

**THE HIGHLY  
EFFECTIVE  
HABITS OF  
5 SUCCESSFUL  
AUTHORS**



OUTSKIRTS PRESS PRESENTS

**THE**  
**HIGHLY**  
**EFFECTIVE**  
**HABITS** OF  
**5** **SUCCESSFUL**  
**AUTHORS**

**How They Beat the**  
**Self-Publishing Odds**  
(and how you can, too)

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Outskirts Press Presents the Highly Effective Habits of 5 Successful Authors:  
How They Beat the Self-Publishing Odds, and How You Can, Too!

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# INTRO BY BRENT SAMPSON

When I contacted the five authors highlighted here and asked if they were interested in being featured in a new book about self-publishing success, every one of them expressed the same level of excitement and collaborative spirit. Ms. Sally Shields sent an article the same day; Ms. Charlotte Endorf filled my in-box with words and photographs; Mr. Ronnie Lee humbled me with his heartfelt response.

Each of these authors took different paths toward self-publishing success. In their own words they will share their respective habits and their private lives within the following pages. While collaborating with them, what I found most interesting were the traits they share: a positive attitude, an honest interest in helping others, and an unflinching desire to share their work and their words with the world.

You see, an author's marketing efforts never end. That is perhaps the single most important habit they have in common.

For instance, when Sally Shields sent me her article, she also attached a screenshot of her new book, *The Collaborator Rules*, on Amazon with a No. 1 Amazon sales rank in both the Organizational Learning and Management & Leadership categories.

When Gang Chen sent me his article, he also included information about an entire series of books he has planned, many of which he hasn't even published yet. But he wanted me to know about all of them.

Ronnie Lee provided me with so much content, it was difficult to narrow it down. Perhaps that is what happens when you are one of the most prolific published authors in the world. Since 2006 he has published over 5,500 pages (and counting). Simply amazing.

When Andrew Rafkin and I corresponded, the communication was split evenly between his contribution to this book and his recent attendance at the *Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books, where he stopped by the Outskirts Press booth to market and sell his latest book, *Mexican Madness*.

Charlotte Endorf's contribution included photographs, and she was already prepared with authorization-to-publish forms. It's great dealing with a professional. Plus, she asked about the publication date of this book because she was already planning on how she would participate in its marketing. She understood that the success of this book would translate to increased exposure for her books. That is the very definition of progressive planning.

What habits do these authors share? They never stop promoting and they never stop writing. Andrew has published four books thus far with Outskirts Press. Sally has published two. Charlotte has published six, Gang Chen five, and Ronnie Lee eight. And they plan to write and publish many more. Sure, they all love Outskirts Press, and they all have very nice things to say, but that's not the point. The



point is that by being positive, prolific, and generous toward others, opportunities present themselves. It is that concept, and the warm messages in the following pages, that I hope you find inspirational and motivating as you pursue your own writing and publishing goals.

Never forget: a writer writes. It is the most highly effective habit of any successful author, self-published or otherwise. If you're not writing or rewriting the book itself, you may be writing an article to promote the book, or you may be writing an e-book to sell along with the book. Or, who knows... maybe someday you may even be asked to contribute a chapter to a book about *your* success.

What a great reason to write!

And with that, let's get to this tale of five authors, in their own words...

Brent Sampson  
President and CEO  
Outskirts Press, Inc.  
May, 2010



**THE HIGHLY  
EFFECTIVE  
HABITS OF  
5 SUCCESSFUL  
AUTHORS**

# outskirtspress CASE STUDY

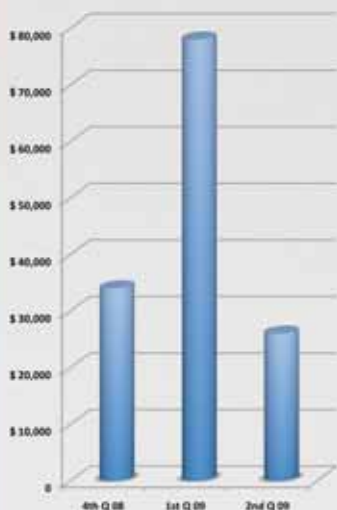
**AUTHOR:** Gang Chen

**TITLES:** *Planting Design Illustrated*  
& *LEED Exam Guide*

**PACKAGES:** Diamond & Diamond

**GOAL:** To earn additional revenue

Recent quarterly royalty payments paid to Mr. Chen



**MISSION  
ACCOMPLISHED**



## LEED GA EXAM GUIDE

A MUST-HAVE FOR THE  
LEED GREEN ASSOCIATE EXAM.  
COMPREHENSIVE STUDY MATERIALS,  
SAMPLE QUESTIONS, MOCK EXAM,  
GREEN BUILDING LEED CERTIFICATION,  
AND SUSTAINABILITY ILLUSTRATIONS.

## Planting Design ILLUSTRATED

A MUST-HAVE FOR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
A Holistic Garden Design Guide with Architectural and Horticultural  
Insights and Ideas from Expert Gardeners in Major Cultures

**GANG CHEN**

"After years of trying, I finally got my book published through the great service of Outskirts Press. Their services do not end after the book is published. They continue to provide excellent marketing advice. My book has consistently ranked as the number one or two selling book on the subject of Planting Design on Amazon since its release."

*—Gang Chen*

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**GANG  
CHEN**

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# BOOKS BY GANG CHEN

## Planting Design Illustrated

[www.outskirtspress.com/plantingdesignillustrated](http://www.outskirtspress.com/plantingdesignillustrated)

## Architectural Practices Simplified

[www.outskirtspress.com/architecturalpracticesimplified](http://www.outskirtspress.com/architecturalpracticesimplified)

## LEED AP Exam Guide

[www.outskirtspress.com/examguide](http://www.outskirtspress.com/examguide)

## LEED GA Exam Guide

[www.outskirtspress.com/leedgaexamguide](http://www.outskirtspress.com/leedgaexamguide)

## LEED BD&C Exam Guide

[www.outskirtspress.com/LEED-BDC](http://www.outskirtspress.com/LEED-BDC)

# 5 Steps to Self-Publishing Success, or How You Can Earn \$30,000 a Month through POD Publishing

by Gang Chen

The economy was not so bad when I started thinking about publishing my first book, *Planting Design Illustrated*. I had received some interest from traditional publishers but they wanted to make quite a lot of changes and add a co-author. These alterations would have made me dislike my own book! So, I turned to self-publishing. At the time, making a lot of money was not at the top of my priorities. I simply wanted to publish my own book in my own way.

Things change. Sure, I still want to have all the control and keep all my rights, but the royalty checks have a way of becoming more important, especially with the current economic climate. I self-published my second book, *LEED AP Exam Guide*, with Outskirts Press in September of 2008. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, is the most important trend in development and is revolutionizing the construction industry. My book had

the benefit of being published at the right time, at the right price. In one month (January 2009), I earned over \$30,000 in royalties (\$31,207.68, to be precise). I earned even more in February.

These are the steps I followed:

## **1. Write a valuable book**

This step is easily overlooked, but it is No. 1 on this list for a reason. Your book must provide some sort of value or benefit for the reader. In my case, my books are both non-fiction, and fairly niche. I earn the lion's share of my royalties from my *LEED AP Exam Guide*, which provides a mock exam, study guides, and sample questions for the LEED AP Exam, required to obtain one's title of LEED AP (Accredited Professional). Did I say it was niche? It is—and for people seeking the information contained in my book, it is also invaluable.

I don't think I'm saying anything revolutionary when I say that publishing non-fiction is an easier proposition on the self-publishing front than fiction. But even fiction books are valuable if they provide the type of escape your reader is seeking. Whether you write non-fiction, fiction, poetry, or something else entirely, the book must deliver on its promise. You might do everything else on this list, and you might even find some short-lived success, but ultimately the success of your book comes down to the strength of your book and the marketing efforts you put forth.



## 2. Identify your target audience

Who is your reader? If your answer is “everybody,” you need to reevaluate your goals and recalibrate your expectations. Even the best-selling book of all time appeals to less than one-fifth of the planet’s population. You know the book? The Bible. No book is meant for everybody. In fact, perhaps counterintuitively, the smaller your audience, the more success you will find. Look at my books: *Planting Design Illustrated* and *LEED AP Exam*. That small, target audience is precisely the reason my books are well known in the proper circles. Do I care that someone who reads *Harry Potter* has never heard of me? No. Is it incredibly important to me that students and professionals in the field of green building design and construction have heard of me? Yes.

Who do you think is easier to find and market to: a person who reads *Harry Potter*, or a student/professional in the field of green building design and construction? Exactly. The smaller your pond, the bigger your fish. Or something like that.

## 3. Recognize the type of book you are publishing

You should be realistic about the type of book you are writing, and the type of publishing you are doing. If you are self-publishing your book (regardless of whether you are doing it yourself or through a POD company, as I did), don’t try to force your book to be something

that it's not. Your book is not a mass-market paperback like those you find in a grocery store. Nor is it the latest hardback, discounted 80 percent, like those you find at Costco. As a self-publishing author, both of those scenarios are too risky, and to be frank, you probably don't possess the means to take on that kind of risk. So why try? Self-publishing authors publish trade paperback and hardback books that can be available regionally (perhaps), locally (probably), and online (definitely).

#### **4. Price your book appropriately**

No, this does not mean you should simply make your book as affordable as possible. It means you should do market research to determine the prices of similar books in your category. Look on Amazon.com for similar books (you'll need to be aware of these books anyway, when it comes to marketing yours). Examine their page counts and price points. Make an honest assessment of your book in relation to the other books in your category. Does your content justify a higher price? Does your page count suggest a lower price? Your method of publishing should be considered but should not play a definitive role in the price of your book—the marketplace should. It doesn't matter where you published your book if no one is buying it (just as it doesn't matter where you published your book if many people are buying it!). Just be sure you are comparing apples to apples (see No. 3 above).

## **5. Publish your book wisely**

My main consideration when choosing a publisher was not how much my royalties were going to be. That only became important to me after the book was published. But they say hindsight is twenty-twenty, so I'm going to share with you one of the main reasons my royalties are so high. The publisher I chose, Outskirts Press, pays me 100 percent of the profits of the book and lets me set my own pricing. A competitor, iUniverse, pays 20 percent of the profit. Xlibris pays 10 percent of the retail price. But by paying 100 percent of the profit, Outskirts Press allowed me to set the retail price to whatever I wanted, and now I earn the entire benefit of increasing my price.

Here's another way to look at it: If I had published my same exact book with iUniverse at the same exact retail price, instead of earning \$31,207.68 in January I would have earned approximately \$5,300. If I had published my same book with Xlibris, I would have earned approximately \$4,600. Yes, without knowing any better, I would have still considered myself a successfully self-published author, but probably not enough to write this article.

# How I Found Self-Publishing Success, and How You Can, Too

*by Gang Chen*

## 1. Find a niche and fill it

There is currently no official book on the LEED Green Associate Exam, and most of the existing books on LEED and LEED AP are too expensive and too complicated to be practical or helpful. The guides in my LEED Exam Guides Series fill in the blanks, demystify LEED, and uncover the tips, codes, and jargon for LEED as well as the true meaning of “going green.” They set up a solid foundation and fundamental framework of LEED.

Each book in the LEED Exam Guides Series covers every aspect of one or more specific LEED rating system(s) in plain and concise language. They are indispensable books for everyone—administrators; developers; contractors; architects; landscape architects; civil, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineers; interns; drafters; designers; and

other design professionals.

In my case, I asked why my LEED Exam Guides Series was needed. A number of books are available that you can use to prepare for the LEED exams. The U.S. Green Building Council Reference Guides, for instance, are comprehensive, but perhaps too comprehensive as they give too much information. The *LEED 2009 Reference Guide for Green Building Design and Construction (BD&C)*, for example, has about seven hundred oversized pages. Many of the calculations in the books are too detailed for the exam. They are also expensive. At approximately \$200 each, many people may not buy them for their personal use, but rather will seek to share an office copy.

This was a niche I could fill with my own LEED Exam Guide series.

## **2. Do your research and understand your market's need**

It is good to read a reference guide from cover to cover if you have the time. The problem is that few people have time to read a whole reference guide. Even if one were to read the whole guide, it is difficult to remember all the important issues to pass the LEED exam. Rereading the material several times is necessary to remember it all. The solution? My guidebooks!

Reading a reference guide from cover to cover without a guidebook is a difficult and inefficient way of preparing for the LEED exams because you do not know what USGBC

and the Green Building Certification Institute are looking for in the exam. But each book in my LEED Exam Guides Series fills in the blanks to become a valuable, reliable source. I knew what the market needed; I just had to deliver.

### **3. Identify the benefits of your book(s)**

By identifying the benefits of your book you are better prepared to effectively and efficiently market them. Customers only care about one thing – how your book will help them. If you can answer that question before they ask it, they're much more likely to make a purchase.

In my case, I made a list of benefits of my LEED Exam Guide Series:

- They are exam-oriented and more effective than the USGBC reference guides
- They will give you more information for your money
- They are better than most, if not all, other third-party books
- They give you comprehensive study materials, sample questions and answers, mock exams and answers, and critical information on building LEED certification and going green
- They are comprehensive yet concise
- They are small and easy to carry around
- You can read them whenever you have a few extra minutes

## 4. Develop a long term game plan

With my niche identified, my research conducted, and my benefits listed, I knew the world needed a series of LEED Exam guides. The next step was planning the series, right down to the titles and sub-titles. Don't just keep the information in your head. Write it down and somehow make yourself accountable to deliver on it.

For example, the next books in my LEED Exam Guides Series are currently in production. One book will eventually be produced for each of the LEED exams. The series includes:

**LEED AP Exam Guide:** Study Materials, Sample Questions, Mock Exam, Building LEED Certification (LEED-NC) and Going Green

**LEED GA Exam Guide:** A Must-Have for the LEED Green Associate Exam: Comprehensive Study Materials, Sample Questions, Mock Exam, Green Building LEED Certification, and Sustainability (LEED v3.0)

**LEED BD&C Exam Guide:** A Must-Have for the LEED AP BD+C Exam: Comprehensive Study Materials, Sample Questions, Mock Exam, Green Building Design and Construction, LEED Certification, and Sustainability (LEED v3.0)

**LEED ID&C Exam Guide:** A Must-Have for the LEED AP ID+C Exam: Comprehensive Study Materials, Sample Questions, Mock Exam, Green Interior Design and Construction, LEED Certification, and Sustainability (Available in early 2010)

**LEED O&M Exam Guide:** A Must-Have for the LEED AP O+M Exam: Comprehensive Study Materials, Sample Questions, Mock Exam, Green Building Operations and Maintenance, LEED Certification, and Sustainability (LEED v3.0)

**LEED Homes Exam Guide:** A Must-Have for the LEED AP+ Homes Exam: Comprehensive Study Materials, Sample Questions, Mock Exam, Green Building LEED Certification, and Sustainability

**LEED ND Exam Guide:** A Must-Have for the LEED AP+ Neighborhood Development Exam: Comprehensive Study Materials, Sample Questions, Mock Exam, Green Building LEED Certification, and Sustainability

**LEED GA Mock Exams:** A Must-Have for the LEED Green Associate Exam: A Companion to LEED GA Exam Guide: Questions, Answers and Explanations, Green Building LEED Certification, and Sustainability



## 5. Find a long term publishing partner

I tried to publish my first book, *Planting Design Illustrated*, with the conventional publishers. I contacted hundreds of them and I did get a book deal with one major publisher. Halfway through the publication process, the major publisher requested substantial revisions to my manuscript and suggested adding a co-author to my book. If I were to make those revisions, I would not like the book myself and I would rather not publish it. I eventually cancelled the contract with the major publisher and decided to publish the book myself.

So I compared various publishing options, and decided to go with Outskirts Press. The author representative and other people at Outskirts Press were hard-working and very responsive. They really know what they are doing. They walked me through the publication process step by step and made it very easy. After years of trying, I finally got my book published through the great service of Outskirts Press.

Their services do not end after the book is published. They continue to provide excellent marketing advice. Since its release, *Planting Design Illustrated* has consistently placed as No. 1 or No. 2 on Amazon's list of best-selling books in the Planting Design category.

# outski<sup>®</sup>press CASE STUDY

**AUTHOR:** Sally Shields

**TITLES:** *The Daughter-in-Law Rules*  
& *The Collaborator Rules*

**PACKAGES:** Diamond

**GOAL:** To achieve fame & publicity



"Not only is publishing possible, but it is easy and fun and invigorating and life-changing!"

—Sally Shields

In the 12 months following publication with Outskirts Press, Ms. Shields became a promotional dynamo, and ...

- ✓ Was a guest on over 100 radio shows
- ✓ Was listed in Ladies Home Journal
- ✓ Was a guest on nationally syndicated tv shows
- ✓ Joined a panel of writers at the ASJA convention
- ✓ Taught at a writers conference in Mexico
- ✓ Got her books into the hands of celebrities like Halle Berry, Jessica Alba, and Angelina Jolie
- ✓ Created a reality show treatment and signed with an agent who deals with production and television

**MISSION  
ACCOMPLISHED**



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**SALLY  
SHIELDS**

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# BOOKS BY SALLY SHIELDS

The Daughter-in-Law Rules: 101  
Surefire Ways to Make Friends with  
Your Mother-in-Law!

[www.outskirtspress.com/theDILRules](http://www.outskirtspress.com/theDILRules)

The Collaborator Rules: 101  
Surefire Ways to Stay Friends with  
Your Co-Author!

[www.outskirtspress.com/TheCollaboratorRules](http://www.outskirtspress.com/TheCollaboratorRules)

# How This Stay-at-Home Mom Became an Amazon.com Best-Selling Author

*by Sally Shields*

**H**i, I'm Sally Shields, author of the No. 1 Amazon.com bestseller, *The Daughter-in-Law Rules: 101 Surefire Ways to Make Friends with Your Mother-In-Law!*

So much has happened lately it's hard to believe that only recently I was a struggling first-time author. I didn't have a clue about writing a book, much less getting it published!

Here is my personal story:

Like most women, I got married and got a mother-in-law. But after a couple of years, I was left scratching my head, thinking, "Where is the manual for this?!"

I wrote to the ladies who authored the best-selling book *The Rules*, and told them that because they helped all these women meet and marry the men of their dreams, they needed to provide some advice on how to get along with the other women in their men's lives—their moms!

These two authors told me it was the best idea they'd ever

heard. I honestly just wanted some advice on the topic!

“You should write it,” they said.

At first I thought they were crazy; the last thing I’d written was a term paper in high school English class! But, the gears started turning in my mind. So I started to jot down all the troublesome incidents that would pop into my head in regards to my MIL, and came up with a rule and a solution to deal with each and every one. When I put a few of these rules into practice (and saw that they actually worked) I thought maybe I could help save other young wives years of needless contention!

But, what about getting published? It didn’t seem feasible from all the stories I’d heard about how impossible it was, and I didn’t have a clue what I was doing. But, I decided to try anyway. I went the traditional route, and contacted over a hundred literary agents. As the process evolved, I realized just how hard it really was. I eventually garnered the interest of a New York literary agent through a well-crafted query letter, and within a few weeks, I was signed. But soon I learned that a proposal was required, which, I found out, was even more difficult than writing a book in the first place! I had to do market research and statistical comparisons. I was jumping through hoops, and it was a process that I never want to repeat! Nevertheless, I got over that hurdle and finally, after several rounds of editing said proposal, the agent began to submit my manuscript.

Months went by. Fifteen rejection letters later, I slowly realized that even if I were lucky enough to get a publishing deal, it would require signing over my rights and editorial

control, and allowing the agency and publisher to decide on my book cover, interior layout, formatting, pricing, and release dates—all of which could take between one and two years, maybe more. And the publishing company would retain more than 90 percent of my book sale revenue.

I contacted an author in my genre who was “lucky” enough to be signed to a rather well-known traditional publisher and asked about her experience. She shared that she handed over her rights and was offered a meager \$3,000 advance, which was split with a co-author. She was promised a 10 percent-of-wholesale royalty rate. She was required to do her own publicity, and spent mucho bucks hiring a public relations firm. Ultimately, the company sold 20,000 copies of her book but 15,000 of them were returned—and destroyed!

The book was taken off the publisher’s roster, and shelved forever. She then had to hire an expensive attorney to reclaim the rights to her own book, which she was told could take several years.

At that point, I decided to investigate opting out of my contract. I thought I’d rather self-publish than go through all of that!

One day, I walked into a Barnes & Noble and just for fun asked if they ever carried self-published books. The person directed me to their Web site, where I saw an offer for a free guide from Outskirts Press. Little did I know that I had just walked into a gold mine—won the lottery, so to speak, the very first time I bought a ticket. I was so lucky!

Not only could I be in charge of my own pricing, in-

terior, book design, and distribution discount, but I could also order authors copies at a deep discount, get a free Web page, and be published within twelve to sixteen weeks—all for under \$1,000. And so, I ended up self-publishing with Outskirts Press. And what a thrill to hold my book in my hands for the first time!

My book came out looking exactly the way I wanted. The cover designer took my ideas and created something that even exceeded my expectations. It was placed with a wholesaler and made available through online outlets such as Amazon.com and Barnes&Noble.com.

My mom was so excited, and bought a few copies. So did my aunt in California, as well as my best friend from high school. The nice lady next door ordered a copy of my book for her daughter's wedding shower.

All very nice. But now what?

I soon found out how difficult it is to get a self-published book accepted by a traditional bookstore without knowing what you're doing. But where else do people go to buy books? I wrote the book so that I could deliver a message to the world, not so that it would sit unnoticed in some computer file in the sky! Through a friend, I heard about a course that taught authors how to get free publicity on their own through zero- and low-cost strategies. This was a very attractive idea since hiring a PR firm can cost up to \$8,000 a month! In this class, I learned that nothing can help you build credibility and increase sales faster than having the distinction of "bestseller status."

So, through an online e-mail blast strategy, I brought



my book to the No. 1 spot on Amazon.com in the Wedding Showers category. And that, I must say, was a fundamental factor that afforded my book an essential credibility boost. Indeed, I was elated to add the bestseller distinction to my name—and I was thrilled to sell a few hundred books in one day! Nevertheless, I soon realized that bestseller day was exactly that—a launching point. Now, how to effectively leverage my new bestseller status to its utmost advantage? How to use this distinction to catapult from selling a few hundred books on Amazon to becoming a true, six-figure-income author? Back to the drawing board.

I embarked on a journey to learn as much as I could about selling through non-traditional methods that had little to do with bookstore sales, since that wasn't an option anyway. I learned that corporations are often interested in using books as premium incentives to give to their customers or simply as gifts to their employees. So I started contacting corporations.

Voila! I partnered with 1-800-Flowers and they ran a full-page ad in the back of my book featuring a coupon code. I contacted several other corporations and currently have interest from major players such as David's Bridal, JC Penney and Bed, Bath & Beyond. Over many months, I studied the top gurus, ranging from authors and publishers, to media trainers, agents, radio hosts, producers, distributors, and more.

By this time, I was getting more and more interested in—OK, *obsessed* with—book marketing, so I decided to take a leap of faith, and signed up to attend a very costly

four-day event in New York City. My husband was sweating bullets! However, at this event, I met producers from over one hundred national TV and radio shows. I also met over fifty book marketing agents, distributors, and publishers.

Here's what I learned at the conference:

The biggest hurdle is not writing a book—it's what you do after the book that is the most significant. See, a book opens doors—it is the biggest and most important calling card you will ever have. But having a book doesn't mean people are going to buy it!

I began to understand the reality that very few people get rich from simply selling their books, aside from authors such as Deepak Chopra, Wayne Dyer, and the like. Rather, it is the back-end products and services that are created from the book that can make the difference between a struggling writer and a million-dollar author.

So, how does a regular person make a living from his or her book? The secret that successful authors know is how to use their books as tools to build their businesses. I learned that the secret to creating a business and selling lots and lots of books, my friends, is none other than knowing how to get massive publicity!

So, rising to the challenge, I set out to get major (and free) publicity for my book, using the strategies I'd been learning. Since self-publishing *The Daughter-in-Law Rules*, I have gained media coverage from over a hundred sources, ranging from radio and Internet, to print and television. My book reached No. 1 in the Wedding Showers category on Amazon, and I appeared on the nationally syndicated show,

*The Daily Buzz*. I was a featured expert on *Martha Stewart Whole Living Radio* and *Dr. Laura Schlessinger*, the No. 3 nationally syndicated radio therapist in America, who recommended *The Daughter-in-Law Rules* as her “pick of the week.” *The DIL Rules* was also chosen as “Hot Book of the Week” in *Star Magazine* on Mother’s Day, and the African Women Business Network purchased the foreign rights to *The DIL Rules* for distribution in Africa.

So, although I didn’t start out having a business, all the publicity I created has intrigued other authors, who are now asking me to coach them. So, what were some of the other results of all this great publicity? I now have a coaching career. I am a workshop and teleseminar leader, radio host, and creator of a potential reality show.

I still strive to make corporate sales, fundraise, and I still speak regularly at bridal events. See, as an author, you are now in the business of marketing. But remember, you have to have a clear vision and a strong desire genuinely to help people. For example, my vision is to create more harmony among mothers and daughters-in-law worldwide, as well as inspire others to follow their dreams through writing and self-publishing a book.

The moral? You *can* reinvent yourself! In order to become successful in any endeavor, the only two things you need are passion for your topic, and a sincere desire to help people. The rest will fall into place.

# ***The Collaborator Rules:* 3 Big Mistakes You Can Make with Author Collaborations and How to Correct Them**

*Excerpt by Sally Shields (copyright 2010)*

Writing is a lonely and difficult business. When you're all alone with a computer in the middle of the night and you can't decide if your character should get married or throw herself under a double-decker bus, it would be nice to have someone to ask. When you're pretty sure that what you've just written is either the worst rubbish any mind ever conceived or a stroke of Shakespearian genius, you might feel the need for a second opinion. When you know exactly how the screenplay starts and how it ends but you're missing that teensy part called "the middle," the thought may well cross your mind that what you need is—a collaborator!

Lots of writers work with collaborators. From screen-writing comedy teams to textbook authors, writing is not always best done alone, wallowing in self-pity. And so, many innocent, doe-eyed writers enter into collaboration, without

thoroughly considering the consequences of this monumental decision. If your writing is important to you, you must make sure that the collaboration is right for you. And when you do find someone who seems to be that perfect partner, is it always smooth sailing? Absolutely not!

Below are three mistakes that you can make inadvertently when collaborating, and some of the steps that you can take to avoid them, and safeguard yourself from potential disaster. Let's begin.

### **Mistake No. 1:**

*Rely on friendship to carry you through a collaborative process*

#### **Solution:**

Never trust anything to smiling handshakes (no matter how much you like your collaborator!). Co-authoring is a *huge* nightmare if one party ends up working harder than the other, or does not deliver content promptly, or if your collaborator suddenly does a 180 and ends up boiling a bunny. (For those of you innocent bunnies who were born after 1987, consider adding *Fatal Attraction* to your Netflix queue.)

### **Mistake No. 2:**

*Fail to copyright your original work*

#### **Solution:**

You have a great idea for a project, (or, if you're the one who came up with "the big idea", write it down, work on it as much as you can on your own, and apply for a copyright with the US Copyright Office. It doesn't mat-

ter how raw a form it's in; this is your brainchild, your hobbyhorse, your magnum opus, your intellectual property, and anything else that comes from it can be labeled a derivative work and will safeguard you from any future parties who may try to claim your efforts as their own.

The main points are (1) that ideas can be and are easily stolen and (2) writers must protect themselves. Although you cannot copyright ideas, you can copyright expressions of ideas; i.e., writings, drawings, musical compositions, and other tangible forms or expressions of this nature. So if you have a great idea, write about it and register it for copyright protection. However, someone else can also write about that same idea and register the copyright, provided he or she doesn't express it the exact same way you did. Copyright exists from the time of the subject's creation, so if you have a great idea and write about it, the time of its conception should be documented on your computer. Then be circumspect; discuss it only with those you completely trust and keep those discussions to the bare minimum until you've reduced it to paper and registered it with the US Copyright Office.

### **Mistake No. 3:**

*Get sloppy with your e-mail communication*

### **Solution:**

Communication used to involve human beings getting in the same place and speaking in such a way that they could hear each other directly. True story! Then

Albert Einstein or Marie Curie or one of those smart inventor types (Edison?) came up with a new tool. It was called a “telephone.” Now, people could talk to each other without leaving home, and without having to smell each other’s cooking! Later, of course, Al Gore invented the Internet, and everyone started sending e-mails. You don’t have to see anyone; you don’t have to talk to them. It’s perfect, right? LOL!

However, one of the great dangers of e-mail is that it’s too fast. Case in point: you read a message from your collaborator suggesting you revise the third chapter. You, on the other hand, think it’s a masterpiece. Also, the third section is in your area of expertise and your collaborator knows nothing about it. Not only that, but you stipulated in your original written scope of work that the third episode was solely your responsibility. So you fire off an e-mail: “3rd. chap fine, leave it.” Guess how much respect your collaborator feels from this mis-sive? Maybe you meant it in funny way, so you added a smiley. Think that caused her to grin? Think again. Once the context of full human communiqué is stripped away, all meaning is lost. You have to go out of your way to explain what you mean, and you have to imagine yourself receiving the e-mail. Is it truly clear? Is it respectful?

For more information about Sally Shields, speaker, radio personality, free publicity specialist, and author of the No. 1 Amazon.com bestseller, *The Daughter-in-Law Rules* visit [www.sallyshields.com](http://www.sallyshields.com).

# outski<sup>™</sup>rtsp<sup>™</sup>ress CASE STUDY

**AUTHOR:** Andrew J. Rafkin

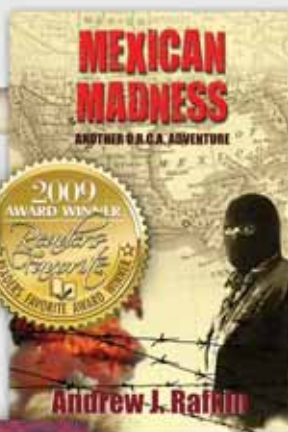
**TITLES:** *Red Sky Morning*  
*Creating Madness*  
*Mediterranean Madness*  
*Mexican Madness*

**PACKAGES:** Diamonds

**GOAL:** To publish award-winning novels



**MISSION  
ACCOMPLISHED**



"Don't let anyone tell you what  
you cannot do, not even  
yourself."

—Andrew J. Rafkin



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**ANDREW J  
RAFKIN**

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# BOOKS BY ANDREW J. RAFKIN

Red Sky Morning

[www.outskirtspress.com/redskymorning](http://www.outskirtspress.com/redskymorning)

Creating Madness

[www.outskirtspress.com/creatingmadness](http://www.outskirtspress.com/creatingmadness)

Mediterranean Madness

[www.outskirtspress.com/mediterraneanmadness](http://www.outskirtspress.com/mediterraneanmadness)

Mexican Madness

[www.outskirtspress.com/mexicanmadness](http://www.outskirtspress.com/mexicanmadness)

# The Old Man and the *Sky*

*by Andrew J. Rafkin*

I was born in 1946 in San Pedro, California, and grew up in a commercial fishing family. Through high school I worked on sport fishing boats, and at seventeen went commercial fishing with my father, the captain of a large purse seiner, during summer vacation. Two years later, a friend asked me if I could relieve him on his father's ninety-foot fishing boat, *Diana*, for four days, off the Santa Barbara coast; his wife was due to have their first baby.

On the second day of the trip, we got caught in a freak hurricane-force storm. The waves grew to thirty feet, and knocked the *Diana* on its side, throwing half the crew into the turbulent ocean. I was one on them. A crewman died in my arms while I tried to save him, causing me almost to lose my life.

It was a great sea story, I was told. "You should write a book," others would say later. "It would make a great movie."

About eight years after the incident, I was on a sport fishing trip with some friends and found myself telling them and other fisherman my tale while sitting in the galley. I received the same suggestions. My response was, “I’m not a writer; I barely made it through English 101.”

Someone on deck yelled. When everyone headed outside, an elderly fellow with thinning gray hair and a full beard stopped me on the way out. He said, “I loved your story, and I agree with your friends. It would make a great book.

“Take some advice from an old man who loves to read. Some day you might want to write this book. While it’s fresh on your mind, write an outline of everything you remember, and when you’re older and have more time, you’ll be prepared.”

I thanked him and went out to catch some tuna, and when I got back home I took his advice and made some notes.

Twenty-six years later, I was on a two-day fishing trip off the Mexican coast telling the same story—receiving the same responses. But this time I decided to write that book!

I found the fifty handwritten pages in a box full of memorabilia from high school and college. The yellow ruled papers were faded and the edges frayed, but that outline was the foundation of my first novel, *Red Sky Morning*.

It wasn’t always easy. For more than thirty years, I have served as the president and owner of Palos Verdes Security.

My wife and I live in a seventy-eight-year-old house on the bluff overlooking Angel's Gate lighthouse, entry to the Port of Los Angeles.

I still love the ocean, and go sport fishing as much as I can. In the near future, I plan to retire and build a fifty-eight-foot sport fisher catamaran, which has been a lifelong dream. I have a great wine cellar and carry on the family tradition of making wine like the Croatian and Italian fishermen of the past.

I wrote most of *Red Sky Morning* at my office. I would read excerpts of the story to my manager to see if she liked it. She said she did, and found the story to be similar to one told by her grandfather, who was a commercial fisherman and had almost lost his life in a storm. Upon further discussion, it became apparent that her grandfather, Ike Ventimiglia, was on the *Diana* with me, and that we had pulled him out of the net. I had resuscitated *him*! It truly is a small world.

Ike was in his eighties living near Redding, California, when he passed away. Thinking about Ike inspired me to work harder to complete *Red Sky Morning*.

Strangely, I've somehow come full circle from my past to the present. In the early morning while having a cup of coffee, I watch boats like the *Diana* making sets for fish off of Cabrillo Point.

The San Pedro fishing fleet has dwindled down to a dozen boats or so. The fishermen of the past made a good living, but today they can barely survive. Most of the fish are gone, and in the recent years, squid—better known as

calamari—have become popular. If it weren't for the local squid fishing, I don't think the local fishermen could survive.

Forty-four years ago, when this true-life adventure began, I was fishing on the *Western Ace*. My dad, the captain, pointed to these huge Russian trawlers that were dragging the bottom indiscriminately, catching every living creature that would go into the net. Dad said that type of fishing method would wipe out the cod fishing industry on the East Coast. His prediction came true. Indiscriminate fishing methods like that, along with long-lining and gill-netting, are now being restricted or banned.

Today we face a lot of challenges. Our world has become much smaller. Countries are forming alliances to address these problems and are also starting to be more aggressive about over fishing and the polluting of our oceans.

The oceans are our life source! We have the technology to change the course we're on. It will require a worldwide effort to protect and preserve our biggest asset: our oceans.

I'm going to fulfill my dream, and build that boat. I hope that my friends and I will continue to enjoy the sport of fishing. I also hope that our families, and especially my grandsons, will have the opportunity to enjoy the ocean and fishing as much as I do.

Publishing *Red Sky Morning* was another dream I had to fulfill. I developed a professional relationship with Outskirts Press and I've been with them for over four years. I've seen some of their competitors come and go. My first book received the EVVY literary award and recognition

from Readers Favorite. I now have four books published and all of them are award winners. I just finished writing another and two more are in the works. I remember back when I thought I could never be a writer. How long ago that seems...

If I had to come up with one piece of advice, it would be this: Don't let anyone tell you what you cannot do, not even yourself.

# Red Sky Morning

*Excerpt by Andrew J. Rafkin (copyright 2008)*

I felt the warmth of the morning sun on my face. A new day, Saturday, perfect for a round of golf. The sunrise was exceptional. Huge thunderheads rolled across the horizon creating a fantastic backdrop, the sun's rays reflecting a panoply of color across the sky. The mid-September weather patterns typified the time of year.

Seasonal storms off the southern Pacific coast of Mexico generated the unstable weather.

Across the border, they called the storms *chubascos*, which blew the thunderheads through the southern deserts of California and into Arizona. The locals there called it monsoon season, and complained about the humidity.

I was sitting on my patio, having a cup of coffee and enjoying the view, when my wife, Lynn, came out.

“Good morning, honey. Want some breakfast?”

“Thanks, but I’m going to have breakfast at the club. So, what are you going to do today?”



“Oh, Diane and I are going shopping at the South Coast Plaza. Then we’ll find a nice place to have lunch, so you better plan to eat at the club when you finish your round. When’s your starting time?”

“Around nine.”

“Well, you better get going if you plan to have breakfast.”

“Yeah, you’re right. See you later, honey.”

I gave my better half a kiss, went to the garage, jumped into my golf cart, and zipped over to the clubhouse.

As I pulled up to the practice area, a friend, Bob Clark, yelled out, “Hey, Andy, the albacore are biting. Let’s go fishing.”

“Sounds good to me. You want to charter the *Patriot*?”

“Sounds like a plan. I’ll make the arrangements after our round.”

Later that evening, the phone rang. Bob said, “It’s all set up. I talked to Greg, captain of the *Patriot*, and booked a two-day trip, a week from Monday. OK with you?”

“It’s good with me. You talk to anybody else?”

“Yeah, looks like Ed Cuff, Terry Small, and Bill Hasvold can go. You have anybody else in mind?”

“Yeah, I’ll call my cousin, Joe Zitko, and my nephew, John Wright; they’re good fishermen and a lot of fun. I’ll also call a good friend of mine, John Chuka, who I’m sure would love to go. That would bring it to eight good fishermen.”

Both John and Joey called back to confirm. The plan was for all four of us to meet at my house in San Pedro, Monday

afternoon, and take my Land Rover to H&M Landing, in San Diego. The rest of our party was driving from our country club in Murrieta. We planned to rendezvous at a restaurant near the landing for cocktails and dinner, then get aboard the *Patriot*.

By two o'clock, we were all at my house. We decided to take two cars, because we had so much gear. We loaded up my SUV and John's truck and took off, hoping to miss the rush-hour traffic. We got lucky. It took about three hours to get to the landing, which was full of action. Albacore fever was rampant.

Albacore are not only considered one of the best-tasting fish, but also a great fighter, challenging any angler. When the word got out that the albacore were biting, the landing reservation phones rang off the hook, and whatever boats had not been previously chartered, would soon be booked. When we arrived, all the parking lots were full. There were people all over the place. Some were arriving and anxious to board their boats and go fishing. Others were getting off the boats, finishing their single to multi-day trips, fishing both U.S. and Mexican waters.

First thing, get a parking spot! The place was like a circus with fishermen and looky-loos running around, and cars jockeying for a parking spot. If we were lucky, a boat or two might drop off their passengers, who would eventually find their cars. If not, it could take over an hour to park. We got lucky. Two cars pulled out, and we slid right in.

Joey asked me, "When are we meeting for dinner?"

"At six. We've got twenty minutes; let's go check out

the action.”

We left our gear locked up in my Land Rover and headed for the dock. The aroma of smoked tuna filled the air. The dock was like a beehive of people, with four boats pulling in and their fishermen milling around the dock. When their trip started, each angler received a number, and any fish he caught was immediately tagged for identification at the end of the trip.

The crews loaded carts full of fish and pushed them up to the dock. Each boat had its own staging area, where the passengers circled and waited for the crew to call out their numbers.

There was total chaos. The crew members yelled out numbers; the fishermen claimed their fish and dragged them into piles. There were booths set up around the staging area with vendors selling hand-packed, canned, or smoked albacore, and trying to convince the fishermen to trade their fresh tuna for the cans or smoked fish. I felt either way the fishermen got the worst part of the deal, but if they preferred smoked, or canned fish, instead of fresh, who was I to criticize?

We walked around and took in the action. Joey said, “Hey, Chuka, looks like the fishing couldn’t be better.”

“Man, I’m glad I could make it. I almost had to cancel because of a real estate deal. You know, I didn’t have time to change my line. It’s only a couple of years old, so it should be OK, don’t you think?”

“Are you kidding? I changed my line, just for this trip. Wouldn’t you get pissed if your line broke every time you hooked a big fish?”

“I guess I better get some new line.”

“John and I filled our reels on Wednesday at the Rusty Hook. I think you need to pay a visit to the tackle store.”

We wandered over to the H&M Landing store, where John bought the line he needed, and the rest of us were able to find something new to add to our tackle boxes.

We got to the restaurant about 6 p.m. The rest of the group was waiting for us at the bar. We had just ordered a drink when the hostess informed us that our table was ready. Dinner was fantastic; we all drank too much and had a great time. We were all pumped up to go fishing, and then the stories started: *How I lost the big one*.

“Joey, remember when we were at the East Cape and caught seven marlin in two hours?”

“How about that time when the four of us caught 290 albacore in one day!” said Bob.

“Yeah, sure, take off the zero, and I might believe you,” said Bill.

“Hey, Bob, did you get a scar where Bill hooked you in the ass?”

Everybody was laughing, then they started the heckling. “Aw, come on and show us!” yelled Ed.

To our surprise, Bob stood up and browned us all.

That really started things going. Known for his quick wit, Joey jumped in with one of his classic jokes:

“One day, this parish priest decided to go fishing at the local lake. He got to the marina early in the morning and rented a rowboat, loaded up his gear, and rowed out onto the lake. It wasn’t long before he caught a fish. He thanked

God, took out the hook, and put the fish in a bucket. When he bent over he saw that there was some water in the bottom of the boat. He didn't remember seeing any water before he left the dock, but he wasn't sure.

"He hooked another fish and was reeling it in when another boat with fishermen came by. They congratulated him and noticed a lot of water in the bottom of the priest's boat. One of the fishermen said, 'It looks like you might have a leak,' and offered assistance. The priest responded, 'It's OK. God will keep me safe. Bless you, and good luck.'

"Fishing was red hot, and within the next hour the priest caught five more fish. Another boatload of anglers came by, and one of them asked the priest what kind of bait he was using, then noticed that the priest's boat was around half full of water and again offered him assistance. The priest thanked him but again said, 'God is with me and will take care of his disciples.'

"About fifteen minutes later, a helicopter flew over the lake and hovered over the priest. The pilot called down and offered assistance. The priest's response was the same.

"Later, the priest decided to call it a day and started rowing back to the marina, but he didn't get very far before his boat sank and he drowned."

"Now, the priest was in front of St. Peter demanding to speak to God. In front of God, he asked, 'Why have you done this to me? I have been loyal to you, celibate, and have preached your message. Why have you forsaken me?'

"God shook his head, 'What more do you want from me? I sent you two boats and a helicopter!'"

## outskiirtpress CASE STUDY

**AUTHOR:** Charlotte Endorf

**TITLES:** *After the Rain, Oh the Beautiful Rainbow!*

*Plains Bound: Fragile Cargo*

*By Train They Came, Volume I*

*By Train They Came, Volume II*

*Unsung Neighbors*

*They Call Me Teddy*

**PACKAGES:** Diamonds

**GOAL:** To bring her family closer together  
in the face of hardship

**MISSION  
ACCOMPLISHED**



In 2004 Charlotte's daughter, Sarah, became very ill. Rather than admitting defeat at the hands of the illness, Charlotte and Sarah joined together to collaborate on writing and publishing a series of books. Then the entire Endorf clan embarked on a cathartic journey of promotion, complete with costumes.

*"As Walt Disney said, 'If you can dream it, you can achieve it. However, goals are mere dreams without an effective marketing plan.' Outskiirtpress goes full circle to ensure success. Our dreams are becoming a reality, thanks to Outskiirtpress. We have nothing but rave reviews and have sell-outs at book signings. We truly appreciate it. Thanks, Outskiirtpress."*

*—Charlotte Endorf*

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# CHARLOTTE ENDORF

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# BOOKS BY CHARLOTTE ENDORF

After the Rain,  
Oh the Beautiful Rainbow!\*

[www.outskirtspress.com/thebeautifulrainbow](http://www.outskirtspress.com/thebeautifulrainbow)

Plains Bound: Fragile Cargo\*

[www.outskirtspress.com/plainsbound](http://www.outskirtspress.com/plainsbound)

By Train They Came, Volume I\*

[www.outskirtspress.com/bytrain](http://www.outskirtspress.com/bytrain)

By Train They Came, Volume II\*

[www.outskirtspress.com/bytraintheycame](http://www.outskirtspress.com/bytraintheycame)

Unsung Neighbors

[www.outskirtspress.com/endorf](http://www.outskirtspress.com/endorf)

They Call Me Teddy

[www.outskirtspress.com/Teddy](http://www.outskirtspress.com/Teddy)

\* in collaboration with daughter Sarah M. Endorf



# **Top 4 Out-of-the-Box Book Marketing Tricks to Promote Your Self- Published Book**

*by Charlotte Endorf*

**A**s an author of historical biographies and self-help non-fiction, I put a lot of time, energy, and research into my books. I go to great lengths to provide my readers with an authentic and historically accurate reading experience. I consider it my duty; it's definitely my calling. It's important to me that my readers have a chance to experience the particular time and place in which any of my books are set. I put my heart and soul into my work—so much so that once my books are published they've essentially become an image of me.

I'm proud of that and therefore very motivated to share these experiences with others. Book marketing is not without its hardships. But like so many of the immigrant orphans I profile in my books, I can overcome the challenge and demonstrate my perseverance.

For instance, here are four out-of-the-box marketing techniques that I have used to market my books. They may help you, too.

## **1. Make your book a performance through a skit or play**

I admit it is sort of a gimmick, but it is also a lot of fun. You see, my immediate family has a knack for bowing to my whims; they're very kind. And not one of them refused when I asked them to dress up in period attire to portray characters in my books. They've actually become the heroes, villains, and historical figures in my books. We perform live skits at book events that are held everywhere from the local bookstore to the public library. I can tell you firsthand our performances are received a whole lot better than a boring old book signing—and there's also a lot more applause! It's what I've come to expect as an “authorpreneur,” because I have a winning team helping to make creating and promoting books all about having a good time. Does it hurt that it brings me closer to my family or helps me sell more books? No; that's icing on the cake.

## **2. Make your book Kindle ready**

Recently, I attended a rather savvy self-employment conference, which advised participants that all self-published books should be Kindle ready. Less than a week later,

I received an e-mail from my publisher, Outskirts Press, letting me know that they could produce Kindle editions for all my current books—and all my future ones, too. As an author, it is nice to be on the cutting edge of publishing technology. Kindle editions receive their own listing in the Amazon search results, and depending upon the price you set, you can earn as much as 70 percent royalties, directly from Amazon.com. More exposure, more sales, more money? You bet!

### **3. Create an On-Demand Espresso Book Machine edition of your book**

The Espresso Book Machine was named the “Invention of the Year” by *Time* magazine and provides a revolutionary, direct-to-consumer distribution model for books. Put simply, the EBM is an automated book-making machine. The operator selects a title to print, and within a few minutes a book emerges, with a full-color cover, trimmed to an exact size, and indistinguishable from the publisher’s version. As they say, “Hot off the press!” With Espresso Book Machines already available in locations such as the New York Public Library and bookstores worldwide, having an Espresso Edition of your book helps you deliver your content to your potential customers in the format, and with the immediacy, they require to make the purchase. Once you have additional editions, send out new press releases announcing the increase in your books’ availability.

## **4. Don't just sell your books—sell yourself**

Self-publishing has helped me get to where I want to be as an author and as an entrepreneur. I'm an incredibly proud member of the ever-growing group of authorpreneurs who are making our mark and transforming the publishing world, but I, for one, didn't do it alone. My on-demand publisher, Outskirts Press, has been an invaluable resource. They've offered great ideas and effective marketing support. They've been somewhat of a lightning rod to help me accomplish my goals of being a successful writer. I realized that as an authorpreneur, I'm not just selling a book or a number of different books; I'm selling myself. And in order to sell myself, I have to establish my value. My expertise is in biographical non-fiction and self-help. Identify your unique selling propositions and leverage them.

As a writer, I find it's really nice to know that words make a difference, whether it's my latest creative opus or an e-mail to my family. Words help us help one another figure things out. Words make us laugh and cry. Words teach us about the past and about the men and women we want to become. It's a fine thing to be a wordsmith. In spite of the occasional writer's block, I know there is nothing else I would rather do than write. I live to compose stories that make the past come alive. It's a pretty sweet life, but what is even sweeter is when writers have what we need in the way of an audience—a growing, ever-expanding readership—so that we can just keep writing.

# An Attitude of Gratitude

*by Charlotte Endorf*

At a time when our armed forces are at battle once again, many are concerned about where their products, purchased and consumed, are made. Burger King, home of the famous flame-grilled Whopper since 1957, is the second-largest hamburger chain in the world. It was made in America.

Although Burger King is ranked *second* in America, I'm certain its originators, James McLamore and David Edgerton, would express an *attitude of gratitude* at news of their company's annual revenue of \$11 billion.

I love their famous slogan, "Have It Your Way," which caters to who is really most important—the customer. This was demonstrated on April 1, 1998, when it was announced that the Whopper would now be available in a left-handed version to better serve the 13 percent of Americans that are left-handed. I was thrilled, since I am one of the minority

13 percent in this right-handed world. Of course, it was merely an April Fool's joke!

I grew up in the Midwest. I hated being stuck indoors all winter. I had to get outside no matter how much snow was on the ground. I was grateful for the beauty of the newly fallen white stuff. I remember making snow angels for hours. We had a trailer house and as my siblings were born I got the couch to sleep on in a room addition. It worked. A space heater kept me warm. I'd get up early in the morning to write. I was out of everybody's way in that little room. I was grateful for my own space.



**As a kid, nothing was better than a  
good snow!**

Each summer we'd travel to South Dakota to visit my father's huge family. He was the youngest of eleven. It was so hot outside. We'd find creative ways to cool off with

water. We just knew an egg would fry on the sidewalk.

We drank lots of Coke, using the heat as our excuse. Coca-Cola is another product that is made in America. I remember telling our parents how we weren't drinking much because we were splitting a bottle. The thing we failed to disclose was just how many bottles we were splitting! Did you know that in 1985 Coca-Cola was the first soft drink consumed in space? Coca-Cola appears in countless films, including *It's a Wonderful Life*; there is a 1914 Coca-Cola soda fountain in Gower Drugs.

Picnics were the highlight of our time with family we'd traveled to see. We were grateful for the shady trees in the park and another summer to chat.



**For cake, I eat with both hands!**



**The beginning of my costume days!**

I can eat with both hands. Did you know that President James A. Garfield could write with both hands at once?

I have loved to dress up since I was just two years old. My parents got me a red cowgirl outfit. I must have been a sight, wearing it constantly with my red hair. I guess I just loved it down to the matching cowgirl boots!

They say that left-handers are unique and better at sports. The unique part is right, but I was really lousy at every type of sport I ever tried. Whether it was volleyball, basketball, or track in high school, I spent a great deal of time on the bench; there is, however, always a reason to be grateful. It was at volleyball practice that I met my true love and husband—Kevin!



**All left-handers are not good at sports,  
but the boys you find are great!**

As I was ready to graduate, I could not decide what I wanted to do. My son is now nearing that point. I watch him with those same troubled looks and feel for him and all of the other graduates as they attempt to make such big decisions. Deep in my heart I wanted to go into law enforcement. Yet I knew I did not want those hours after I started a family. My mom encouraged me to become a nurse. I jumped into that for a whopping one week of col-



lege coursework, realizing it was definitely *her* dream and not mine. I quit college.

In a small town the gossip is rampant. I moved to a nearby larger town and got the only job I could find—but was obviously grateful for—so that I could eat. It was at a nursing home as an aide. I paid back the scholarships I'd wasted in that week of discovery and worked my tail off. I

took on others' shifts and babysat for people who needed it during my time off. I worked my old high school jobs of cleaning for the elderly, scooping snow, and waitressing.

I was a saver. After I had been on my own long enough not to be considered a dependent of my parents by college standards, I began applying for grants. I then pursued business school. I went to school during the day and worked at night. I was grateful for a second chance.

We had lots of snow that winter. I remember getting so sick once that I thought I just couldn't go anymore. I'd let myself get too run-down. That Christmas, my parents asked me what I wanted. I told them I just wanted food and a dictionary for school. They kept asking about clothes and silly things I used to put on my list. They must have known then that I'd grown up, and they granted my wish. I learned a valuable lesson that year. If you want something badly enough, you'll succeed. You'll appreciate it much



**A taste of the state patrol with a week as a junior law cadet!**

more in the end as well.

After college I was married to my high school sweetheart and would like to say I could end it here—we lived happily ever after. Wouldn't that be nice? It seems that is where life got interesting! We had great jobs and a nice little home that we owned and then life hit us square between the eyes—both of us.

We're grateful, though, because those great jobs don't exist anymore in that cozy little town. We were transferred three hours away from our families. None of our siblings had moved that far, so it seemed to us like the North Pole. Our kids joke that the Mason-Dixon Line is about an hour south, because nobody comes this far north to visit.



**The Endorf Family:  
Charlotte, Kevin, Spencer,  
Teddy and Sarah**

The move was fifteen years ago. Our kids know the “north” as home. They were five and under when we left

the “south.” Since moving, we’ve acquired friends who seem like family to us. The kids want to finish school here, so we become parts of communities based on where we are in life.

In 2004 our daughter, Sarah, became very ill. Prior to that we would leave the rat race of this 20,000-plus city to go camping every weekend we could. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were a big part of our lives. We loved the Nebraska state parks. We loved the horse rides within the parks, the walking trails that reduced the hectic pace of our workweek, and the fishing. Did we bring a tick home from our time relaxing? Or was she bitten in our own backyard? It really doesn’t matter. She was bitten. She’s had Lyme disease, borreliosis, or Masters’ disease since then.

It’s been a living nightmare. We’re grateful she’s still with us though. She’s been through every oral, IV, and even shot known to treat what she has. We were just told that medically there isn’t much more they can do. She continues to suffer at age twenty. We’re now turning to alternative medicine.

We feel there is a reason for everything. When Sarah became ill, we knew that she needed to focus on something other than herself. She has had a pen in her hand since before she probably should have. Our first book, *After the Rain, Oh the Beautiful Rainbow* was put together while she’d lie on the couch and dictate to me. Isn’t it odd that I chose to quit nursing school?

I will not quit being Sarah’s mom. I will fight until the bitter end for her. We’ve watched friends die of this disease, which scares us to the core. That is why we are grateful for

Outskirts Press handling the publishing chores so we could focus on more important things, like Sarah.

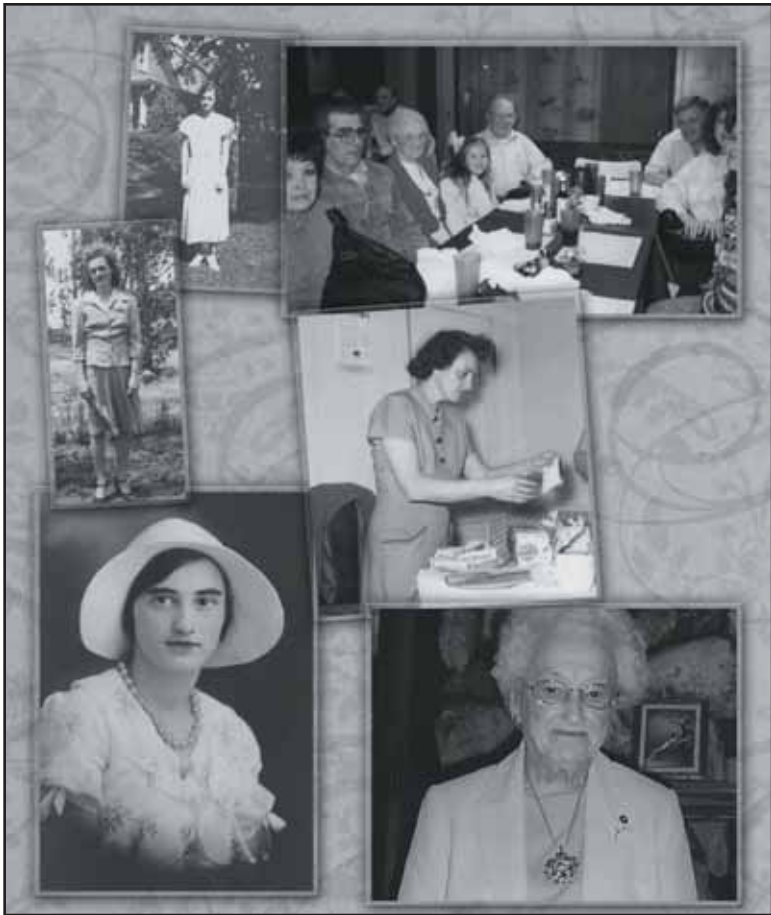
Next, we decided that we needed to take the focus off of the disease completely. So, we chose to study the history of foster care and adoption. We actually became a licensed foster care family. It allowed our children to realize that there are kids who have it much worse than even Sarah. Imagine not having a home to call your own? We now take in children on an emergency respite basis.

Sarah illustrated *Plains Bound: Fragile Cargo*. She co-authored *By Train They Came – Volume 1* and *By Train They Came – Volume 2* all with this same theme. The actual Orphan Train ran throughout the entire United States and into Canada in search of new homes for children without them. These children are now mostly in their nineties. We were finding ourselves at many funerals and I was being asked to speak. It was becoming very depressing. I did not want to depress Sarah further. We're seeking wellness! Yet these people featured in our books have become like grandparents to us.

It was much like the popular American-made candied popcorn and peanuts we know as Cracker Jacks. Sailor Jack was added to the package in memory of originator Fred Rueckheim's grandson, Robert, who tragically died from pneumonia at age eight. Our popular *Plains Bound: Fragile Cargo* tells a story in itself. Each child shown is in memory of a special "grandparent" who was integral in keeping this part of history from being swept under the carpet.

One of those riders is still living and is a prime example of just how close a friend they become. Her name is Lela

Newcombe. She is ninety-six years young and lives forty-five minutes away from us. Two years ago we traveled to New York City together to trace her biological roots. She had a desire to find her actual story and answers to questions that lingered in her mind. We opened records dated back to 1917.



Lela Newcombe

My fifth book took a completely different turn. It's called *Unsung Neighbors*. In one chapter, Sarah provides an update of where she was at with the disease. It also describes all of the neat people I've met and places I've been able to travel as an author with Outskirts Press. It's about the heroes among us.

My sixth title is a fun book. We read about animal therapy. We went to the pound and were grateful to find a bichon dog, whom we named Teddy. We got him for Sarah for Christmas. What a gift he was as he's saved her life twice during the seizure-like activity she's experienced.

We had customers ask us for DVD and CD media too. We found vendors locally who could help us because Outskirts wasn't set up yet to do that. It has been a great bonus for us. The profit margin on them is good. We make "combo packages" out of them with our books. Our customer base loves them. We're back again to the Burger King motto of letting the customer have it *their way*!

Writing a book is just the beginning. How fun it is to pull that first book out of the box admiring it from cover to cover—then the



real work begins! *You* alone are responsible for making it happen. I enjoy mingling with other authors. It amazes me how some have the mindset that they should merely write and the books should sell themselves. It would be great if that happened but in reality that just isn't so.

We're grateful that Outskirts Press has so many options available and keeps us updated constantly with whatever is on the cutting edge. I initially took books off my own shelf. I made a spreadsheet. I also used magazines that compared publishers. I found Outskirts in my Toastmasters magazine. I suggest that every author join Toastmasters.

I wouldn't recommend that you attend Toastmasters meetings merely to sell your book. Instead, I'd use it as a chance to improve your speaking skills so that you can multiply your sales with bookstores and all of the other avenues you are working. Your confidence will make the members *ask* you what you do and sales will naturally follow! If you're serious about public speaking, a fellow Toastmaster and friend has put together an excellent tool to help you *Get Paid to Speak By Next Week!* It's a great CD package that is very beneficial to your business. You can find out more at [www.unsungneighbors.com/Toastmasters.htm](http://www.unsungneighbors.com/Toastmasters.htm).

I cannot take credit for what has been our best idea for producing revenue with our half a dozen books. It came directly from Outskirts Press. I dress up in 1800s attire to bring the history of our books to life. When it works in the schedules for the rest of our family, they do it too. It has definitely brought our family closer together. What other business can you declare your own hours and bring your

family to work whenever you want? For more information, visit [www.unsungneighbors.com/Entertainment.htm](http://www.unsungneighbors.com/Entertainment.htm).





I grew up in the generation that avidly watched *Little House on the Prairie*. I didn't miss an episode. I read the books and on our annual trips to South Dakota, begged my parents to take us to the *Little House* museum there. Part of Sarah's therapy has been via DVD. I included *Little House* DVDs and tested her on what had happened in the scenes. She loved them as much as I did. I enjoyed watching them again.

Her out-of-state doctors were located close to the *Little House* museums in both Missouri and Minnesota. We took her there to stretch her legs during the long drives. We came to know the museum staff from the frequent visits, especially in Minnesota. What was just childhood fun has come full circle.

After dressing up in historical attire for therapy when Sarah needed it, I started putting on period garb to bring my books to life. Many who see me in regular street clothes do not recognize me at first. They are used to seeing me in costume! What a prime example of making your dreams come true to all of the *Little House* fans out there!

You'll see at my entertainment link above that we've become creative with entertaining, which creates more avenues to sell our books. The more people who know about us, the more sales we'll eventually have. It becomes a snowball effect. We don't focus on sales though. Like Burger King, we focus on the customer. By doing that, we feel the sales will come.

Customers have asked us for walking tours of our hometown's downtown. They've had a need for clowning. We've

met needs for holiday party talks, Red Hat meeting talks—the sky is the limit. Everywhere we go, we have our books available or a flyer with them. They are for sale at all of our local outlets. We also have them for sale on consignment all over the state and all of our neighboring states.

I will admit, I am weak on getting back to everybody but figure it as money waiting out there. What other job can you have that has money just sitting there when you come around? Or checks coming to you sporadically in the mail as books sell? It makes it very fun to go to the mailbox!

Many stores will just purchase the books outright so they don't have to mess with consignment. You must be professional and know immediately what you are going to charge them wholesale. You also must go to your local IRS office and follow their rules *before* you hit the road. You are a business and must treat it as one.

Every library in the nation should have your book. The Library of Congress should record it for the visually impaired. (This is free for you and the customer!) I try not to pass through a town without prospecting the library, nursing home, or some other entity. Sure I have to allow extra time. But time is money to a serious author!

Sometimes we get burned, but it is very seldom. We've had the motto that if people forget their checkbooks, they can mail us checks. Until just recently we never, ever had a problem with this. We've only had a problem once since our first book was published several years ago. Amazingly enough, the problem involved a teacher. I've called her twice and she's told me the check "is in the mail."

I will not call her again. It's her conscience that has to suffer. I hope she'll teach with the books and our end goal will still be met—to get the history out. Yes, we lost profit. But apparently she is short of money right now. We've been there too. (Nevertheless, I never, ever lied as she has done.) She'll find us one day and if not, we'll chalk it up as a donation.

I make donate my books to newspapers and radio stations and ask them to give the books to their local libraries when they are finished. It is a win-win situation. It's much like the American-made gelatin dessert we all know as Jell-O. Several attempts were made to launch this product in the nineteenth century, but they all flopped. School dropout Frank Woodward bought the rights from his neighbor for a mere \$450, and started to manufacture the product. He finally managed to get the product off the ground by giving away over fifteen million cookbooks. I certainly don't give away that many! But I do feel that we must give to get. Planting seeds is necessary to harvest.

I always knew in the back of my mind that taking credit cards was coming. Other authors told me that I needed to do it if I were going to be successful in selling while speaking. The problem of taking bad checks or waiting for checks was about to dissolve itself. Now, rather than the trust system where I always made 100 percent, I'll lose 4 percent on the credit and debit card sales that could have been trusted checks. So, who really is the loser? It's all in the way one looks at things, isn't it?

It is good to have your own Web site in addition to the

Web site that Outskirts provides its authors. There are tons of things you can do with it in terms of marketing. I had priced around and thought I could never afford one. For about \$1 a day, I found I could. A fellow Toastmaster has also helped us achieve that goal. It's been one of the best investments we've ever made. You can find out more at [designsbyfrank.com/index.htm](http://designsbyfrank.com/index.htm). Again, tell him we sent you!

We know that we must look at things positively in order for Sarah to heal and for people to want to associate with us. Wow, aren't there lots of negatives out there? I'll say that one again. *Wow*, aren't there a ton of negatives we must contend with? We've chosen to disassociate ourselves with as much negative as possible. We just plain vacate the area. It's your choice. You don't have to put up with it. If it's the news on television—shut it off. If it's a book—stop reading it! Friends or relatives—hang around them less or not at all. If it's an e-mail—hit delete. You are in control.

We find that if we let the negatives get the best of us, we can't be all that we want to be with our customers. We're not at our best. It's not fair to them. It's not fair to us.

We love the life of being authors. I was a speaker before I was an author and people kept asking when I'd be writing a book. Once we wrote that first book, people put us on a pedestal. I keep telling people not to do that. We're the same as we were before the books. It is funny how when we go to a book event, the customers realize how young we are and look for my mother. They truly can't imagine that twenty-year-old Sarah has any part in it.

The general public seems to have an image of an author

as an elderly, white-haired lady or gentleman who needs assistance at a book event. Then when I come bebopping in with my new *Orphan Train* Keds shoes, made by Outskirts Press, they don't know what to think!

I think all people have a book inside of them. It's just a matter of getting it on paper. I talk to and mentor countless people. It's as though they want me to do



it for them, but I will not do that. I have goals of my own. I will gladly guide them through the process. Is it simple? No. If it were, everybody would be doing what we're doing.

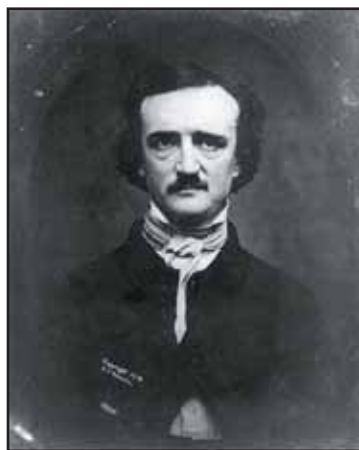
Do you have your goals thought out? Is your next year written down on paper? If not, it's merely a dream. I carry around a finger puppet in my purse to remind me of my goals. It's a puppet of Edgar Allan Poe I purchased while in New York City. While Poe only lived to be forty, he was a great American writer, poet, editor, and literary critic. He did more by the age of forty than many do who live to be ninety.

He was the first well-known American writer to try to earn a living solely through writing, resulting in a financially difficult life and career. He was born in Boston, and was orphaned at a young age when his mother died shortly after his father abandoned the family. Poe was taken in by John and Frances Allan, of Richmond, Virginia, but they never

formally adopted him.

He left the University of Virginia after one semester because of lack of money. After enlisting in the army and later failing as an officer's cadet at West Point, Poe parted ways with the Allans.

He married his cousin, who passed away from tuberculosis at the mere age of twenty-five. His work forced



**Edgar Allan Poe**

him to move several times and his writing didn't come easy. But In January 1945, he published the poem "The Raven" to instant success.

The cause of his death was never determined. Some say it was alcohol. Others say it was brain congestion. Some debate that it was cholera. Then there is the debate about drugs. It was also said to be heart disease or rabies, suicide or tuberculosis! It's odd that his death was debated as much as his works.

A number of his homes are dedicated museums today. I was grateful to be able to see one of those while visiting New York City. It was very inspirational as a writer. I encourage all writers to take a moment whenever they can to stop and charge their batteries by fueling their goals.

People tell me all of the time how lucky I am. I wouldn't call it that. I'm grateful to have had the brain capacity to make the most of the situation at hand. We're all given a

life to live. Every day is a series of choices. We can get up grouchy or happy. We can write five pages or shove the manuscript away for a rainy day.

We choose to have two manuscripts going at all times. We feel that if we have a mental block on one we can always pick up the other. I firmly believe that's the reason we have so many books published.

Sarah and I have grown lots closer through this entire process. Many mothers and daughters are at each other's throats from the ages of fourteen through twenty. We pray together, write together, cry together, and celebrate together. We're closer than many girlfriends because she had to re-learn everything. She lost her entire memory. She couldn't even remember who her brother was at one point.

Still, she's a trooper. Even though the school was scared of the IVs—and I couldn't blame them—Sarah got her GED. She was the first to finish a home-based program facilitated by the local college. She'll graduate this coming year with an associate's degree and plans to continue college even though she's technically totally disabled. She's learned to do what she can when she can. She's learned to pace herself. Most importantly, as a team we've become advocates for Lyme disease.

Together we worked with the governor of Nebraska to name May Lyme Awareness Month. This designation had already existed in other states, but it was critical for Nebraska so that the medical community would become more aware. It's also critical so that the general public won't be ignorant, as we were. When the proclamation was announced,

though, it was stated as “limb disease.” True—it affects the limbs, but it just reinforced the reason we needed to continue to get the message out about *Lyme*!





Before Sarah became ill, we had no idea what the disease was. We thought if you ever got sick, you simply went to the doctor and would be well after ten days of whatever antibiotic the doctor prescribed. It's a real wake-up call when your child is ill and doctors scratch their heads with no answers. It's scary as ever when doctors turn you away because they can't help you anymore.

I can't express the feeling of helplessness when the insurance company puts the huge bills—bills charged for the doctors to tell you they couldn't help—in their “gray” area. They rack up to thousands of dollars that you owe for no answers. Meanwhile, your child is withering away. Then she gets better with a little antibiotic. It's a yo-yo effect. You have a glimmer of hope that the antibiotic worked so healing can take place. This goes on, not for days, but for years.

I want to insert a word of caution to all caregivers. *Take time for yourself!* You'll feel guilty at first but it's essential. Without you, the entire process falls apart. I've talked to caregivers of stroke victims, elderly parents, transplant recipients, Parkinson's disease sufferers, and others. We all feel the same. We all have so many hours in a day. We all get worn down and need help. Get it! Don't feel guilty about it. You need it.

I found Three Creator Concepts to be very beneficial for our entire family as we all work as caregivers at the Endorf household. Their e-mail address is [threecreatorconcepts@gmail.com](mailto:threecreatorconcepts@gmail.com) and their phone number is 402-439-2921. Tell them Charlotte Endorf sent you. It's critical that you as the caregiver do not go down. I did once from all of the

stress. We thought we had problems before; we were in a real mess. Stress can do awful things. Just the stress of a new book can be tremendous. That's *not* the way it should be. Life is to be enjoyed.

Along with teaching people about Lyme, I also mentor those who want to learn about becoming an author. I especially enjoy working with children. There are so many in the schools that we work in. Abby is featured on my Web site as an Incredible Gem ([www.unsungneighbors.com/IncredibleGems.htm](http://www.unsungneighbors.com/IncredibleGems.htm)). Here's a poem she's written about becoming an author:

## An Author's Life

*To be an author is so cool,  
even though I still go to school.  
It may be hard when you first start,  
but you learn as fast as you throw a dart.  
My life as an author can be hard,  
but it is worth every card.  
I rhyme sentences on what's on my mind,  
then I put them together and bind.  
It doesn't matter if they rhyme,  
I just like to do that all the time.  
People ask me to write something for them,  
then they act like it's a special gem.  
To be an author, you don't have to write stories,  
you can write a poem on how wars are gory.  
Write about anything you want,  
so a bad idea won't come to haunt.  
I learn some techniques from school,  
that's why being an author is so cool.*

We've recently decided to go one step further with our book business. Bringing history to life in costume is fun; however, it puts lots of miles on our vehicles. Our van has over 190,000 miles and our car has over 70,000. That's lots of windshield time! We have decided that we'd like to bring history to life at least once a month with a talk anyone can listen to. Our goal is to book at least ten times a month with nationwide radio shows from our home. You can find out more at [www.unsungneighbors.com/RadioProgram.htm](http://www.unsungneighbors.com/RadioProgram.htm). Is it easy? No. Just like the book process, if it were, *everybody would be doing it!*

Life has become so interesting since we've become authors. Some of our close friends and relatives worry about "catching" Lyme and stay away. The relationships we've built while researching for our books, however, are phenomenal.

While looking for Orphan Train riders, we came across Clarence Carney of Sioux City, Iowa. The Orphan Trains ran from 1854–1929. Clarence was in the Graham School Orphanage from 1937–1943. His story really made us think. The trains had stopped. Welfare programs had begun. If a train had been available, perhaps he would have been placed into a family like the quarter million others in the seventy-five-year time period the Orphan Train existed. Somehow it didn't seem fair. But then, as Edgar Allan Poe discovered, life isn't always fair.

Clarence explained to me that he really didn't know how to act in society because he'd never had a family. He went from the orphanage and high school to the navy in 1943 as an aviation radioman 2C. In 1947, he attended Iowa State

University to earn a B.S. in math and psychology. He went on to receive his M.A. in guidance and counseling. In our interviews, it seems that those who have been through trials and tribulations tend to have the grateful attitude we admire.

They say a person tends to change employment several times in a career. Clarence



**Clarence**

was no different. He began his career in the fifties as a math teacher and a football coach. From there he went into banking for a short time. Next he worked for a utility. Then it was back into education, working for a variety of entities. Throughout his career, he was always very active in community and public service. No doubt, he was giving back for what he felt he'd been given.

Life may not have been fair by keeping him in the orphanage when maybe there was a family out there who could have taken him in—but life isn't always fair. It's all in how you look at it. His time in the orphanage taught him to be a great man who helped many in his career and on into his retirement.

Clarence is fascinating to chat with. I truly enjoyed my time meeting with him and his new friends in his retirement community. He's obviously loved by many. He's just one example of the wonderful people I have the opportunity to

meet as an author with book events.

As the Japanese proverb states, “If there is no wind, row.” When we’re not writing, we’re reading in our spare time. I have two books always going at once. Did you know that President Jimmy Carter could read two thousand words per minute?

We feel it is essential to feed our minds. When I’m putting in all of that windshield time, do you think I am listening to the radio, daydreaming? I’m listening to a book on CD or my MP3 player. It’s food for my mind! What are you doing with your time in the car?

The nice thing about Outskirts is we can purchase just five books at a time. We’re not like other authors who have ten thousand books tucked away in the closet. It is nice to work up to twenty so that you’re not embarrassed at a book event by running out, or having to charge postage to mail books when you should really have them on hand.

Worry and anxiety can stop you dead in your tracks. Don’t let it. I have to admit that sometimes I’ve let it get the best of me for a while. My husband always talks me through it and I realize that I was overreacting and worrying isn’t very productive.

We attempt to live by this motto. By doing so, any author will thrive:

*It is a mistake to look too far ahead.*

*Only one link in the chain of destiny can be handled at a time.*

—Winston Churchill

# outski<sup>rt</sup>spress CASE STUDY

**AUTHOR:** Ronnie Lee

**TITLES:** *The Book of Life*  
*The Meaning of Life*  
*The Philosophy of Life*  
*Poems of Life*  
*The Genius of the Metropolis*  
*The Philosopher King*  
*Philosophy: Back to Basics*  
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unmask morality, and share  
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**published over 5,500 pages**  
on the subjects of philosophy,  
religion, and the human condition,  
making him one of the most prolific  
published authors in the entire world.

"Outskirts Press has made my  
legacy as great as it can be,  
and for that I owe them  
gratitude and my blessings."

*—Ronnie Lee*

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**RONNIE  
LEE**

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# BOOKS BY RONNIE LEE

The Book of Life: Existentialism,  
the Will and the Truth: The New  
Wisdom of Philosophy

[www.outskirtspress.com/ronnielee-philosophy](http://www.outskirtspress.com/ronnielee-philosophy)

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the Universe and Social Problems

[www.outskirtspress.com/TheMeaningofLife-ronnielee2](http://www.outskirtspress.com/TheMeaningofLife-ronnielee2)

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# How Self-Publishing Saved My Life

*by Ronnie Lee*

I first wanted to write a book when I was twenty-four years old working in Hong Kong. I carried this passion through my twenties and thirties. It wasn't until I started writing philosophy that I realized I could write original poems from my theories.

One day I was struck with the creative muse! Twenty minutes later, I completed six poems. I started creating Web sites to showcase my work but all the while I felt incomplete, unworthy, and sad. My Web sites and my poems were not well known, or even publicly available, and even my family and friends were quiet about my writings.

I realized that I would forever be unhappy and unsatisfied unless I could find an established authority to support my writing and help me share my work with the world. But finding an establishment was difficult. I continued to look and I continued to write.

Then in 2006 I stumbled across a Web site for Outskirts Press. Within a few months, my first book, *The Book Of Life: Existentialism, the Will and the Truth*, was published. I was ecstatic and, just like that, my life changed. From 1993 to 2006, my life had been a constant struggle to be recognized and appreciated as a writer. Suddenly, I had achieved a goal that had been imprinted in my mind through sorrow and pain in my wonder years.

You can imagine the relief and personal satisfaction that set in when you have overcome a major hurdle, and the change in feelings that occurs when a book you have toiled to write is finally published. What a tremendous achievement! My book was in my hands and available for purchase throughout the world on Amazon.com. It made me feel whole, complete, worthy, revived, excited, and motivated to live my life happily, fully, and more inspired.

I became more prolific, too, with a renewed zest and love for writing. Between 2006 and 2010, I wrote and published six more books with Outskirts Press. When something this easy makes you feel so alive, you pursue it with all your heart. I have book videos for all my books available on YouTube. I have audio excerpts on iTunes for some, and business cards for others. My reviews have mostly been positive and some were even exceptional. My first six books are in the Hong Kong public library and my first book is also for sale in a major bookshop, Swindon Book Co. Ltd. in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong. The gladness in my heart grows ever stronger every day.

Without self-publishing, I would have missed one of

the most delightful moments of my life—seeing my own books on the Web site of a bookshop, WHSmith, where I used to buy schoolbooks as a youngster. Would I ever have imagined my own books on display? No. But there they are, and all I can say is, it is worth it! I am hoping to publish more books and I am also planning an exhibition with other artists in Hong Kong. By helping ourselves, we artists and writers can help others in society through inspiration and motivation from our words.

Publishing makes me feel like a first-class citizen. I feel like Outskirts Press saved my life. Without them, I would still be lost. Recommending other writers self-publish is a great privilege for me, since I know how much it changed my life. I have always worked hard and now self-publishing has made my life's work honorable.

I have achieved more than I could have ever expected.

# A Very Convenient Truth

*by Ronnie Lee*

When I began to think about writing a book, my goal was to clarify what I knew about mankind through my organization of a species theory. Yet, this theory, as well as my political and spiritual experiences, made my train of thought head toward religion, God, Jesus and the Devil and, ultimately, good and evil.

I was extremely scared thinking about this, even becoming paranoid. The thought of creation and the start of evil (Adam, if you will), made me fear even myself and my past history beyond this life, beyond this time on Earth. It brought to mind the famous quote from the film, *A Few Good Men*: “You can’t handle the truth!”

By this time, I was happy just to sort out my own thoughts and mind. I had to work continuously throughout this time in big companies, in Hong Kong and Portsmouth, England. But I went back to England and started writing

again, and sent a few of my theories to recognized magazines hoping to make a name for myself and expose my work to the public. Some sent me rejection letters and some never replied.

My aim was ever stronger as I wanted to know more and publicize my theories. I then met a friend who taught me spiritualism. After that, my faith in life increased and I added to my theories. When I studied philosophy and started to write poems, I began looking for my own Web site publisher as this was the beginning of the Internet era. I must have been one of the first to have such a big Web site on poetry; I think it contained over two hundred poems. It was the one of the first type of private blogs, I believe, where I added daily notes on my life, and thoughts and theories through poems. It was even approved by the FBI, which had contacted me to safeguard me from threats via e-mail (true yet unbelievable!). It sounds paranoid, but by then I had actually developed original and important insights into good and evil, God, religion, politics, and basically all sorts of theories.

I had thought to myself about being famous, but also figured that as long as I did my little bit in life, I did not mind myself as long as I played my part. At that time, though, I comically, yet with motivation, wanted to write a better equation than Einstein. A bit of self-competition or confidence or maybe even naivety made me believe that my ambition was reachable, yet that was in my imagination at that stage.

By the time I had published hundreds of poems on the

Web site, I knew the problems in the world, and sincerely wanted to help others with their own problems so that I could help the people in the world. I had written for my Web site tag words like “help,” “spirituality,” and “care” to show that I wanted to save the world. In my state—as a schizophrenic in the early 1990s—I had said I was a “religious figure” trying to save the world. Ironically, my work still follows this train of thought, yet I am more aware of what the Bible means nowadays. My job now is to publish the truth—as much truth as necessary—before I see the changes needed in my lifetime to say my work has done its job. I know when my work has done its job when I see the changes I need and want in life, if they ever come! To share my work with others and to help them out in their own lives is my greatest success, achievement, and satisfaction. I know now that fame is not my goal, not even my purpose, and not even my hope anymore. My goal is to see the success that comes from my faith, hope, and heart for others in need and for life itself to reach its potential. Maybe my progressive nature has its flaws but it’s the only way that makes some things work sometimes.

But ultimately, now I would like my efforts to be known as one of the great philosophical works of the time, as I know the importance of what I have written. Helping others and preserving my work for people until the end of time would be a great satisfaction. I believe the destiny of mankind is to follow the will to success from God’s plans to their own technological innovations to further mankind’s legacy as the technologists of the universe, even if they are on the

lowest scale of morality. My work tries to make this happen with the highest morality for everyone in life.

I would like to be remembered for my life's work, but maybe not whilst I am alive, so that I am untainted by the pain and power of this world. Fame makes you owe a lot, beyond your own human life. It kind of gets paid back in many lifetimes, or even eras!

Yet I have to write. It is the will of many to know the truth and to adapt and succeed in life. By writing my truths, equations, and wisdoms, I can make profit for God and the world, even if I do not make financial profit myself. I do not write for the money, for if I did I would write about how to get money itself, but many already do that. There are many ways to make profit, such as spiritual protection and love or dignity and honor. Sounds rather heroic, but actually heroism is sometimes just living righteously. Writing, however, has to be skilled, logical, wise, and correct, in my understanding. It is being honest.

I work for a living but writing relieves all my pain, stress, suffering, tension, and pressure. If I do not write, I will probably become paranoid and just take medication and not do things such as work and play sport. Writing makes me strong and more of a fighter. Writing should be for education, but sometimes there is a war in information; some who write the truth have to fight the lies and enter a type of war mode or war temperament.

Unfortunately, the truth can make you angry, scared, and alone. As it is said, "You live by the sword and you die by the sword," so it should be said, "You live by the infor-



mation, you die by the information.” Yet there is no choice sometimes. The gift one has is the gift one has to use. God will open it for you, if he wants you to use it at that time. He will lead and you must follow. But the truth will set you free if you can find it and share it. This is what publishers should do and this is what Outskirts Press has basically done for me. The greatness of Outskirts Press comes from its heart and its willingness, love, and support for the truth, goodness, and hope for society. I say this because I know it chooses to publish works of authors who have big hearts, as shown by the books that come from Outskirts Press.

I currently think about breaking records of all kinds, including those in philosophy, science, logic, existentialism, morality, religion, knowledge, etc. The more truth I get, the more points I score, the bigger profit God gets, and the more worth I attain. I know there is a big existential gamble that many divines have to win. I have to write enough to make my name intact and I think four books was enough! Outskirts Press has helped me win my bet with “spiritual gamblers.”

It is now about more than just publishing my work; it is about making the world succeed and profit as much as it can without turning evil. It is also to extend my own legacy in this world as I feel I have to complete my destiny, too—whatever that may be. And Outskirts Press has made my legacy as great as it can be, and for that I owe them gratitude and my blessings.

My work, which I try to derive from truthful analysis, is intended to make the world good as well as profitable, and

that will extend the power and market share for God. The world needs this to survive, prosper, and become healthy again. These are my metaphysical aims now, for my writings and work.

The physical success comes from the physical achievements, such as producing books. The spiritual success can only be seen by acknowledging the spiritual changes in the people and the environment of the world. The metaphysical successes are the goodness, happiness, and love that changes in the soul and minds of everyone and the environment itself. The profit comes from all of the above merits and credits.

Each achievement, especially the physical achievements in this world, creates a worth beyond financial success; it is also spiritual and emotional success bound by the laws of nature and through God. The energy changes as everyone's achievement and success is accumulated, created, and exchanged for a greater will to live, and for strength, health, motivation, inspiration, and love. This creates metaphysical and spiritual success as the workers plant seeds to make God's word succeed.

Each book is not a price or cost to me, but a seed for which all good things, all love and success can grow. That is the way I think now. Yet being a seed can be a slow existence, so dramatic and efficient changes are needed sometimes and work must be completed.

Outskirts Press has given me many things, some of which I cannot yet state accurately or as profoundly as I want to. It has helped many to mature through their lives,

relationships, and work. It has generated honor and profit and hope. It has offered salvation for me and success in my eternal spiritual life. The souls are all united for a reason and I think Outskirts Press has a large destiny to achieve and fulfill. I believe the spiritual connections are what make a company good, wise, and best. Outskirts Press is one of these companies. There are not many around, but they should be growing.

If I can summarize what Outskirts Press has given me, I can say:

- 1) Honor, respect, and a name
- 2) Achievement, worth, and power
- 3) Happiness, peace, and gladness
- 4) Gratitude, appreciation, and love
- 5) Reason, meaning, and purpose
- 6) Friendship, unity, and belonging
- 7) Success, profit, and safety
- 8) Truth, progress, and development
- 9) Stability, balance, and longevity
- 10) Health, sense, and care

It has really given me everything I wanted from my life. The things above form just a list, but again, I cannot yet explain everything that I feel or want to find. I am still confused, especially in the politics of life. Yet these books and my total work, helped by Outskirts Press, have cleared my mind and spirit to great ends. I hope this case study can be used to understand me, my life, publishing with Outskirts

Press, and the world as a whole. It is a unity of spirit and information. It is in the vision of God, I believe. I can only do what I can in life, in the time I am given on this earth, to help others achieve their goals and successes—for themselves, the world, and especially God. This is my purpose in my life now and it is my hope for the happiness of life and living life no matter what comes our way.