?

www.bookninja.com Canadians George Murray (author and poet) and Kathryn Kuitenbrouwer (author) describe their site as "the premier Canadian literary site, and one of the top literary sites in the world. It is frequented by thousands of people from all around the globe and has become a nexus for literary news and opinion." They are indisputably "literary" in tone, complete with utter disdain for genre fiction.

Buzz, Balls, and Hype: mjroseblog.typepad.com/buzz_balls_hype/ The subheading says it all, "Because there are over 175,000 books published a year and they can't all get reviews in the *NYTBR*." Mystery writer MJ Rose's site is a model of internet marketing. Frequent guest bloggers share insights often focused on marketing savvy in the internet age. Her early September series of 10 Commandments (with some guest bloggers)

had me laughing so hard I was in danger of forgetting about the deadline for this article.

www.booksquare.com This site bills itself as "news and views for authors." It presents a daily list of publishing-industry links (the Daily Square). Examples of recent links include: There's No Such Thing as a Bargain Agent, Concept of the week: Multi-channel Marketing, and Analyzing Penguin's Marketing Strategy Because We Can.

http://www.publishersmarketplace.com/members/hillblog/ "Astrology for Writers, Editors and Filmmakers" Written by Agent Julie Hill, this blog isn't updated frequently, but it is intriguing. An example of her Sept. 9 horoscope for our beloved *NINK* Editor: "Sagittarius: As Venus moves into the perfect place for you as a writer, you will experience success or progress without as much effort as usual. Take foreign matters very seriously: rights, trips, characters, anything that's distant."

grumpyoldbookman.blogspot.com This one is mostly book reviews, but his review of *The Divided Mind* by Dr. John E. Sarno could be intriguing to those of the writerly persuasion.

notesfromtheshlushpile.co.uk Writer, artist and journalist Candy Gourlay talks about the world of children's fiction, complete with marketing and contract news.

www.booksinq.blogspot.com Frank Wilson is *The Inquirer's* Book Review Editor, and his blog provides "a behind-the-scenes look at a book-review editor's world." Many of his posts are pithy comments or links, with the occasional longer opinion piece.

Blogs About Publishing:

www.ospreydesign.com/foreword/ If you're interested in the process of physically creating books and their cover art, this site might contain some useful information. Personally, I found the way

comments were posted to be so distracting from the whole that I didn't invest much time here. It looks to me to be more of a discussion board than a true blog.

www.mediabistro.com/galleycat/ Edited by Ron Hogan and Sarah Weinman, this blog introduces itself as "a blog about books and publishing." There is no lack of opinion here, as evidenced by one rant on "here's what wrong with people who hate chick lit." The running commentary focuses more on current events in the publishing world, as opposed to more static topics such as "finding a good agent." Ron Hogan maintains his own blog at www.beatrice.com. The tagline for this site reads, "Introducing readers to writers since 1995."

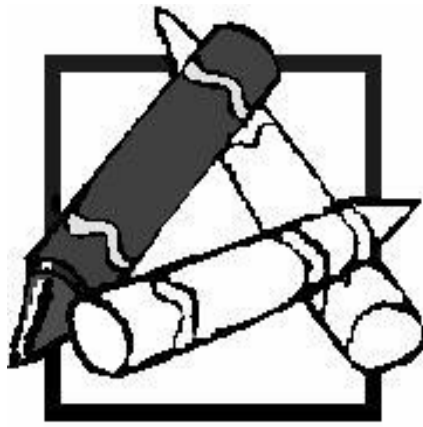
accrispin.blogspot.com Authors A.C. Crispin and Victoria Strauss give you the scoop on avoiding scams in the publishing world, and dish out an abundance of information on publishing and writing in general.

Blog of note:

kannerlake.blogspot.com This blog was created by suspense author Brandilyn Collins. Kanner Lake is the fictional setting of her current series. Through her own blog forensicsandfaith.blogspot.com she recruited fans/amateur writers to be the "voices" of her various Kanner Lake characters. She says it's taken a lot of effort on her part to select the right writers and to keep it all functioning properly, but the result was a huge "advance buzz" on her first Kanner Lake book, *Violet Dawn*.

And even though this isn't a blog, I stumbled across this site and thought it to be too useful to leave out. http://www.writersdigest.com/101sites/categorysearch.asp?year_101=2006 This is *Writers Digest's* "101 Best Sites for Writers." Should be worth at least a day's procrastination. ▲

**Crayon
on my**



**Key
board**

She's Out of Control

BY JANELLE CLARE SCHNEIDER

I had such high hopes for this past summer. I had a writers' retreat in mid-July, and in August, my in-laws were taking the Little Realities for an extended visit. I had visions of lazy days, basking in the sunshine, bursts of creative energy when I'd get lots of writing done, and romantic evenings alone with my hero.

Reality blasted through July and August like a tropical storm, not leaving wholesale destruction, per se, just utterly rearranging my plans and upending my expectations.

To start with, I came back from my retreat deeply exhausted. We all know how it goes at these published writer functions. We're so thrilled to be with others of our kind that we dispense with common sense things like getting adequate rest. The theory was that we'd leave the Little Realities in summer day camp for the rest of the week after my return, so I could recuperate. Then a friend needed emergency child care for "just a couple of hours." It was a bona fide emergency, so I obliged. Five hours later, those children went home, just in time for my own to return.

Not only that, but the view from my back yard, and all the major windows in my house, underwent a serious adjustment. The lot on which our house sits straddles the line between two lots behind us, one of which has been empty. The neighbor who owns the developed lot tore down his baby barn, and in its place constructed what I not-so-fondly refer to as Taj MaShed. I've literally had people ask me if it's a guest house.

No, I know for a fact, it's a shed. A massive, honkin', view-blocking shed. If Neighbor had taken sight lines from my kitchen window (the source of my favorite view

of the lake), he couldn't have done a better job of obliterating the scene. Since I'm 5'8", there is a tiny strip of lake still visible above the roof line of Taj MaShed, but that's not nearly as soul-satisfying as the previous full-window vista.

And so it went for the remainder of July. No major events, just little rearrangements of my plans, and miniscule opportunities for re-energizing. I kept my mind on the goal of August. Little Realities would be gone for a month. I'd recharge then.

I spent the first week of their absence sleeping. The second week, Hero had a conference in a nearby city, so I went with him. My idea was that I'd have mega-creative time in the hotel while he was gone, and then we'd have lazy, romantic evenings together. As it turned out, his second in command rode to the city with us, and attended the conference as well, so there went the lazy, romantic evenings. Rather than ordering in Chinese, we dined out at a Greek restaurant. The food was great, and the conversation congenial, but it wasn't what I'd envisioned.

Not only that, but the silence of the hotel room didn't produce the creativity I'd hoped. Instead, it produced massive Nap Attacks that flattened me.

We did go shopping one evening, and I managed to find jeans that not only fit comfortably but look great. No small miracle, but it didn't compensate for the lack of serious Me Time.

We came back from our trip to discover construction had begun on the empty lot behind us. So now rather than seeing the lake view through my living room picture window (also the source of the view from my office), I see a construction site, complete with pot-bellied construction workers sans shirts. Need I say, "Not Inspirational?"

And so it went.

By the time we retrieved the Little Realities from the grandparents, I was more worn out, both physically and emotionally, than when we'd dropped them off.

I was also frustrated. This month was supposed to have been *my* time. My only chance at rejuvenation had slipped through my fingers, one re-scheduled, challenging day after another. What had I done wrong to make my life go so awry?

That's when it dawned on me. Despite my best efforts, I really am not in control of my own world.

I love plans and schedules. Thumbing through the Daytimer catalogue is one of my favorite pastimes. Organizing stuff, people and events gives me a major rush. Thus, for over 20 years, I've clung to the delusion that if I just tried a little harder, I'd have everything sorted out. I'd be ahead of schedule, instead of behind. I'd set aside rest times, so I could avoid that exhausted feeling that comes from doing too much. The Little Realities would have their homework ready on time, every day, and we'd arrive at the bus stop each morning calm, well-prepared, and smiling.

Ah, yes, Reality. Amid the perpetual dust bunnies, piles of laundry, and unwashed dishes lay the remnants of my hopes for my self. Yes, I met Obligation A, but the rest of my life crumbled in the meantime.

I'm ever so slowly learning that the harder I try to control life, the more out of control it gets. Sanity, for me, lies in being adaptable, rather than in control. So, I didn't get laundry done today. At least I did get grocery shopping done, and Little Reality #2 enrolled in hockey camp.

Of course, using the "not in control" defense to an editor as a deadline whooshes by doesn't do much for career advancement. There are nonnegotiables. (Yes, dear NINK Editor. I'm rambling as fast as I can!) Such a non-negotiable is why the breakfast dishes were still on the counter when the Little Realities came home from school. The Writing Must Get Done, so the housekeeper takes a

leave of absence.

At the end of the day, though, this little voice inside tells me I "should" have been able to do it all. If I'd spent less time looking out the window at the new house being built, I might have been able to clean the house and get the writing done.

To that ever-critical little voice, I'm learning to reply, "thpppppt" as I turn the volume knob to *Off*. I turn instead to the page I've saved from my *Calendar for Women Who Do Too Much*. It reads, "When I truly realize that I will never get my work completely done or even completely catch up, reality moves in."

I'm finding reality much more comfortable than my over-achiever expectations. Accepting reality means that I just turned down a speaking opportunity offered to me for the second week in October, which is the week immediately following Canadian Thanksgiving. While I'm expecting the day to be fairly mellow, with just Little Realities, Hero, and myself, this summer has taught me to appreciate the impact of the unexpected. Why commit myself to overachievement this early in the game? The women's group, it turns out, will be happy to have me two weeks later, anyway.

Don't get me wrong. I haven't chucked the family planning calendar, and my DayTimer still goes everywhere with me. However, I'm learning to view them more as assistants than taskmasters. And for the record, this morning we did get to the bus stop early, and we were all still in a good mood when we got there.

Janelle Clare Schneider's newfound acceptance of reality is still being challenged daily by the unchanging presence of Taj MaShed, and the ever-increasing girth of House Under Construction. She consoles herself by plotting the growth of clematis and other climbing plants along her back fence, and welcomes suggestions for improving the view during the six months of winter.

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The Care and Feeding of the Girls in the Basement . . .

BY BARBARA SAMUEL

Celebrating Your Loves

A writer friend sent me a copy of the *Chocolat* soundtrack, and I've just put it on to listen to as I write this column. Music is one of the most uncomplicated loves of my life—it moves my days and years and decades like the weather, constant and ever changing. Something about this CD brings back a very early music memory—and, I suspect, one of the formative ones: dancing in my grandmother's living room to *The Sounds of Hungary*, one of dozens of collections she had. She played the albums on her enormous console stereo, and I wore a gauzy blue negligee robe, the hem spinning out around me as I twirled and leapt, knowing in my four-year-old heart that a Hungarian princess would dance just like this.

I love music. I feel no need to master it or analyze it or be good at it. It cheers me up, helps me think or concentrate, keeps me company, breaks through all sorts of blocks and barriers I might be keeping from myself. I like to make soundtracks for books, but mainly because I'm creating a soundtrack for a period in my life.

As I listen to this lovely CD, I think of Paris, which I visited briefly this past summer. It scares me and enchants me, Paris. So different and yet so familiar, so intimidating to such a word maven as myself. French doesn't feel like more words—it feels like a song I don't know how to sing, one that will make me look foolish when I attempt it. In public, to people who sing it very well. And yet, sing I do, stumbling pathetically along. I love Paris and want to know it better, and for that mat-

ter, know France and the French and the language better.

Paris makes me think of my friend Sonia, with whom I spent two weeks in France five years ago, in Paris and Nice and hiking the Alps, which I thought of yesterday because I regained my love of hiking on that trip, and yesterday, I tackled a hike I've been meaning to do for quite some time. More on that in a minute.

We've talked about celebrating the role of others in your life, family and friends as well as mentors and loving your body and loving the moment. Last month, the subject was loving the work.

This month, I want to talk about celebrating your passions, whatever they are. And maybe not even passions, but the things you love, or just like. I like petunias. Yes, they're ordinary. Yes, they're everywhere and common and there are amazing flowers that take your breath away, but petunias are cheerful and simple and easy to grow. Put a bunch in a barrel or a pot or a window box and stand back—voilà! Fountains of flowers.

Our lives can be overtaken by our careers if we let them be. It's such a rare chance, it seems, to be a writer, to accomplish something so few do, that we become slaves to it and fashion everything in our lives to serve the work, from the books and movies we imbibe to the places we visit, to the hobbies we no longer allow, and the non-writer friends we don't have time for anymore.

Hobbies are important. They encompass our loves, our likes, the little things that bring soft light into our

days. I believe in hobbies, in making jam and jewelry, in running and square dancing, in playing the cello and the organ and playing tennis. It would be as much a tragedy for Krissie Ohlrogge to stop making her spectacular quilts as it would be for her to stop writing her books as Anne Stuart. The world would be a much poorer place for the loss of either one. As the recipient of one of those quilts during a long difficult season, I can tell you few things have ever brought me more joy—but more, I know there was fierce joy in Krissie’s working on it, too. In choosing the fabrics, arranging the patterns, knowing, knowing where it would go. She sews when she’s weary and sews when she’s worried and goes to quilt shows when she’s giving herself an artist’s date. She sews for herself and for others, and it enriches her life. Probably her work, too, but that’s not the point today.

When the work becomes everything, a bad turn in the market or a beloved editor leaving or a period of drought can be almost unbearable. If work is everything, what’s left when there is no work for a moment or a season?

A friend of mine says the most important thing people need is something to look forward to. If you’re making a quilt or training for a race or planning which fruits to can next month, you have a purpose beyond your career. A garden exploding with dahlias is a pretty good reason to get up in the morning. Volunteering at the local cat shelter because you like cats is pretty good stuff. So is learning to lift weights and seeing muscles show up in your arms or dancing the tango for the first time or learning to crochet. Not to put it in a book. Just because you are alive and that alone is a pretty good gig.

There’s a lot to like in this big world. Liking things is pretty terrific. What did you have for lunch today? Of all the things there are to eat for lunch, did you at least pick something you like? I hope you did. I hope you’re wearing something you like, too.

This afternoon, I’m sitting here in that dwindling gold of sunlight shifting season, with the cheery soundtrack of *Chocolat* on my computer and my most comfortable pants and a turquoise colored t-shirt I always think makes my skin look a pretty color. Around me are a lot of things I like, my posters and rocks and statues. I have a new chair and in the air is the scent of pizza baking for supper because it’s the end of a weekend.

My right heel has a thin-skinned blister that will dry up and go away in a day or two. A muscle over my knee is weary. Yesterday, I went hiking.

Hiking is one of my hobbies. I’ve been an outdoor girl all my life—camping and hiking when I was a girl, climbing trees and riding my bike. I did chores for my grandmother to earn quarters to go to the swimming pool every single afternoon of the summer. When I had a youthful broken heart, my mother showed me how to plant flowers, and I grew the prettiest patch of blue

bachelor buttons you ever saw. They made me happy every time I looked at them. Simple. Blue. Beauty there because I put it there.

Hiking was something that slipped away for a long time. I was married to someone who wasn’t much of an outdoor person, but then I happened upon that hiking trip and went to Provence with Sonia, and I fell in love all over again with the deliciousness, with the feeling of just moving up and down mountains, in the clear air, a pack on my back. I love being a little sweaty and all in the moment, and letting go of everything to be outside.

Yesterday, I did a hike I’ve been wanting to tackle for three years—Pikes Peak. I love the mountain. It’s been there all my life, steady and changeable and eternal. I wanted the experience of walking along his hems, up to his waist and torso, to his shoulders, and finally his head, which I look at every day. I wanted the intimacy of that connection.

It’s a tough hike, but my friend and I have been hiking a lot. We were best friends in junior high and lost touch until three years ago, and it was fun to set off on yet another adventure with her. And it was a great adventure, an exercise in indulging my loves—for hiking in general, and this mountain in particular; for being outdoors, not caring what my hair looked like. It was a challenge, but it was also a big fat thrill.

It was also mainly about me and my life, my own feet on this particular path. Like any hobbyist, I’ve collected my tools—my broken-in boots and my Camelbak and expensive hiking socks and wicking t-shirts. I know a lot about this particular thing—how to eat and how to pace myself and what to carry in that pack and how to be safe. I worry about bears a little, and sometimes about lightning.

But what I really think while I’m hiking is almost nothing, minimal thought grunts: Yellow flower. Pretty pine needles. Rock. Blue sky! And, like a chant, I’m so lucky, I’m so lucky, I’m so lucky.

Life is richer when we take the time to indulge the things we love and the things we like. It’s not about a lot of perfection and being focused, but maybe more a lot of little things that are just right. I loved sitting in the crowded gift shop at the top of Pikes Peak drinking hot chocolate and eating bad, greasy doughnuts with a woman I’ve known since I was twelve, our faces grimy, our legs buzzy.

But I also like right now, with dusk moving over the Front Range and a dog barking in the quiet. Maybe yours is a cup of tea made with just the right amount of sugar and a dollop of milk, served in that mug you bought on a rainy Saturday afternoon with your ▶

Life is richer when we take the time to indulge the things we love and the things we like.



The Girls in the Basement . . . Celebrating Your Loves

▶ sister and mom at the arts and crafts fair, tea you drink in your big gold chair in the coziest corner of the living room while reading a really good book, a cat curled up on your lap.

And of course, it all feeds the girls in the basement, who are busy collecting details while you amble along or sing in the choir or sew seams. They love it when you surround yourself with things you like, things you love, things that make you happy.

What do you love to do just because? What might have been left behind that you really ought to bring into your current life? What are your loves? Let them take up a little bigger part of your weeks this month.

Barbara Samuel loves Pikes Peak and her dog Jack and little Ganesha statues and starting new books. Her latest book is a romance by Ruth Wind, Juliet's Law. Visit her website at barbarasamuel.com

Older Women Given a Voice

Coming in the Spring 2007 Hyperion will launch its new imprint, Voice, for women 35 and older. Hyperion says Voice will provide "fiction that explores our own day-to-day experiences, or transports us to another time and place entirely," and "nonfiction that informs, energizes, inspires, or broadens our knowledge of ourselves and our world." One article pronounced this the antidote to chick lit.

Bits'n'Pieces

A Lawsuit Here, A Lawsuit There

Random House and author James Frey are working on agreements in several class action lawsuits as a result of Frey's admission he made up portions of his popular memoir *A Million Little Pieces*. The settlements may take months before refunds are awarded

after the September hearings on the 10 consolidated lawsuits before Judge Richard Holwell. Consumers must have a proof of purchase, and sign a statement that they wouldn't have bought the book if they'd known the facts weren't true. The settlement maximum (including lawyers' fees) is \$2.3 million. Refunds above \$2.3 million will be reimbursed on a pro-rated scale. Currently Random House cites only 100 requests for refunds. Frey's lawyer stated that the incentive to work with Random House was a "desire to move on." Random House has held the royalty check on Frey's book (a seven figure payment) pending the outcome of the lawsuits.

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