
The Pen & Press

November – December 2009



NCPA membership renewals are due again. Memberships are on an annual basis, expiring December 31.

If your membership is due for renewal (that is, not already paid through next year or beyond), then you will be receiving a renewal notice in the mail. Please respond promptly. As NCPA has not had a dues increase in many years, one may be necessary before long (that is a matter for the NCPA board to consider), so be sure to renew in a timely way to take advantage of the current renewal rate (\$40 for one year, \$99 for three years, or \$60 for non-writer/non-publisher members (Associate/Corporate) for one year.

Checks should be made **payable to NCPA**, and sent to:

NCPA Membership Chair Stephanie Reali
c/o Northern California Publishers & Authors
3104 O Street, #270
Sacramento, California 95816

That is also the address to use for new memberships. As of deadline for this issue of the newsletter, the membership form posted at www.norcalpa.org has outdated information on that point.

Which reminds me: NCPA needs a take-charge webmaster. That office is vacant, and the lack is showing.

For that matter, we are approaching another NCPA election season, and will need new or continuing volunteers for ALL board positions. See the board list on the last page of this newsletter.

NCPA is a volunteer organization. It depends on self-motivated individuals to take on those responsibilities.

These are challenging times for publishers and authors, especially in the independent publishing arena. The networking and information resources of NCPA are a bargain as a means of improving your chances for success. Please renew promptly, encourage new members to join, and contribute through a board role or committee membership.

— Ken Umbach, editor

Leveraging “Social Media” is November Meeting Topic

November’s meeting topic, presented by Stephanie Chandler, is “Social Media for Authors: How to Leverage Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter for Maximum Visibility and Book Sales.”

The use of social media is one of the most powerful ways to generate exposure on the internet. From building your brand as an author to attracting new readers, the opportunities are abundant. Stephanie Chandler will share insider secrets for developing your social media plan, managing your time, growing your network, getting known online, and selling more books—all in less than an hour per day!

Stephanie Chandler is an author of several books including *The Author's Guide to Building an Online Platform: Leveraging the Internet to Sell More Books* (Quill Driver), *From Entrepreneur to Infopreneur: Make Money with Books, eBooks and Information Products* (John Wiley & Sons) and *LEAP! 101 Ways to Grow Your Business* (Career Press).

Stephanie is also founder and CEO of AuthorityPublishing.com, which specializes in custom publishing and content marketing services. A frequent speaker at business events and on the radio, she has been featured in *Entrepreneur Magazine*, *BusinessWeek*, Inc.com and many other media outlets.

As usual, the meeting is at Merrill Gardens Retirement Community, Stock Ranch Road (just west of Sylvan Road, a quarter mile north of Greenback Lane), Citrus Heights.

December Meeting to Feature Networking and Member Book Display

Our December 12th meeting will feature the popular annual combination of member networking and book display. Bring copies of your books for other members and visitors to see.

NCPA encourages its publisher and author members to donate copies of their books to Merrill Gardens for its library, available to Merrill Gardens residents. You can leave books at the front desk, with a note that they are intended for the library.

The meeting will be at Merrill Gardens Retirement Community, Stock Ranch Road (just west of Sylvan Road, a quarter mile north of Greenback Lane), Citrus Heights.

Rise to the Top on Radio: Tips for Authors

By Kimberly Edwards, NCPA Member

Radio hosts crave guests, just as authors crave exposure. This symbiotic need works to the advantage of authors with a book to promote. Yet there’s a science to sounding articu-

late. Below is advice from two writers who attended the April, 2009, Northern California Publishers and Authors Conference.

“As an author, you’re now a celebrity, and people want to know about you,” says John Takacs, who was heard on some 50 radio shows across the country after his novel *The Take-Us* (www.thetakeus.com) came out late summer 2008. This realization made Takacs ratchet up his “package quotient.” A former paratrooper who survived a Vietnam helicopter crash, Takacs assembled the tools to handle the media. This included Performance Power’s Vickie Jenkins (www.media-trainer.com). With her help, he prepared to present himself and his novel’s themes, including America’s dependence on oil. “I had more experiences than you can imagine. Most were great. Still, before every interview, I always practice. I don’t write down answers because I want to be fresh and genuine. Never do I want to be boring.”

Michele Avanti, columnist and author of *GreeHee The Journey of Five: Tales of Tamoor Book One* (TalesofTamoor.com; [Tweet@tamoor](https://twitter.com/Tweet@tamoor)), which won Best Juvenile & Visionary Fiction awards, praises Francine Silverman, editor/publisher of *Book Promotion Newsletter* and author of *Book Marketing from A-Z*. Avanti says that before any interview, she sends the station a list of her areas of expertise. “When they decide on the topic that best fits their audience, I give them a list of suggested questions.” Avanti believes this act is appreciated, since most hosts don’t have time to study their guests’ work.

A veteran of 1,500 radio shows, Avanti says that an author new to radio should find someone with whom to role-play. “Radio requires that you be articulate. No ah’s or oh’s.” To rise to this level of proficiency, Avanti suggests joining a group such as Toastmasters or practicing with a fellow writer. Try different rhythms: short, long, slow, fast. Use short, vivid sentences.

Novelist Takacs suggests authors develop a short blurb to describe their book. “Be concise and pointed. Yet always make the hosts look smart. Compliment them. Say, wow, good question.” Even when faced with a tricky question, a political prompt or a comment he can’t address, Takacs responds, “Hey, that’s a great question.” Then he regains control by reframing the question to fit his topic.

Avanti stresses that if authors are asked questions outside their field, honesty is the best approach. “If you want to offer an opinion, state that it is just an opinion.” Air time requires study. Authors should listen to talk shows. As the speaker pauses between segments, a number of seconds go by. “Take a deep breath before continuing to speak.” But be aware of “dead air,” when too many seconds pass without sounds.

Takacs suggests that authors reference their book as often as possible. “In my book, the book *The Take-Us*, that’s Take-us, www.thetakeus.com, now, I’ve said it three times.”

Finally, Takacs says it’s important to invent a ritual that puts you in the right frame of mind before an interview. “I sit on the edge of my chair. I tell myself, here goes. Show time, I say to myself. Then, *voila*, you become you what need to be. You rise to the top.”

Kimberly Edwards writes meeting, cultural, and travel tips. She is a member of the Northern California Publishers and Authors and serves on the board of the California Writers Club, Sacramento Branch. This article originally appeared in a slightly different form in Book Dealers World.

Old Writer's Digest Provides Timely Self-Promotion Tips

By Susan Osborn, NCPA Member

Recently, Pete Hayes passed along back issues of *Writer's Digest*. As I review them, I'm finding some oldies but goodies. Included in these gems is an article by Gregg Levoy, one of my favorite authors. (Gregg Levoy, "Seven Ways to Make Contacts," *Writer's Digest*, September 1993, pp. 35-39.)

Levoy says, "You don't get attention if nobody knows you exist!" He spells out seven tips for self-promotion.

1. Tell everybody. Levoy points out self-promotion calls for courage. However, the process is less fearsome if you begin by talking with people close to you - telling them what you do and asking them what they do.
2. Keep a press box. Be ready to send out your resume, published clips, letters of recommendation, reviews, photos, dust jackets, business cards and brochures.
3. Sound the trumpets. Make sure your work is noticed. When anything of yours is printed, make copies and send them to people who might be interested.
4. Volunteer. Join professional organizations and serve on a committee, edit a newsletter or put together a conference.
5. Apprentice. Trade labor for learning in the writing industry.
6. Teach. Offer workshops and lectures to service clubs, trade associations, church and temple groups, journalism classes, senior centers, cruise lines and writers' groups.
7. Get into the community. Put on a show. Gather friends and colleagues for an evening reading or benefit for a local charity, hosted by a local bookstore or coffeehouse. Tell the media about it.

In summary, Levoy says, "The contacts game is about how you relate to virtually everybody with whom you come into contact. Touch people by the sheer force of your own exuberance. This generates energy and tells them whatever assistance they offer will go toward a worthy cause and be appreciated."

Susan Osborn is a staff writer for Senior Spectrum, www.senior-spectrum.com.

NCPA 2010 Conference Planning Underway

By Rosa Umbach, NCPA Conference Director

Over the summer we began the planning of the NCPA 2010 Conference. Our planning team has five energetic, insightful, and enthusiastic members who are planning a day of current topics, dynamic speakers, and valuable networking opportunities. We will provide an update on planning activities in the newsletter. For now, please mark your calendar to hold the date of Saturday, April 24, 2010, so you won't miss this exciting conference.

The NCPA 2010 Conference Planning Team members are: Kim Edwards, Margie Yee Webb, Lynda Straus, Norma Jean Thornton, and Rosa Umbach.

NCPA Treasurer's Report

NCPA treasurer Anna Hourihan reports that NCPA's bank balance is a healthy \$8,487.24. More information is available in the Files section of the NCPA Yahoo group, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NCPA>. You need your Yahoo ID and password to access the group's message archive and other files.

BalonaBooks Holding Up in Challenging Market

Special to The Pen & Press

BalonaBooks' new niche offerings are doing relatively well in a stressed marketplace, according to publisher Jonathan Pearce. *Bandits! A Dangerous Adventure on Gold Rush Trails* and *Emma Snow: At the Edge of the World* are by Joaquin Peralta. The books, both historical fiction, went on the market respectively in January and April of 2009.

Bandits! details the adventuresome plight of a 13-year-old boy, a runaway from his family's goat farm at Hangtown, seeking his fortune in the 1853 gold fields. He happens to speak Spanish and is kidnapped and held as interpreter for a month by the outlaw band of Joaquin Murietta.

Emma Snow is the story of an orphaned, articulate 12-year-old Boston girl and her younger brother taken by their fortune-seeking stepfather to 1848 Gold Rush "Yerba Buena" and sold into servitude there to make their way on their own. *Emma* had a brief but affirmative "reader's review" in the September 6 issue of the *Christian Science Monitor* that has resulted in orders.

Scheduled for early 2011 is a YA-Crossover in Magical Realism by Balona editor Jon Riis. Titled *Something for Nothing*, the story features a college freshman, a giant, a fairy, and a talking mouse.

Phil Silver Recounts 2009 Book Sales Experience

By Phil Silver, NCPA Member

I was advised early on that with my books *Boga Bear: Beat the Heat and Boga Bear: Staying Cool* (both print-on-demand, POD, books), and my third book, *Andi the Bee*, (pretty much self published), that I don't need a distributor. Especially since *Andi* is a niche market book. So I listened to the advice and set out on my own to market my books any way I could.

I decided in December of 2008, that in 2009 I wanted to do at least two sales events per month. That seemed reasonable to me. For those of you who rely on your book sales for a living, you must think I'm crazy, but you have to understand that I'm not reliant upon the sales of my books to sustain my life style. I just enjoy getting out there and meeting people at book fairs, fine arts and crafts fairs, and seeing the faces of little children in a school classroom as I read to them from my books. All the money I get from the sales of my books goes right back into savings account to help defray cost of my next book or book related expenses. So again, two events a month seemed reasonable to me.

So far this year, I've done 32 events, with the 32nd held the evening of October 17th at the Placer County Fine Arts and Wine Party in the new Roseville Fountains Shopping Center. I've tried just about every kind of show you can think of with children's books.

I started the year off by doing a gun show, followed by an Easter Egg Hunt, children's barber shops, banks, used children's clothing stores, car shows, Folsom Thursday Night Markets, and some other off-the-wall events. I'll go just about anywhere to put my books in the public's eye. I've even have a group of ladies who bought and liked *Andi the Bee* so much that they started a campaign to get me on the Oprah Show, but so far, Oprah hasn't called.

With a couple more months to go, I still have several more events set up through the end of the year. Besides these fun sales events, I've also made some sales into the non-book-store markets, and made many contacts in the niche market area. Needless to say, I exceeded my bogey of two events per month and have sold close to 300 books in the process. Just getting out there and selling is the key for me. I know that if I can get my book out there, I can sell it.

By far, my proudest moment came from one of my many book donations. This particular donation was made to a friend's church charity to raise money for an orphanage in Uganda. Many months after I made that donation, I received a letter from April Dobbs, describing her experience in reading my books to the children.

I recently decided that it was time to get a distributor because I missed out on some fairly large sales. The only reason I couldn't close the deal was, I didn't have a distributor. Barnes & Noble told me they wanted to carry my book but couldn't do without a distributor. So I set out on a personal quest to research and find the best distributor to fit my needs. The list of distributors isn't huge, but it is quite self limiting because of their re-

quirements, and I found myself with a very short list of three possible distributors. I contacted all three and was rejected by all because they don't handle POD books at all and won't handle a new author with only one title. That ended my search for a distributor and set me on a new path to market and distribute my own books.

I'm currently in the process of creating a new marketing plan to better reach the niche market of disabled children as well as the non-book store retail market. If I'm successful, I'll share my success with you at a Saturday monthly meeting.

Marketing, the way I have been marketing, is very hard and time consuming, but making every sale, and meeting every new contact for possible future sales, makes it all worthwhile for me. Parlaying new contacts into new sales is the key, but again, it can become very time consuming. I guess it's true that nothing worthwhile will ever come along without a lot of hard work and time.

That's my story. It's been a very busy and interesting year with a huge learning curve built into it.

Phil Silver, PBJ Books, www.pbjbooks.com; pnsilver@gmail.com; 916-772-4872 or 916-759-6559; Boga Bear: Beat the Heat; Boga Bear: Staying Cool; Andi the Bee.

Terry Prince to Speak at Suburban Writers, Nov. 16th

Special to The Pen & Press

Terry Prince, long time NCPA Member and past board member will be speaking at the Sacramento Suburban Writers Club on November 16, 2009 about Blogging and the Writer. (The meeting, at the Fair Oaks Library, Fair Oaks Blvd., south of Madison, starts at 7 pm.) Learn how blogs can be of great value to fiction and nonfiction writers as well as consultants and small business owners.

Terry will explain how creating a blog for your writing business or avocation may be easier than setting up a website and keep you technologically up to date with your peers. Terry will talk about various blog platforms and features to consider when setting up your blog. She will also discuss how blogs can provide excellent and unique research material for your writing and articles as ways to organize your blog reading. Terry's blogs are <http://terrystinking.wordpress.com> and <http://transitionyourlife.blogspot.com>.

Terry Prince is a productivity coach and organizing consultant with over 100 published articles. She has also authored many technical publications for the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization (NSGCD). Terry served on the NCPA Board of Directors for over 10 years and was the founder of the organization's book award event. Terry is currently four chapters short of finishing her first mystery novel.

Terry Prince, CPO-CD®; 25 Years of creating order out of Chaos; Founding NSGCD President; Golden Circle NAPO Member; twitter.com/TerryPrince; www.linkedin.com/in/terryprince; Blog: <http://terrystinking.wordpress.com>; Blog:

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Karin Carter Offers Free Critique Service Trial

Special to The Pen & Press

NCPA Member Karin Carter is offering a critique service to members. She explains the offer as follows:

If you have a writing critique group, you may have all the input you can handle. But if you've ever asked for feedback and received only unusable comments such as "It's good," or "It was interesting," I have an offer for you. I'm a freelance business writer and editor, and I'm considering offering a critique service. To test my idea, I'm offering free critiques to anyone who'd like feedback on their writing, fiction or nonfiction.

Here's how I imagine it would work: you send me a four-page sample (that's about 1,000 words) and some information about your project. For whom are you writing? How high are you aiming-do you want your writing to be workmanlike or original/poetic/artistic? Are you already published? Are you just curious about a critique and doing it for fun, or are you always working on your writing skills?

My goal will be to give you specific, usable feedback on a detailed level on things like word choice, sentence rhythm, and sentence construction. I do not feel qualified to judge bigger issues such as your story arc or theme or subject matter, so I won't! I'd be glad to chat about those issues with you, if you're interested, but I'm not an expert at writing fiction. I'm a lifelong reader and have been writing and editing for many years, first full time at Microsoft, then as a freelancer in the tech arena and most recently for other small businesses.

Any advice would be offered in a positive way that would help you see where you could improve. You should feel encouraged, not discouraged, after getting feedback from me. Would you like to see if I can help you fine-tune your writing and get the results you're looking for? My email address is kc@kcwriting.com and my phone is 425.466.1535.

Karin began her editing career at Microsoft in 1991. At the same time, she started editing as a freelancer, helping businesses with their user manuals and web sites. In 2003 she formed a small publishing company to publish her own book about life at Microsoft and another writer's book about managing technical employees. She has a small collection of rejection slips for her fiction and remains a lifelong reader in love with the magic of creating worlds with words.

Book Reviews

By Carol Ryan, NCPA Member

Adventures in Publishing: How to Publish Color Children's Books with Original Illustrations, and Other Books in Full-Color for Self-Publishing Writers, by Brent Sampson \$9.95.

This book consists of 24 pages, each containing a verse couplet. Each couplet ends with the name of the company the book is advertising. One disturbing thing about the book is how the author, Brent Sampson, has successfully manipulated Amazon into selling such drivel.

Another book by Sampson, *Sell Your Book on Amazon*, tells (with a foreword by Dan Poynter, no less), exactly how to do it. *Sell Your Book on Amazon* has content and tells you what to do to manipulate Amazon. His *Adventures* book illustrates how any book, no matter how useless or offensive, can be sold if the author is willing to go to the dark side and employ shady techniques.

For example, I was infuriated when I received the *Adventures* book and discovered I'd paid for a childish commercial. So I wrote a review on Amazon exposing the lack of content. One of Sampson's techniques is to have friends, relatives, and willing sycophants write glowing reviews. Even though I gave his book one star, he had fifty friends (including the CEO of the publishing company the book advertises) give him five-star reviews, making his average review outstanding. I have to admit Sampson knows his stuff and employs all of his own tricks to sell on Amazon. I can recommend his *Sell Your Book on Amazon*. Just stay away from anything else by him, and consider a shower after reading his 'good one.'

Nominations for the 2010 William Saroyan International Prize for Writing: Deadline January 31, 2010

The Saroyan award, given by Stanford University Libraries in partnership with the William Saroyan Foundation, recognizes newly published works of fiction and nonfiction with a \$5,000 award for the winner in each category. The prize is designed to encourage new or emerging writers and honor the Saroyan literary legacy of originality, vitality and stylistic innovation. (NCPA member Kiyo Sato's *Dandelion Through the Crack* won the Saroyan nonfiction award in 2008.)

For official entry forms, contest rules, and other information on the prize, visit the Saroyan Prize website: <http://library.stanford.edu/saroyan/>.

Visit <http://library.stanford.edu/saroyan/2010SaroyanRelease.pdf> to view the press release.

Please note that the deadline for submissions is January 31, 2010.

Other News, Announcements, and Comments

Your editor invites submissions for this section of *The Pen & Press*. Short items about NCPA members or otherwise of interest are welcome here.

✓ Your editor hopes to have a more complete update on new members in the next issue of *The Pen & Press*. My apologies to those who have been overlooked this time. Meanwhile, one new member on whom I have information is Pamela Johnson (Stone Harbour Press, www.stoneharbourpress.com). NCPA welcome new members, and of course we are always happy to have visitors at our monthly meetings, whether or not they choose to join or not.

✓ Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 24, 2010, date of the annual NCPA publishing conference. Planning is underway and details will be announced as they become available. Tentatively, the annual NCPA Book Awards Dinner will be the preceding evening, Friday, April 23, 2010.

✓ Patricia (Pat) Canterbury's first non-children's mystery *Every Thursday* is the first Nancy Noire mystery set in a fictionalized coastal town in Washington State. The book will be launched on Saturday, December 12, 2009, at Book Lovers Book Store, Madison at Manzanita, Sacramento. Time is to be announced.

✓ Suzy Hopkins' middle grade fiction book *The Extraordinary Summer of the White Horse*, for 9-11 year-olds, won the bronze medal from the Moonbeam Children's Book Awards for First Book - Chapter Book.

✓ USA Book News awarded Dr. John Mayfield's *Body Intelligence* first place for 2009 in the "Best New Non-Fiction" category: *Body Intelligence: How to "Think" Outside Your Brain and Connect to Your Multi-Dimensional Self*, by John Mayfield, D.C., Nubalance Publishing Company, ISBN: 978-1-59712-314-3.

✓ This is a cautionary tale. Take a look at <http://www.dreambooksllc.com/editing>. Beyond the errors on that page offering editing services, you might be surprised to learn that the principal, a fellow named Jacob Morris, is eighteen years old, a high school student with no meaningful writing, editing, or publishing experience. Yet he and a few friends set themselves up as professional editors and, although they have dropped this part for the time being, publishers.

You can find an illuminating and vigorous exchange of message board posts about the company here: www.absolutewrite.com/forums/showthread.php?t=153384

✓ A new paperback edition of Ken Umbach's *The Pursuit of Publishing: An Unvarnished Guide for the Perplexed*, is available via <http://stores.lulu.com/kenumbach>.

✓ **Your notice or announcement could go here!**

A Note from the Editor

Send your articles and announcements to ken@umbachconsulting.com.

Use **NCPA NEWSLETTER** (*exactly and only that*) as the email subject heading. That helps me to find newsletter submissions in the avalanche of incoming email.

Please provide submissions in Microsoft Word (or compatible) format, or in plain text with no special formatting. If you would like to discuss an article idea or have any other questions or comments about the newsletter, feel free to email or phone.

What fits best into *The Pen & Press* is news of members' books, activities, marketing, speaking engagements, and accomplishments. Also of value: members' insights into the challenges and opportunities of writing and publishing and information on regional resources for authors and publishers. Cover illustrations and other photos are welcome in jpeg or other standard format. Please keep photo dimensions and file sizes reasonable. When in doubt, call or email me in advance.

The deadline for submissions for the next issue (January – February 2010) is close of business, Friday, December 18, 2009. Earlier submissions are better.

— Ken Umbach, editor



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Readers are of course free to print copies for noncommercial personal use, and NCPA members are welcome to print copies of the newsletter to share with friends, colleagues, and prospective members.

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Meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month, 10 am to noon, at Merrill Gardens Retirement Community, 7418 Stock Ranch Road (just west of Sylvan Road about a quarter mile north of Greenback Lane), Citrus Heights.

Visitors are welcome.