

# The Police Writer

Volume 2  
Summer 2006

## Congratulations!

To PSWA member **Barry Horney** on publication of his first book, **On the Job** (Old Kings Road Press, 201 pp.), a book of vignettes about his career as a police officer with the New York City Transit Police. Prior to publication, **On the Job** received an honorable mention in the 2006 PSWA writing competition. To buy a copy and support your fellow PSWA member, contact Barry at [Barwin41@cfl.rr.com](mailto:Barwin41@cfl.rr.com).

To PSWA member Keith Bettinger on publication of **Fighting Crime with "Some" Day and Lenny or What Happens when Dragnet Meets Car 54 Where Are You?** (iUniverse, 94 pp.). Keith's book is a collection of short stories about the adventures of two NYPD cops, Detective Sergeant Robert "Some" Day and Detective Lenny Birnbaum who work the Major Case Squad on Staten Island. To purchase a copy, contact Keith at [Kiethbett@cox.net](mailto:Kiethbett@cox.net).

Keith's book was recently reviewed in *Beyond the Badge* magazine. [Click here](#) to see the review.

To PSWA member **Liz Martinez** on inclusion of her short story, *Freddie Prinze is my Guardian Angel*, in **Manhattan Noir**, edited by Lawrence Block. (Akashic Books, 257 pp.) *Manhattan Noir* is the second in a series of stories from New York City's neighborhoods that began with the 2004 anthology, **Brooklyn Noir**. Liz's story, that begins, "Freddie Prinze had been dead for four years when he spoke to me for the first time..." is set in Washington Heights. **Manhattan Noir** is available from Amazon.com.

## Other books of interest

Those of you who attended the 2006 conference in Las Vegas may remember Brian Rouff, who gave such a wonderful talk on marketing a self published book and donated one of his books to our silent auction. Brian, who specializes in books set in Las Vegas, now has two books in print: **Dice Angel** and **Money Shot**. **Dice Angel** is about a bar owner who, faced with losing his business, seeks the unlikely aid of a "karma-spouting planet charting colon-cleansing floozy," to bring him luck at the craps table. **Money Shot** follows the adventures of a Las Vegas advertising executive who wins the chance to make a million dollar free throw at a basketball tournament. Both books are published by Hardway Press and available on Amazon.com.

If you haven't already, you may also want to add this year's other writing

competition prize winning books to your summer reading list.

- **Under a Cloud** by Eliot Seffrin (iUniverse) available on Amazon.com
- **Oral Interview Dynamics** by Andrew Borrello (LawTech Publishing)
- **Hit the Streets: The Other Side of the Badge** by Steven C. Rose (PublishAmerica)
- **Deadly Choices** by Jennie Spallone
- **The Electric Sewer** by Trebor Nehoc (Oak Tree Press)
- **Tales from the Bat Cave** by O.J. McLaughlin

Other books by our members include:

- **Hot Shots and Heavy Hits: Tales of an Undercover Drug Agent** by Paul E. Doyle (Northeastern University Press)
- **Marine Corps Detectives** by James B. Benson, Jr. (Para Publishing)
- **Beyond the Call** (iUniverse), **Dire Straits: A Miami Novel** (Harlan Publishing), **On My Father's Grave** (Harlan Publishing), **Call Me Mommy** (Harlan Publishing), **Frankly Speaking** (Alexander Books), by Marshall Frank
- **Deadly Decisions** by Volitta Fritsche
- **The Morgue, Red Gold, Blood Money, Killer in Pair-A-Dice, One-Armed Bandit, Pension, Policing Las Vegas** by Dennis Griffin
- **A Cop's Guide to Occult Investigations** (Paladin Press) by Tony Kail
- **Sex-Appealed: Was the US Supreme Court Fooled?** By Janice Law
- The Deputy Tempe Crabtree mystery series: **Deadly Trail** □ **Deadly Omen** □ **Unequally Yoked** □ **Intervention** and **Wing Beat**; the Rocky Bluff P.D. series: **Final Respects** □ **Bad Tidings** and **Kachima Spirit**; **Astral Gift**, and **Guilt by Association**, (more information about is books are listed on [www.fictionforyou.com](http://www.fictionforyou.com)) by Marilyn Meredith.
- **Morning Star** (Wings e-Press), **Holly in the Morning** (Wings e-Press), **Sweet Caroline** (Hard Shell Word Factory) by Micqui Miller.
- **Women Who Risk** (Hatherleigh Press), **Gangsters** □ **Gunfire and Political Intrigue: the Story of the Indiana State Police** (.38 Special Press) by Marilyn Olsen

## CopTales 2000 and Beyond?

In 2000, the Police Writers Club (the PSWA's predecessor organization) decided to publish the winning stories from our annual writing competition. At that time, the contest was limited to works of fiction and non-fiction, 1500 words or less. After announcing that we were going to do this, members began coming to us with a lot of other

stories and even a few novellas and before long we had a book-length anthology. Of the 1,500 copies we printed through .38 Special Press, just 20 copies still remain – those whose covers got a little dinged up by shipping and were rejected by Amazon.com. Some of you have requested copies, so they'll be available on a first come-first served basis for \$5 each. To request a copy, contact [molsen@policewriter.com](mailto:molsen@policewriter.com). Sometime in the near future, if there's enough member interest, we may do a second anthology. Let us know if you might have a story to contribute or would like to volunteer some of your time to make this happen. Again, contact [molsen@policewriter.com](mailto:molsen@policewriter.com).

## Thanks!

A special thank you to **Beyond the Badge** magazine for its full-page coverage of the 2006 PSWA writing competition in its Spring 2006 issue. For a copy of Beyond the Badge, write to Beyond the Badge, 47-01 Greenpoint Ave. #114, Sunnyside NY, 11104 or call (888) 831-7605. **Beyond the Badge** is edited by PSWA member Liz Martinez

## Have You Returned Your Survey?

By now, all PSWA members should have received a member-interest survey, your chance to help us continue to provide the activities and benefits you enjoy most from PSWA and the opportunity for you to volunteer your time and talents to help the organization continue to grow and prosper. If you did not receive a survey by e-mail or prefer to snail mail your survey, please print out the copy printed below and send it to PSWA, 2024 Falcon Court, Bellingham, WA 98229. Thanks!

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### Interest Survey

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the activities listed below on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the most important to you and 5 the least important to you.

\_\_ website

\_\_ writing competition

annual conference

newsletter

manuscript review

list serve

Please feel free to comment on any of the above.

Volunteer opportunities: Please check the activities for which you would be willing to donate your time and talent.

#### Conference

Help recruit speakers

Publicize the conference

Recruit sponsors

#### Newsletter

Write articles of interest to the membership

Write new member profiles

#### Website

Do book reviews

Write "tips"

#### Writing Competition

Help publicize the competition

Find judges for the various categories

#### Membership

Provide names of potential members

Write (or e-mail) potential members about joining

#### Publications list

Supply information on publications that accept freelance work

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## Welcome New Members

**James Andre Boles** is an 18 year veteran of police departments in San Francisco, Mendocino and Reno. He is now a practicing attorney in Reno.

**Brad W. Coulbeck** is a sergeant and team leader of the Emergency Response Team of the Ontario Provincial Police Department.

**Janice Law** is a judge and former state and federal prosecutor in Houston, Texas. Law has published a non-fiction book, *Sex Appealed: Was the U.S. Supreme Court Fooled?* She is also a columnist for the Galveston, Texas Daily News.

**Joe Pelkington** is a retired police chief of the city of Treasure Island, Florida. Prior to that, Pelkington was deputy chief of the Tampa, Florida Police Department. He has been published in the Florida Police Chief Magazine and is currently working on a book titled *Shades of Blue: From Street Cop to Police Chief*.

**Johnny Saunders** is a police officer and criminal investigator in Wilmington, Delaware and two-time recipient of the Distinguished Service Award and Merit Lifesaving Award. He trains new officers, fresh out of the academy and is completing a mystery novel.

**Philip Weiss** is a paramedic and lieutenant with the New York City Fire Department's EMS Command. Weiss has been published in Fire Engineering and EMS Rescue Technology.

## Books of Interest

By Marilyn Olsen

Following are three books I picked up last month at the American Society of Journalists and Authors annual conference in New York.

*Bob Bly's Guide to Freelance Writing Success: How to Make \$100,000 a Year as a Freelance Writer and Have the Time of Your Life Doing it*, by Robert W. Bly.

Filbert Publishing. 252 pp. \$15.95. ([www.bly.com](http://www.bly.com)).

If you are or aspire to be a freelance writer and actually make a living at it, Bob Bly's book is a great reference. Although Bly is primarily a

corporate writer and a lot of his income seems to come from public relations and advertising copywriting rather than feature or technical articles, there are still some nuggets in his book for every writer – no matter what subject they write about. Some of his advice is common sense, but always bears repeating. Write what you know. Write what interests you. “If every piece you write is on a new or unfamiliar topic, your research will be more time consuming and you won’t be able to produce finished writing as rapidly.” Bly says another key to his success is to “develop your interest by becoming a specialist in one or more areas of knowledge, then write about those areas from many different angles.” That way, he says, one research effort can pay off many times. Bly is also a firm advocate of being a voracious reader, suggesting that writers spend at least 30 minutes a day reading newspapers and magazines, clipping articles that offer ideas and filing them for future use. Other chapters involve setting financial goals, writing query letters and promoting yourself by setting yourself apart from competing writers. A 10-page reference section at the back of the book lists other books, articles and websites that contain Bly’s words of wisdom. You may not agree with everything he says, but, hey, you’re bound to learn something by heeding the advice of a guy who claims last year he brought home a half-million dollar income doing freelance work.

*Get Slightly Famous: Become a Celebrity in Your Field and Attract More Business with Less Effort.* Steven Van Yoder, Bay Tree Books, 248 pp. ([www.getslightlyfamous.com](http://www.getslightlyfamous.com)).

As we discuss elsewhere in this edition of the newsletter, today’s editors and agents expect basically all authors to be involved at least to some extent in marketing their books, and, of course, if you self publish, chances are the *whole* job of marketing will be up to you. To do this, the experts say, you need to give careful consideration to developing a “brand” for yourself that becomes the “platform” from which you launch your marketing campaign. How do you do this? Van Yoder says, by becoming “slightly famous.” In format, “*Get Slightly Famous*” will remind you of the Dummies books, replete with lots of lists, sidebars, examples and catchy photos. This format makes the book way more fun to read than other books on this subject. The “real-world success stories” scattered throughout the book are both engaging and instructive. While *Get Slightly Famous* is directed toward business entrepreneurs (everyone from “the funniest tax guy in America,” to dog biscuit bakers who call themselves “entredogneurs”) there’s a lot of good advice in the book for authors of all genres – whether you aspire to write for magazines, newsletters, on-line or produce the next great American novel. There is a chapter on why you need a website, as well as a common sense chapter on how to not only get speaking engagements but how to become an interesting speaker as well. A 15-page resources section in the back can lead you to even more information on the subject.

*Guerrilla Publicity: Hundreds of Sure-Fire Tactics to get Maximum Sales for Minimum Dollars.* Jay Conrad Levinson, Rick Frishman and Jill Lublin, Adams Media Corporation, 301 pp.

Although a little less fun to read than *Get Slightly Famous*, *Guerilla Publicity* is another great guide to understanding the kinds of things you're going to have to know when it comes time to publish your book or promote your articles to editors. Divided into nice concise chapters, that are, in turn, divided into short paragraph or two topic areas, the book offers down to earth, non buzz-wordy ideas designed to help you stand out from the crowd of folks doing basically the same thing you're trying to do. Chapters 13 and 14, for example, are titled "Fifteen Things the Media Hates" and "Fifteen Things the Media Loves." They're both full of words to the wise not just for contacting the media, but also agents and editors as well. The last 60 pages of the book contain real-life sample materials and examples of the points the authors have made throughout.

## **Alas, These Days it's All About Branding**

By Marilyn Olsen

Maybe it's just me, but the older I get, the more impatient I get with business buzz words. Unfortunately, for those of us who are interested in publishing, it's hard to go anywhere where two or more publishing house editors or agents are gathered these days and not hear endlessly about "branding" and "platforms."

Lifted near as I can tell directly from the advertising business, branding, as it relates to authors is pretty much what in the ad biz branding means to, oh, say tomato sauce or dog biscuits. In order to stand out from the competition, you need to have an image (brand) that makes you so special your book (or your tomato sauce) will be the one that people will remember and therefore buy. Thus, it is no longer enough to simply write a book, even a good book or a great book. There has to be something about you, the author that gives you a fighting chance to get the TV interviews, the radio interviews, the newspaper stories or even the appearances at the local Rotary Club that others can't get.

Once you have a brand, then you have a platform from which to launch your book. As we've been pointing out on this site for a while now, there is very little even the major publishers will do to publicize your book if you aren't willing to pitch in and do most of the work.

So, how do you achieve a brand? For non-fiction writers, achieving a brand is often easier. Their expertise in an area gives them a built-in advantage, particularly if they also happen to be a well known expert in their chosen field. It also never hurts, of course, to be a celebrity. Thus, folks like Dr. Phil have great brands. Dr. Phil is a

perceived expert in his field (psychology) and, because he's a TV star, he also has the celebrity brand. It wouldn't much matter what he wrote a book about (I believe the last one was about dieting), he'd already have a dynamite platform from which to sell books, because his brand was so well known.

Fiction writers may have a bit more of an uphill climb to brand-hood, although you have to hand it to perhaps the most famously branded fiction writer these days, Dan Brown. Brown, the author of the *Da Vinci Code*, is neither a theologian nor a particularly well credentialed Biblical scholar but the talk show hosts just can't get enough of him, inevitably pairing him up with actual theologians to endlessly debate his (Brown's) fictional premise that Jesus was married to Mary Madeline. And every time he makes one of those appearances, the name of his book (now also movie) gets a mention and the books fly off the shelves. Talk about a platform!

So, since that particular plot line has already been taken, what can you do to create a brand for yourself that will eventually result in recognition and book sales? For some of you who are writing detective novels, you're already on your way to a brand. You are a detective (or at least a police officer of some kind), so you have more credibility than another crime writer who is not. Probably, however, just being a police officer won't be enough, brand-wise, since so many cops write detective novels. Thus, you'll have to double up. For example, if you're a female police officer, you can get extra branding points if your main character is also a female police officer and your book involves issues you've personally experienced (such as sexism, discrimination, family pressure to stay home with the kids, etc.). In addition to both of those "brands," it would probably be helpful to have the crime in your detective novel involve your particular area of professional expertise – drug enforcement, identity theft, immigration policy, etc. If you also happen to have been involved in a high profile case that got a lot of media attention (hopefully favorable to you) you've got even more ammunition when it comes to building your platform from which to launch your promotional effort. Other possibilities would include coming from a long line of police officers, being the daughter of a female police officer, having dual credentials (police officer/psychologist). Extra curricular activities can also help build your brand. Examples might be that you're a tough female cop who also writes poetry or does watercolors or you are equally tough in another field such as being a competitive swimmer. The more interesting things there are about you personally, the stronger your brand, therefore the wider the scope of opportunities for others to help promote you.

Because branding is so important these days, before you even start to write, you probably need to think about how the content of your book will help you not just create a good story line, but also how it will help you sell it. Back to Dan Brown for a moment. Unlike you, Dan Brown didn't have the advantage of being a professional police officer,

or even a well-recognized historian for that matter. So what he did was find a topic that he knew would be extremely controversial. Most police officers are familiar with controversy, so this may be easy for you. When thinking about controversy, however, remember to think about the wide audience you'll need to buy your book. Internal controversies in your department may have been a big deal to you, but it is unlikely they will be of general reader interest.

Another approach is to write about something that's grabbed the headlines. That's how true crime authors succeed, by becoming "experts" on the lives of everyone involved in the crime and punishment in high profile murder cases. The disadvantage of this specialty, of course, is that you have to act fast, while the public is still interested and compete with others who've also thought of this idea.

***Review of *Fighting Crime with "Some" Day and Lenny or What Happens When Dragnet Meets Car 54 Where Are You*, written up in *Beyond the Badge* magazine***

by Sal Montero

Police work is serious business, but it's a rare officer of the law who doesn't have a sense of humor. Retired Suffolk Co., N.Y. police officer Keith Bettinger displays his funny-man side in his first collection of short stories, titled "Fighting Crime with 'Some' Day and Lenny: Or What Happens When Dragnet Meets Car 54, Where Are You?" (iUniverse, 2006).

Bettinger doesn't take anything too seriously — least of all, crime fighters. The stories in this book center on Sgt, Robert Day, who, to his chagrin, is nicknamed "Some" Day, and his partner, Detective Lenny Birnbaum. Some Day and Lenny work the Major Case Squad on Staten Island, "where every case is a major case."

Some Day and Lenny don't just stay on their home turf, though — they are sent hither and yon to fight crimes too big for the other squads to handle. Ever hear of Pahrump, Nev.? Neither did Some Day and Lenny, until they're sent there for an extradition, Pahrump, for the uninitiated, is a small burg just outside Las Vegas. But Lenny is one connected guy, and he hooks himself and his partner up in Sin City: "Through his friends, we were picking up our rental car from Such a Deal Car Rental. He also booked us a suite at a single room rate at the So Maybe You'll Win Casino," Day reports.

All's well that ends well, and Some Day and Lenny always manage to get the bad guys — and extricate themselves from some pretty uncomfortable situations — by the end of each short story. The stories are really short, too — only two or three pages each, perfect for quick breaks, although readers won't want to stop delving into the pair's adventures.

The entire collection will generate guffaws, except for the final story. In "What It's Ail About," Bettinger demonstrates his genius for addressing

serious topics, too. The author sends his Dynamic Duo to Washington, D.C., for the Candlelight Vigil at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial to honor fallen officers. So while you'll chuckle from the beginning of the book, you'll finish up with a lump in your throat.

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Last modified: August 25, 2007