



Penwheels

For Escapees Writers . . . Published or Not
Winter, 2007

MUSINGS FROM THE EDITOR:

I apologize for the extremely early Fall, 2007 Newsletter. I wanted to get it done before we left on our eastern adventure. We went to the Maritimes [the setting of 'Jacob's Tails . . . (Back-to-the-Land)'] to promote the book and then follow the 'changing of the leaves' down towards Livingston.

What an adventure for us and for 'Jacob's Tails'. We ran out of copies of the book within a few weeks (mind you, my level of confidence about the book's audience appeal was fairly conservative and we have downsized our travel rig considerably, so we took a limited number of copies). Needless to say, I am surprised, delighted and needed to have 'BookStream' (the company that distributes the book) send me more books.

The theme for this *Newsletter* is **To Publish or not to Publish – that is the Question** and my experience over the past few months has given me some interesting insights!!

1. Finding a traditional publisher (for me) was an exercise in futility. I discovered most publishers do not even accept unsolicited manuscripts.
2. Self-publishing entails much more than producing a manuscript – the more you can do yourself – the more economical it can be. *The learning curve is extremely steep!*
3. There must be good profit in the *Printing on Demand* or *Vanity Publishing* business because there are so many businesses doing it. If you decide to *self-publish*, it takes a lot of research to find the *printer/publisher* that is right for you.
4. Most bookstores (real or virtual) will carry your book (on consignment) but want 30 to 75% commission. Many are willing to let you do in-store book signings.
5. If you are going to self-publish, you have to self-promote – big time! But even if you do have a traditional Publisher – you still have to self-promote. Nobody does it for you.

Forewarned is forearmed! But if you are forearmed and ready – it can be a lot of fun!!

I have included a posting from the *self-publishing* forum by Pete Masterson-Aeonix Publishing Group <http://www.aeonix.com> that says it very well (*Resources and Opportunities*).

Happy writing!

Lynne Benjamin

PS-Sometimes I may spell things differently from what you are used to. It's not a typo; it's just the Canadian way, eh?!

Tentative schedule for publication is:

Spring – April, 2008

Summer – July, 2008

Fall – October, 2008

Winter – January, 2009

This Issue

- What's gone on between then and now
- Writers' Groups News
- Contributions and Contributors
- *I've Been Published* – Bragging Rights!
- New Members & Introductions
- Resources and Opportunities
- Review

Submissions:

Want to contribute? Send submissions to: Lynne – 2firststep@gmail.com
Submit the month before publication

What's Gone on between Then and Now

CARE-A-THON Fund Raiser – submitted by Darlene Miller

Monday, November 12 - Carol Weishampel and Darlene Miller had a book table at the CARE-A-THON Fund Raiser. A portion of our receipts went to CARE and we each donated two books to the auction. Over \$3000 was received for CARE.



Fall Escapade (Goshen), 2007 Report – by Joan Pomeroy #75145

Once when I was at Rainbow End, in Livingston, Texas I heard Kay Peterson say "Escapades was not built all at once, it has been built slowly, one suggestion after another, some of the ideas worked and some didn't." I was once again reminded of this when I learned that the Fall Escapade in Goshen was to be the end of the summer and fall Escapades as we have know them.

While at Escapades I learned the reason for the change; more people need full hook ups, and meeting rooms are just not big enough, nor is the sound system adequate in many of the places that Escapades has been held.

There was a lot said about how much better the facilities are at Gillette, Wyoming, where the Escapade and the 30th Birthday Bash will be held.

We were all sorry that Kay Peterson was just not quite up to making it to Goshen for the Escapades this year. Joe and Kay were greatly missed. It is the first one they have ever missed. However Cathie Carr, Bud Carr, and Angie Carr did a great job.

Thousand of dollars of door prizes were once again given out. Did you know it takes three couples to cover the door prizes. One couple does the local area, one couple does the market area of Escapades, and the other is in charge of the National prizes which are obtained by letters from the National Headquarters paid staff. At least this is the idea I have after speaking to Penny Scott, who was attending the Rainbow Parks booth in the Market area.

There were 850 rigs, with over 1,650 people in attendance. Wednesday was the community day, which surprised me that they would have a day where people can come for free.

No new parks are in the plans; however they plan to make improvements on the parks that are all ready in existence. Such as the new club house in Branson. It so happens that there is also a HOP planned for Branson during the Holidays.

Cathie and Bud Carr spend time helping to build the Club House at the Branson Park. Although they are traveling, they are still working hard for Escapees. Cathie told me personally that, they have plans of visiting other parks in the near future.

At the closing ceremonies I learned that there were at least 200 volunteers, working in different positions at Escapades. To each of these volunteers I personally want to say Thank You. Their efforts keep the cost of Escapades down and speak well of the pride of being an Escapee.

This was Jerry and my first Escapades, and yes we are planning on going to Gillette, Wyoming in June.

Writers' Groups News

Writers Group at Fun N Sun, San Benito, Texas Contributed by Marianna Nelson, SKP 45711

In 2003, the Writers Group at Fun N Sun wrote and published *Open Windows: Glimpses of Our Lives*, and for the past year we've been compiling a comprehensive book called *Fun N Sun Then N Now*. It traces Fun N Sun's pioneering origins from 1963 to the present and encompasses the lives and activities of RVers living in our subtropical paradise, the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The targeted publication date is November 2008.

Contributions

In response to the call for contributions on *To Publish or not to Publish – That is the Question*

Posting #1417-November 2nd, 2007

Why do you write? I know I started this phase of my writing to deal with some unfinished business and ended up enjoying writing so much it has become an integral part of my life. And that gets us into publishing - Publishing (for me) is my reward!! To be published is to be recognized. What do you think about publishing? Is it important to you? Why? Why not? What about self-publishing? What about marketing your writing? Do you market your work? How?

Let's see if we can take the 'next step' - what do you think?

Contributed by Darlene Miller

My experience is that publishing and marketing are like love and marriage. You won't be successful with one without the other.

I have many stories that need to be written. I found that I enjoyed it when someone told me that they found my writing amusing. Why not write and pass out smiles? For anyone to smile or laugh at my stories, I had to get them published.

A Place in the Promised Land is a young adult novel, which was published in 1996 when I discovered that I was expected to do the marketing. I had to set up the book signings and pay for my travel to them. It wasn't

very profitable by the time that the publisher and distributors got their cut. After twenty-three years, the publisher went out of business without paying me my last royalty check so I ordered enough books to cover my royalties. When they asked for payment, I told them that when they paid my royalties, I would pay for the books. Then they sold me my remaining books at a much lower cost. Now I really had to do the marketing or have a closet full of books.

What did the publisher do? Basically, he had someone edit the book, prepare a cover, assist me in getting an ISBN number, formatted the manuscript and contacted printers with this information. I figured that if I had to market, I could self-publish. *RV Chuckles and Chuckholes- The Confessions of Happy Campers* was the result. I asked questions of others who self-published. (Penwheelers Jaimie Hall Bruzenak and Alice Zyetz have an excellent cd called *Taking the Mystery out of RV Writing*.) My husband and his friend set up a website called www.rovingpen.com for sales; I arranged for book signings; and asked for reviews in magazines. I told everyone about my book and gave interviews on the radio and to newspapers. I even sold in craft fairs. Camping World put my book on their web. I sell books through the RV Writers Co-op. I am now in the third reprint of the book.

I like it so much that I wrote another book called *More Chuckles and Chuckholes - More Confessions of Happy Campers*. I feel like I've come full circle and want to continue the cycle over again. It's as easy to sell two books as one, isn't it?

The most poignant reader comment was when Michele told me that she had IV Chemo treatments that were very painful. She was told to relax but that was easier said than done. During one session, she read my book and laughed and laughed. "It was the best IV Chemo session that I have ever had," she concluded. Some rewards are not monetary.

Contributed by Jaimie Hall-Bruzenak

There is enormous satisfaction in writing a book and getting it published. It may be all we ever want to do in the way of the publishing business.

Marcie Cumberland, who wrote the wonderful young adult novel *Tree at the Top of the Hill*, is concentrating on writing more books, though she and Jim each have blogs and work to promote her first book. At least for now, the writing is taking precedence over marketing. She is currently working on two books. She enjoys the research, which they can accomplish by Workamping® in historic areas.

Former Penwheeler Stephanie Bernhagen wrote an inspiring how-to book, *Take Back Your Life! Travel Full-time in an RV*, committed two years to market and sell it then moved on to other things in her life. She and Paul are now off the road and Stephanie is a successful consultant for Creative Memories. She satisfies both her creative urges and desire to help others in a different sort of way.

Or, you could do more, even much more—that is if you want to get back your printing investment or, even better, make money. A big chunk of publishing is the marketing. Learning about Amazon, websites, blogging, book distributors is a whole different ball game than writing the thing. Then there is keeping your book before potential readers, developing a brand, getting publicity.

Carol White, Escapee member and author of *Live Your Road Trip Dream*, is a real inspiration in the marketing end. Having a background in publicity, it has come naturally to her and husband Phil. Their book won the Benjamin Franklin award for marketing excellence. She utilizes every possible tool. This year they were spokespersons for RVIA, traveled in a donated RoadTrek to events and got a booth at the AARP convention. That lady knows how to sell not only her books, but herself.

Which one are you?

Though you don't have to decide before you start your book, it helps. Believe me, there are many early decisions and steps you need to take along the way if you want your book to sell well - or at least be sold by booksellers. Reading books like Dan Poynter's *Self-Publishing Manual* will help you understand the process, decide if you have a marketable book and establish a time line.

Prior to writing and publishing a book, you should also have a marketing plan. There are a number of excellent resources to help you plan your approach. If you leave things to chance, you'll have RV bins (or a storage shed) full of books and not much demand.

In 2002 I published *Support Your RV Lifestyle! An Insider's Guide to Working on the Road* without thinking a whole lot about marketing, though I had Stephanie Bernhagen to help and Dan Poynter's book. Then Alice Zyetz and I teamed up to do *RV Traveling Tales: Women's Journeys on the Open Road*. Later we wrote two RV-related e-books together. Alice has another e-book to her credit as well. We are also the publishers for Adrienne Kristine's two e-books. We have grown.

You do have to keep growing—or die off. More product give you more to sell and keeps your name visible. Plus established readers are an easier market to sell to than finding new ones. For us, it makes sense to write more books and e-books related to RVing.

At the Escapade, a fellow suggested a particular camping directory. It's a great idea. We could do a half-baked one that simply referred campers to other sources or we could do a thorough one that involves lots of work. The second is more our style, what we would feel good about offering. However, I having trouble getting myself psyched up; it would take a huge commitment of time and effort. I'm still back on step one— getting the marketing part down. That already takes way too much of my time. Alice would like to work on a new product. We are still discussing what to do next.

At any point a writer can re-evaluate, see what their goals are and then realign. However, if you are thinking about writing a book, before you start, think about who your audience is and how you will reach them. Remember that writing is only half the effort. Marketing takes time, effort and even some money. Are you willing to commit that? If so, how much and for how long?

Contributed by Sam Penny (edited)

I have been around the horn on this question many times, and have several different (and sometimes opposing) views.

Many years ago during my working years I wrote papers and marketing materials, and always enjoyed word-smithing, so when Alice and I started planning to retire, I began a website . . . the editors of RV Companion called me. They liked my website and asked me to write a column for their magazine. After three years . . . I gave that up, but the publishing experience was great, and I received a lot of encouraging support.

Along the way decided I should "save the world" by writing a novel exposing the dangers of an earthquake near Memphis . . . I finished the novel and sent out query letters to publishers and agents. That was when I learned the downside of the real-life publishing world: rejection, rejection, rejection. In retrospect, I fully understand why no one was interested in what I had to offer: too technical, not mainstream, wrong genre, one in fifty-thousand trying to get attention, etc.

But I still wanted to save Memphis, so I decided to self-publish. I would show those b**t**ds! But my good sense told me, "don't go with a vanity publisher who is simply there to stroke my feelings, go with someone who would help me turn out a good product." I chose Booksurge because they offered the most basic service: I would provide a print-ready PDF and do most all the marketing and they would print it on demand. That meant that I had to learn enough about book formatting

to do the right thing. It was another great learning experience, and after three books, I think I am pretty good at it. I did sell about 900 copies of the books, but I also have an inventory of about 500 left in my shed and rig. At least I don't have 5,000 like some friends do.

So I self-published, and found that I still had to do the marketing side of things. I learned how to do radio interviews, and even did a couple of TV interviews. I set up a website for sales. I dealt with

Amazon. I learned how to arrange for book signings, and how to go to book fairs. I learned the rules for book consignments. In fact, I learned how to be a book publisher, from editing to formatting to pushing and shipping product. It did not leave much time for writing, so after two years of that I decided to get off the book circuit and enjoy life.

* * *

It is important to be published, because that means you have presented something to the rest of the world that has a chance of remaining after you die. It is your chance for immortality, but at the same time, how many authors of the 18th century do you remember? How many will really remember you? Does it really matter, or is the act of writing what really makes the difference. Keep in mind, publishing -- meaning presenting your work to the public -- is work, hard work. It does not happen without effort, and most of that effort will be yours. If you want to publish, good luck. If you succeed, it will all be worth it.

Contributed by Beth Ramos

The question for this issue of Penwheels is “Why Publish..” Stephen King doesn’t write for the money. “Not now, never did.” He writes because “In the end, (writing is) about enriching the lives of those who will read your work, and enriching your own life as well.”

I claimed “writer” as part of my identity at the 2006 Escapade. Stephen King affirmed and encouraged me even when, in the end, I found myself confused by his bottom line advice. “Read a lot, write a lot, read what you write.” What I read is tomes of every genre. I write short poems and essays. Do I start a novel or head to the bookstore to stock-up on poetry and magazines?

Maybe I’ll just head to my “writing place” and do a few hundred words on my dilemma.

Contributions that are too long can be uploaded as files to the Penwheels Bulletin Board by Alice. If you want a copy of it via snail mail send a SASE to Alice at: 45120 Hwy 79 S, #426 Aguanga, CA 92536 and she will send it to you.

Contributors to this issue of the Penwheels Newsletter:

Lynne Benjamin
 Jaimie (Hall) Bruzenak
 Darlene Miller
 Marianna Nelson

Sam Penny
 Beth Ramos
 Carol Weishampel
 Alice Zyetz

Attention: Contributors to the Escapees Magazine:

When you write the author blurb that accompanies your article, please add a phrase that you are a member of the Penwheels BOF. This will help build an awareness of our BOF in the community. I've met many Escapees in my writing workshops at Escapades who weren't aware there is a BOF for writers.
 Thanks and hugs, Alice Zyetz

I've Been Published – Bragging Rights! (Be you writer or author)

"You're a writer if you say so; you're an author if you're paid for your work."
(Heard at a BOF meeting – Beth Ramos)

Let Us Know About Your Current Publications

- Your Name and SKP #
- Title of Piece
- Magazine or Book and Date

Kudos to:

- **Judith Ackerman** SKP#97113 – *What I Know about Shopping the Day after Thanksgiving*, November edition of AARP Bulletin, pg. 32.
- **Lynne Benjamin** SKP# 86190 – *The Same – Only Different*, Sept/Oct edition Escapes Magazine, pg. 10
- **C. Bree** SKP# 79014 - Sr. Junior Ranger book for the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument used as an example to incoming interns for the ongoing program.
- **George Bruzenak** *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, a Fractured Fairy Tale*, National Novel Writing Month (November) writing a total of 72,700 words-***I did enter and win.***
- **Jaimie Bruzenak** *Vermont Love Affair*, Nov/Dec edition Escapes Magazine, pg. 63
- **Sandy Johnson** SKP# 86982 *Confessions of a Road Worrier*, Sept/Oct edition Escapes Magazine, pg. 34.
- **Kay Kennedy** *Chasing History Along America's Byways*, Sept/Oct edition Escapes Magazine. Pg. 26
- **Betty Mulcahy** *Senses in the Desert* Summer/Fall edition, The Fish and Wildlife News is a publication of the US Fish and Wildlife Service
- **Beth Ramos** *My Top Ten Reasons Why We May Be Skipping Thanksgiving*, a letter to the editor, Nov. 11 edition of the Orlando Sentinel.
- **Sharon Vander Zyl** SKP# 91843 *Force Field Analysis*, Sept/Oct edition Escapes Magazine, pg 18; *Aransas National Wildlife Refuge*, Nov/Dec edition Escapes Magazine, pg. 87
- **Carol Weishampel** *Journal; John Frederick Weishampel, Jr. 1858-1895* – published by Brentwood. My brother and I inherited this journal kept by our great grandfather during the Civil War. A book editor and publisher, he was a resident of Baltimore, MD. His observations and insights are historically significant today."

Next Issue:

Blogging

Do you blog? Why? Is blogging a good way to promote your book and yourself?

Spring Contribution due date: March 1st, 2008

Submit to: 2firststep@gmail.com

New Members

New PW members are: Debbie Troop and Ed Phillips
Hugs, Joanne

Alice Zyetz – PWBB Moderator

To join the **Penwheels** bulletin board and get daily (almost) digests, send a blank e-mail to:
penwheels-subscribe@yahogroups.com

Please send an e-mail to me, Alice (youshoulda@aol.com), as well, letting me know that you have subscribed, so as Moderator I can inform Yahoo to accept your request. Include your name, **SKP #**, and when you joined **Penwheels Bof**. Make sure you sign up for the daily digest once you have been accepted. If you don't start receiving your digests, please contact me.

Welcome and many hugs, **Alice Zyetz**, Moderator and **Jaimie Bruzenak**, co-Moderator

New Members – Introductions

My name is Debbie Troop and I am hoping to retire this year and hit the road full-time. We are in the process of getting rid of things and fixing the house up for selling. My husband is already retired and chomping at the bit for me to get going. I am a government employee and may have to work a little longer than I want - but will get there. I have degrees in journalism and creative writing and started my young career as a teacher - hated it! My story is typical of many - I was always going to get back to writing but kids came along and life was complicated. Now that I am getting ready to retire and hope to have lots of time for me on my hands I want to be a part of a writing community. I sincerely hope to be able to meet many of you down the road soon.

Thanks.

Debbie Troop

Resources and Opportunities

**editor's note - Over the past few month, postings on the forum have included a number of opportunities for submissions and resources. Following are some examples:*

Opportunities for Submissions

- ❖ A short story of 750 words - October issue of *Writer's Digest*
- ❖ Helium.com
- ❖ National Novel Writing Month - a 50,000-word novel, from scratch, in 30 days - Court TV is having a contest to find the next great crime writer! See <http://courttv.gather.com/>

Resources

❖ *The Modern Language Association of America Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th ed Joseph Gibaldi (guidelines need to be followed by anyone writing papers of any sort which may have used materials from other sources). I think you can get information from <http://www.ALA.org> also (American Libraries Association web site).

**editor's note – Self-Publishing Yahoo Forum*

❖ **Re: [Self-Publishing] Article on self-publishing** by Pete Masterson-Aeonix Publishing Group
<http://www.aeonix.com>

Self publishing is not for the feint of heart. It is difficult and there are many road blocks to success. For many wannabe authors, the need for capital investment can be a major stumbling block – even though there are any number of ways to do-it-yourself, and manage costs -- it's still an expensive proposition. And many who under- invest in their projects simply fail.

That's not to say that self-publishing using the advice from the several books on John Culleton's "short list" and with the support of this list (and other similar online groups) that you can't be successful -- many self publishers are successful and a few have established very attractive small publishing companies based on an initial self-published book...

It's easy to get caught up in the process and to believe the hype put out by the "self publishing companies" (that are really vanity presses). But with hard work and modest to significant capital investment, some level of success can be achieved.

Reviews

Review - *More RV Chuckles and Chuckholes - More Confessions of Happy Campers* by Joanne Alexakis

Darlene Miller has created *More RV Chuckles and Chuckholes - More Confessions of Happy Campers*, a sequel to her original book, *RV Chuckles and Chuckholes - The Confessions of Happy Campers*.

Darlene takes us on driving trips across America with her husband, Terry Miller, in their RV. She treats us to viewpoints on The Perfect RV Woman, "She is thrifty, gives a great back rub, and always dumps the black water." On The Perfect RV Man she states, "He still has a 36" waist and can fix anything with duct tape."

It is easy to read between the lines and see that Darlene is having a delightful time writing (and living) this book by the way her humor shines. But she also includes a poignant letter about missing old traditional Christmases before Mom and Dad began fulltime RVing.

Yes, Darlene Miller is at it again, amusing us with smiles, laughter, and of course, chuckles along her adventurous journey.

Contributors to Darlene's book include Penwheeler Terry Hager writing about "*Mechanical Genes*" and "*Things that Go Klunk on the Road*"; Penwheeler Adrienne Kristine who edited this book and contributed "*RV Breakdown: My RV has a New Slant*", "*Only in Olema*", and "*Fresh Air*"; and Penwheeler Joan Pomeroy's articles "*Joan's Tornado Story*" and "*Joan's Taste of Home*".

PENWHEELS

An Escapees RV Club Birds-of-a-feather (BOF) group for RVers interested in writing of all kinds. Some are published and some are not. The purpose of Penwheels is to establish a support network of RVing writers for sharing information, discussion, critiques, and socializing in person, snail and electronic mail.

Penwheels is published four times a year. Subscription is \$8 (USD) per year. In order to belong to any SKP BOF group, you must be a member in good standing of the **Escapees RV Club**. You may contact the Club at 1-888-757-2582.

Editorial submissions are best submitted via e-mail to:
2firststep@gmail.com

Or snail mail to:
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