

I Don't Want to be a Bullfighter

If you read *I Don't Want to be a Pirate*, you know what this is all about. If not, it's more information about some of the headaches of being a writer. I don't intend to write another book about it, but here are a few of my experiences which occurred after the book was sent off to the publisher. Some of these incidences may have convinced most people to go back to bed – tomorrow's another day.

High Fences, Inc.

I started the story of my trials with one book store, but I didn't reveal the name, so let's call it High Fences, Inc. Sometime in the spring of 2008 – the place still had three copies of my cookbook – I decided to check up on sales. I asked for Slim – not his or her real name – but instead was informed that Lulu was in charge of the books now. Obviously, that name too is made-up since I doubt that anyone has that appellation. I was also told that Lulu was not around, but I should call back in one hour.

I dialed the number more than an hour later, but somehow Lulu was out to lunch. When I called for the third time, spoke to her and revealed who I was and the name of my book, she stated that there was no record on file of either. I mentioned that I had a consignment statement that I could dig up and get to her. I emailed it but she didn't receive it as I was missing one letter in her address.

Not hearing from her, I called a few days later and the word was that I'd have to call back, but when I did, once more I was told that she was out to lunch. I getting to be a bit annoyed so I mentioned to the person answering the phone who I was and why I was calling. He then said that Lulu could be in the building – so could Elvis – and I did talk to her. Lulu found two of the books and I managed to email the consignment statement and she eventually received it. She also emphasized that they were not going to be doing consignment anymore so I indicated that I'd be over to pick up the two copies on Friday along with the check for the one book. I was quickly corrected as payment would have to go through the corporate office. I offered the fact that this effort would probably take about three months and she agreed wholeheartedly.

I moseyed – I think that's a word and I spelled it right – over to the store and asked for Lulu. The person I talked to was the one who I had originally dealt with – the shelf clearer. I was informed that she was out to lunch – with that I could easily concur. This individual said she would be summoned anyway. I waited, and waited, and after about ten minutes or

more, someone carried out the two books, but not Lulu. I headed home, figuring this fiasco was finally over. I had yet to meet Lulu – maybe she was a comic strip character.

It wasn't too many days later that Lulu emailed me and asked if I wanted to do a book signing. From my past experiences in those stores, I should probably have said no, but I like pain and suffering. I agreed, and to make a much too long story shorter, it was set up for Saturday, July 12, 2008 at 2 pm. I really intend to spread the word on that day. Stay tuned.

Distribution guaranteed

I omitted talking about distributors in *I Don't Want to be a Pirate* because I hadn't any experience with them. However, at a book festival in Buffalo the day before Easter 2008, I was given that bad news about those leeches. Another writer mentioned that she had good success selling her epic novel, but I learned that overall, her book business was still in the red. Apparently we have another type of thief. It appears that I will be learning a bit more about these bandits since I recently became incorporated and from this day forward, I will be working with Lightning Source, since I am the publisher. To get the complete story, go to the page I have on my 2007 book, *This Page Intentionally Left Blank* and click on "more" just underneath the image of the movie, *Fired*.

Working with the printer – not that one

As you probably know, I despise technology for what it has done to us. This is especially true for PCs and the Internet. The only reason I became incorporated had to do with ISBN numbers. Those are the codes you find on the back covers of books to identify them. However, I needed them in order to work with Lightning Source, the printing company that will help with publishing my books. The people there are wonderful as I have received more welcomes than the U.S. troops in Iraq after they liberated the country in 2003. I wasn't presented any roses, though.

I was told that the process would be easy, but that reminds me of an action begun on March 19, 2003. Nevertheless, I figured I could do it and so far I have one book almost ready to go – the introduction needs editing since I decided to rewrite it, a friend is proofreading the manuscript and I have to assemble the cover. That latter task appears to be quite a job. My niece, Elizabeth, did the image I wanted for the cover, but now I have to obtain some art creation software and start formatting it. I was under the impression that Lightning Source would send me a template and I could add the image, title and a few words on the back and an icon here and there and that would be it. It's not that easy.

I bought the software to create the interior and I seem to have done that all right. Another annoying thing with this process has to do with work. Before, much of this would be handled by the publisher. Well, it still is, but I'm the publisher. Also, the people at Lightning Source seem to be sending me so much material and it really could be simplified. It seems a dozen people sent me emails and introduced themselves. I hope someone there can assist me to get my books published.

I'm not holding my breath for a number of reasons even at this early stage. I hope I'm wrong and eventually I'll realize that my previous publisher's decision not to publish, *wake up – it's time for your sleeping pill* was a mistake and the entire process will go quite smoothly for me. However, I was told that to have the book formatted – which I had to do – Lightning Source required a certain outcome that had to be accomplished by some software called *Distiller*. Apparently, I'll be able to make my own moonshine. On talking to a representative of the company, I figured I needed to purchase Adobe Acrobat Version 8, which would have the hooch maker inside. You could purchase either the Professional or Standard version but it was indicated to me that the former would suffice.

I bought that software and on Friday, June 13 – my lucky day – I was informed that I needed some art creation software. Moreover, it may be true – I can't verify this because I don't know and I wonder if anyone else knows either – that buying the professional Version of Adobe Acrobat would have spared me the search for this other software. As Roseanne Roseannadanna used to say, "It's always something."

Agents of money removal – yeah, yours

I didn't reveal that status of my relationship with my agent in *I Don't Want to be a Pirate*. That was so you'd read the sequel. Actually, there won't be one – this is it and it probably will be never ending so it could never get published. It's been more than a year since I made my agent redundant – no, I didn't kill her, I just didn't renew the contract after re-employing her for a year with nothing getting published. I also discovered that her name was listed on the **Predators and Editors** web site. You can probably guess under which category she fit. If not, let me just say that she was listed as a **Top Twenty Worst**. I gave up trying to find a new agent since my efforts were fruitless – you should have at least five fruits and vegetables daily. I sent enough letters to agents as well as publishers in 2007 and I will do without either and not give them a cut of the profits.

I think the difficulty in getting an agent is that they won't work with you unless you've written a best seller. I found a list on a few web sites – some were highly recommended, another group recommended, a third not rated and those in the final batch were to be avoided. Perhaps I should have contacted the second group rather than the first. Any of these people will still grab your money. With publishers, I pointed out in my 2008 book that those companies only print what will sell millions of copies. Quality doesn't really enter into what is published.

More bookstore events

I had three events at bookstores since my 2007 book came into print. One was at a store in my former home town, about twenty five miles from where I live. I managed to peddle three books, but was hoping to do better. The second was at a small independent bookstore in Buffalo and I even made some Irish soda bread to entice people to buy any of what I had written. I sold a single copy and have yet to receive payment for the book. Maybe it will come in 2010. I was seated away from the cold winter air and did talk to a few people, but one couple who bought a book at the festival I referred to earlier, said they weren't sure if I was an author and so didn't come by. For this signing, there was a great deal of publicity, but apparently nowhere near enough.

The final gig was a panel discussion on ***This Page Intentionally Left Blank***, suggested by the store owner. We did everything possible to get out the word, including fliers and news in the local press. A few days before the discussion, a journalist called for an interview. I told him I couldn't do it right at that moment but that he could talk to me the following day. I'm not sure if he read the book – I sincerely hope he did – but he asked me if it was socialist. I said no, and when he called the next day, he mentioned that his boss had given him another assignment and I had been pre-empted. That happens to me a lot.

The discussion came off anyway on a really fine winter day – I had to go to Rochester and prayed for a good day, with neither snow nor ice. We were blessed in that regard, but if it weren't for the panel, their friends and the owner, no one would have showed up for the discussion.

Festivals are better if they're the right kind

The kind of festival that makes sense is a book festival. I traveled to Geneva, New York in November 2007 on another of those iffy days – that is, it could have been snow, rain or ice. Fortunately, there was neither and my trip was about the same as sung by Peter, Paul and Mary – ***A Hundred Miles***. I made some Irish soda bread from my cookbook for the Hobart and

William Smith Book and Arts Festival and sold twelve books, including nine cookbooks. The bread was a big hit and there was a buzz around the room about it. Good food draws people in. In fact I met a woman who bought a copy and mentioned that it could be a good idea to place it in her winery. Eventually, I shipped out some copies. I hope they're selling.

The next doing was Christmas at the Broadway Market in Buffalo on the Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving. I was only there on the first day as I had already committed to the first signing discussed above. Nonetheless, I did sell nine books and this included two I sent out to a gentleman who said he would buy a book or two in a week or so, and he did. Most likely, I will get involved in this venture in 2008 as well. I was mailed the application in June 2008. I had an interesting experience with the post office as I discovered the books visited Pennsylvania and Maryland, even though the buyer lives about twelve miles away in Erie County. It's nice that our mail can see different parts of the country.

I had a great time in the state of Pennsylvania – excerpt for two glitches – at the Philadelphia Book Festival on the weekend of May 17, 2008. The table under the tent was free, courtesy of Infinity Publishing, but getting there turned out to be a huge challenge. By that I mean obtaining a slot or two for displaying my books. There was a note about the event in the monthly newsletter so I figured I would try to be there. My problem is that only half of my books were published by Infinity, so I emailed John describing this but telling him that I was interested. He replied that maybe I should contact the Festival itself. I did and they replied that my best bet would be to take up John's offer, since it was too late to obtain a vendor table. At this I was perplexed since there was no offer from John. Eventually, I managed a two hour slot on each day and because of the threatening weather, I probably could have been at the Infinity tables for the entire weekend.

The person responsible for setting me up was a substitute for John, who underwent surgery for skin cancer. Bob O'Connor is a writer of well researched civil war novels, whom I recommend very highly. I bought his book, *Catesby: Witness to the Civil War* and even included it in my manuscript about war, which I hope to publish in 2008. I only brought my first three books – had I had all six, I probably would have had more sales. In general, each of us sold only a few books – I lightened my load by five copies.

My next adventure will be at the New York Book Festival in Central Park on Saturday, June 28, 2008. A friend lives less than two miles

from the park and I will be staying with him. Logistics is another problem but I believe I have that worked out. One aspect that is hard to consider is the number of books to bring to these events. I always bring more than I will sell – a great deal more – but if you only carry a handful and sell out, you may lose out on a sale. You can always take the name and address of the interested party and offer to send her the book (s) she wants, but you could lose out on a sale. On the other hand, lugging one hundred books presents quite a challenge.

Those ink stained wretches

My writing experience with the press has generally not been very satisfactory. On too many occasions the journalist would not let me read the article before publication. Invariably, there will be some omission, or some fact that just isn't so, which could have been corrected. This extra effort helps the writer but at the same time spares embarrassment to the creator of the interview.

In *I Don't Want to be a Pirate*, I discussed an error in a review done in the Buffalo News in the summer of 2005. It wasn't intentional and maybe my reading it beforehand would not have changed a thing. There was also another incident that I related and it seems that without proofreading, there will be problems. In the spring of 2008, I emailed a writer from a local paper an excerpt from an upcoming book. This person took most of it and what was there was fine since it had the best parts of the piece. However, The introduction had a blatant error and an important omission, which I was able to correct. In this case the journalist did the right thing by allowing me to read what was to be published beforehand.

Did he read the book?

I've had difficulties of a similar nature with reviewers. I have been fortunate to have been blessed with great reviews for my books – provided someone opened the book and read it. My cookbook has had great praise from critics and the general public alike, but one reviewer may have read someone else's book. There were two statements in the review that were complete distortions of what I had written, even though this reviewer gave it five stars.

More recently and to my great delight, *I Don't Want to be a Pirate* received five stars as well. I talked about the delay from the time a book is published until the time of the review, but in this case, the book was published in March and reviewed two months later – that is an unbelievable turnaround. Apparently it helps to write short books. I believe that something else entered into the picture: the reviewer started reading and

couldn't put the book down. I have one complaint: he or she used the same words I included on the web page I had for the book. The page is still there, but I deleted those similar words. They'll probably never review any of my books again.