

SEPTEMBER MEETING

*How to Win Book Publishers
and Influence Editors*

BY DAVID EPSTEIN

Arnie Bernstein, whose fourth nonfiction book will be published in Spring 2009, will speak at IWOC's September 9 meeting. He will cover key questions for aspiring book authors, including:

- How does a writer attract a book publisher? How do you find the right publisher for your book?
- How do book projects typically get started—with the publisher or the writer?
- What should you put into a book proposal to convince an editor?
- Do you absolutely have to have an agent, and if so, how do you get one (before you are famous)? What is the agent's role? What are typical terms, commission, etc.?
- How do you negotiate royalties, advances, and subsidiary rights (especially electronic)?
- What's it like working with various book editors? How do issues about titles and covers get worked out?
- What are some good tips for promoting your new book? How do the agent and publisher help on promotion and publicity?

Bernstein's forthcoming book, *Bath Massacre: America's First School Bombing*, is a creative nonfiction tale. Using an approach like Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Bernstein recreates moment-by-moment a forgotten chapter in history: on May 18, 1927 a madman set off 500 pounds of explosives he'd planted in a rural school, killing 38 children and six adults. He also burned down his farm, murdered his wife, and blew himself up in a spectacular suicide bombing that killed several bystanders.

An earlier work, *Hollywood on Lake Michigan* (Lake Claremont Press, 1999), won first place honors from the American Regional History Awards for the Midwest Division. Roger Ebert, in an introduction to Bernstein's book, *The Movies Are: Carl Sandburg's Film Reviews & Essays* (Lake Claremont Press, 2000), wrote: "Arnie Bernstein has performed an extraordinary accomplishment in bringing this book into being.... [He] adds great knowledge and insight.... This is a book that reopens a chapter of journalism and history that might have remained closed forever."

Bernstein is noted for looking at history through unique perspectives. The late Senator Paul Simon, a Lincoln scholar, noted in his foreword to Bernstein's *The Hoofs and Guns of the Storm: Chicago's Civil War Connections* (Lake Claremont Press,

2001): "Readers—and those who follow Arnie Bernstein's recommendations [on Chicago's Civil War sites and resources]—will be enriched, understanding a little better where we have been and where we must go."

Bernstein serves on the board of The Society of Midland Authors, one of the oldest author's associations in the nation, founded in 1915 by Harriet Monroe and Vachel Lindsay, among others. He has served as a judge for the Society's annual book awards and for the Illinois/Chicago Film Offices for their biannual screenwriting competition. He has also written author profiles for the book section of the Chicago Sun-Times.

Preceding the program, we will hold our brief annual business meeting and elect officers for the coming year.

Networking with snacks and beverages begins at 5 p.m. and the meeting at 6. Nonmembers are cordially invited. The meeting is free for IWOC members and \$15 for nonmembers. Plan to stay for a buy-your-own dinner at a nearby restaurant after the meeting. The location is National-Louis University, 122 South Michigan, Room 5008. National-Louis U. is across the street from the Art Institute. See you there! ♣

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN/ROGER RUEFF

A Tradition of Rituals

I've been thinking about ritual, lately. And tradition. And how they relate to each other. At first glance, the two words seem strongly interrelated to me—so strongly as to render them, if not synonymous, at least codependent. But they're not the same thing. Ritual is a prescribed way of doing something; tradition (in at least the definition that applies here) is a continuing pattern of beliefs or practices. So one could maintain a tradition of performing a ritual... but not vice versa. If that makes sense.

I planted the seeds for this kind of musing last Tuesday, when I went on a day-long solo motorcycle ride to a lovely highway not far from the Wisconsin border. It was the one-year anniversary of my father's death, and I wanted to pull myself out of the sticky tangle of day-to-day doings and set the day apart—to render it out of the ordinary... which is one of the many functions of ritual. I wanted to dislodge myself from the fixed track of life for a few hours and view things in a broader context... one that encompasses the many avenues and side streets of life that I don't happen to be on at the moment.

I chose to spend the day on my Harley (a 1200cc Sportster) for a couple of reasons. One is that when I'm on it, I enter into what I call "motorcycle mindfulness"—a peaceful, active awareness of my surroundings. When you're riding a motorcycle, you must be in the moment all the time. If you slip outside the moment,

even briefly, you might find yourself outside of all moments for good ... if you get my gist. Every pothole, every slick spot in the road, every driver who might not see you—must register in your awareness. And you have to develop a sort of radar—what's going on in front of you two-seconds out, four-seconds out, eight-seconds out... and where you will go if that guy in the Chevy hits the brakes (and I don't mean "to the hospital or morgue.")

It sounds like a tense and frightening enterprise, I know—and it can be when you first start riding. But after you put a few thousand miles behind you, it becomes second nature, like an elaborate form of breathing. And breathing lies at the heart of many meditative practices... so I do mine on the bike.

The other reason I chose to honor the day with a bike ride is that that's what I was doing the day my father died. It was a Sunday last year, and I had decided to stretch my definition of a day trip all the way to Galena, which is a good four hours from Naperville when you're taking the back roads... the most enjoyable way to travel on a bike. I had ridden to St. Charles and taken Hwy 64 through Oregon all the way to Savannah, near the Iowa border, where I picked up Hwy 84 and rode north along the Mississippi River to Galena. While lunching at a little French bistro on the far end of Main Street, I put in a call to my dad... a Sunday tradition. No



answer. After lunch, I rode Hwy 20 (the Grant Memorial Highway) back east through Rockford to Marengo, where a good friend of mine lives and owns a dry goods store that his grandfather opened in the 1920s. We chatted for a bit at his house, and I tried my dad again. Again, no answer—which I found curious, because he was usually around on Sunday afternoons.

Back on the bike and home to Naperville. A call at 5:30, no answer. Another at 6:00... and 7:00... and 8:00. Finally, at 9:00 (8:00, his time), I called one of his neighbors and asked him to check in and see if he was okay. As it happened, the neighbor had just been by the house and peeked in the screen door, where he saw my dad lying on the couch in the living room, apparently napping. But something about the scene had concerned him, and he and his wife were about to go back and recheck. Ten minutes later, the wife called to tell me that he had passed on.

It's hard to believe a year has passed. But time seems rather slippery and hard to hold onto these days, anyway. There are a few estate matters still to settle, but things are generally under control. The house is listed on the MLS. The agent is getting nibbles. Life goes on.

And I've ended up with a couple of new traditions. One involves a long ride on the motorcycle; the other involves a glass of scotch, a votive candle, the nighttime sky above my deck... and silence.

Continued on page 5.

Making Online Networking More than Social

This is yet another review in an irregular series devoted to books and Internet sites that are popularly classified as reference source material.

BY RICHARD L. EASTLINE

Seven Days to Online Networking / Ellen Sautter & Diane Crompton / 173 pp. (incl. appendix and index) plus table of contents / JIST Works, 2008 / \$9.95 list (paperback) / ISBN 978-1-59357-550-2

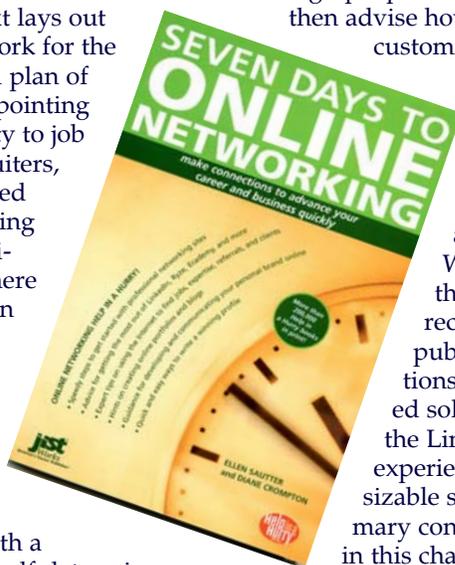
Do you really get what you pay for? Sometimes you get more—which is what happens if you buy this slim, do-it-yourself guide. At ten dollars, you're not likely to find a better, one-source tutor to define and clarify the options available for building a beneficial presence on the Internet. The authors take an aggressive, persuasive approach to pointing out the advantages as well as some shortcomings inherent in the seven primary categories of making contact via cyberspace: "social" networks, identity management sites, blogs, webfolios (websites that act as resumes), discussion groups, online publishing, and online public speaking. Yes, these all make up the full package.

Sautter and Crompton both have a wealth of experience that becomes apparent after delving into any of the chapters. Granted that the "seven days" in the book's title is more a promotional premise than a promise, it does serve to caution the reader that more than a quick read is in order. The arrangement of topics is especially well organized and thorough, as evidenced by the details that fill a seven-page table of contents. Chapter sections are bluntly identified: textbook style rather than cute titles. All in all, the structure of this guide is exemplary.

Now for the specifics, beginning with the authors' first chapter. Don't skip it unless you are already well sold on the virtues and operating procedures of cyberspace interconnections. The text lays out the groundwork for the overall grand plan of networking, pointing out its validity to job seekers, recruiters, and established workers looking for more business. From there on in, the plan unfolds in easy-to-read segments (no industry "in" language allowed), beginning with a very concise self-determination guide on the kind of identity you want for yourself online. What then follows is the overview of seven selected categories of networking mentioned earlier.

First on the list—and foremost in the hierarchy of importance—are the specialized "social" networking sites that cater to business, offering opportunities for online meeting and dealing. Going beyond naming several of them, Sautter and Crompton chose to hone in on LinkedIn as the pre-eminent choice for both beginners and experienced pro-

fessionals. Devoting twenty pages to this monster-sized medium (20 million members representing some 150 industries), they guide you through the initial stages of setting up a profile and then advise how to customize your



account. While there are recent publications devoted solely to the LinkedIn experience, the sizable summary contained in this chapter will be more than adequate for initiating your participation.

Once past this recommendation, the authors then identify and comment on the remaining half-dozen tools that comprise their networking package. Blogs come next and, here again, there are specific guidelines for creating a blog and for responding to others. The point is well made that doing the latter is a valuable plus inasmuch as your name will become more visible more often on the Internet, possibly enhancing your own profile in terms of topic knowledge as well as gain-

ing more contacts at no cost.

No longer the most important item in your Internet portfolio, the personal website dominated by your work resume nevertheless has retained value in performing as a permanent calling card. Now labeled "webfolios," these operations provide a reference point in your communications and don't demand the more urgent sense of timeliness inherent to networking sites or blogs. The authors present some suggestions before going on to discuss the remaining options for making contacts. More than a mention is given for discussion groups (finding them and participating), but only brief commentary is provided for electronic publishing—newsletters, articles, podcasts, and webinars (the Internet version of seminars).

Concluding this plainly written guide is a worthy resource compilation. Not only does it identify a number of useful assessment (exercises and tests) websites that relate to the networking experience, but it lists current, as of 2008, blog sites, professional association directories, search engines, and sites relating to publishing. If you get the impression, by now, that Sautter and Crompton have produced a virtual partner to assist you in achieving an effective cyberspace presence, you are so right! 🍀

In the Spotlight:

Amy Bernstein

BY KAREN SCHWARTZ



Q You're called both Amy Bernstein and Amy Williams Bernstein. Which do you prefer?

A My byline is always Amy Williams Bernstein, but that's a mouthful, so in non-professional settings I just go by Amy Bernstein.

Q Where were you born and where did you grow up?

A I was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, but I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama. I know, I know, I don't have a Southern accent.

Q Do you live in the city or suburbs? What do you like about living where you do? How long have you lived in this neighborhood?

A My husband and I live in the West Loop. We love it here because it's still emerging as a residential part of town, which makes for an eclectic neighborhood. A trendy bar/restaurant, a row of meat packers, and a couple of uber-contemporary art galleries coexist within a block of our building. But what I like most is that we can see the top of the Sears Tower from our roof deck. When we moved from California last June, I saw that view and immediately knew this is where I wanted to live.

Q Do you have any family in the area? Pets?

A Neither. We were living near my husband's family in Southern California, but he got a job offer here that made it worth leaving them to come to a city where we knew nobody. We do want a dog, but right now

we're having too much fun being responsibility-free globetrotters.

Q How long have you been a freelance writer?

A I've been full-time freelance since January.

Q What kind of work did you do prior to becoming a freelance writer?

A For almost five years, I was a features editor for AAA member magazines at an office in Southern California that produces magazines for five states. Just as we were deciding to move, they offered me a promotion to editor-in-chief of a new magazine for AAA-Alabama. They made it a contract position that I did full-time from Chicago through the end of 2007.

Q What kind of writing do you specialize in?

A Travel, lifestyle, arts, community news, and I might expand to copywriting.

Q What do you like about being a freelance writer?

A The freedom to travel. There's no worrying about how many vacation days I've accrued or scrambling to get a coworker to cover while I'm gone. I just bring my computer along and work from the road.

Q Describe one particularly memorable/interesting assignment on which you've worked.

A I coincidentally got three different assignments that involved taking three different Chicago tours. So I decided to pitch a story

about Chicago tours. In the end, I took 13 tours in five months. I'd say I got to know the city pretty well for a new resident.

Q How long have you been a member of IWOC?

A I first attended an IWOC meeting in July of last year, but at the time I was under contract with AAA and not doing much freelancing. This summer Jeff Steele contacted me and convinced me to come back. I joined in July.

Q Why did you join IWOC?

A To be a part of a community of freelancers. This work can be very isolating, and I saw that IWOCers are genuinely interested in

sharing their experience and knowledge, helping each other develop, and just being sociable.

Q What other Chicago-area organizations are you a member of?

A I belong to the Association of Women Journalists and Chicago Headline Club.

Q What are your favorite hobbies?

A Running, soccer, dancing, and snowboarding.

Q Any fun/memorable things you did this summer?

A I was in a longtime friend's wedding in Highlands, North Carolina. While there, I tried fly fishing for the first time. 🐟

2008 All-Day IWOC Writers' Workshop on October 25

Plan the day on Saturday, October 25th, to hear how you can expand your career as an independent writer. Whether you've just recently gone freelance or are an established veteran, you should be there.

IWOC members and other professionals will present instructional sessions and panels to include:

- The Zen of Writing
- How to Pitch to Magazines
- The Freelance Life
- Social Networking
- Research for Non-Fiction Book Authors
- Practical Marketing for Strategic Business Development
- How PR Professionals Can Help Writers
- Cold-Calling Boot Camp
- The Law of Communications

All that, and lunch too, for only \$99 for IWOC members. The place will be easy to find; it's our regular meeting location at National Louis University – 122 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago.

Watch the IWOC website for more detailed announcements and sign-up information.

So that got me thinking about the other sorts of ritual and tradition in my life... and what separates them from mere habit. When I shower in the morning, the sequence of body parts I wash is identical from one day to the next. Habit. My contacts go in right-eye first. More habit. The order in which my teeth get brushed and flossed, the way I prepare my morning coffee, the software I launch when my computer boots up, the websites I check and the order in which I check them. Habit, habit, habit, habit, and habit... an unconscious repetition of behavior.

But I have my share of traditions, too. From the time I divorced in 1997 until my son graduated from high school last year, he and I took two yearly road trips out west—one in the summer and one in the winter—to visit my dad and see points beyond or ski. Doing so became our tradition (and one I consciously tried to establish). Our summer journeys always involved a side trip to see friends in Aspen and a visit to the Hot Springs Pool in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. More tradition. Once each summer, we also spent an entire day at Six Flags Great America riding roller coasters... and, in the evening, had our caricatures drawn—and professionally framed when we got home, providing me with a lasting chronicle of his growing up that still hangs on my walls. Tradition, tradition, and tradition... a conscious repetition of behavior.

Which leaves me at ritual, a prescribed way of doing something, of which only two personal instances come to mind—one having to do with safety, the other having to do with religion and the entreaty of Universal forces for success. The safety ritual manifests in the way I check out the Harley before I ride. I'm free to vary the sequence of checks but never do. Performing them in a prescribed sequence every time ensures that none will be missed and keeps me from heading out on the road with a mind not fully prepared to be mindful.

The religious ritual has to do with the Cubs.

Last spring, I started dating a gal who shares a night-and-weekend season ticket package to Wrigley Field. (High five!) Between her tickets and the ones I bought when they first went on sale in February, I've seen 20 games (and counting) this season. To get to there, we take Red Line from her neighborhood in Uptown to the Addison Station and leave the platform via the south stairwell. She exits the station through the left turnstile; I exit through the right. We cross at the light and immediately make our way, hand-in-hand, to the Hank Sauer paving-brick section on the south side of the ballpark, where my son and I have a brick that reads, "DYLAN & ROGER RUEFF, CUBS AETERNA!" We tap our toes on the brick (and, in these last several weeks, have had to move the step on the Acuvue Contacts advertising stage to find it) and head directly to the main entrance, where we get our bags checked and tickets scanned at the far-right ticket line, make our way up the ramps and deposit our bags at our seats, then go to the upper deck patio, where we buy the same kinds of beer every game (Michelob Light for her, Beck's for me) from the same beer vendor, purchase pizza (for her) and a brat with onions (for me) if we're hungry, then head back to the seats, settle in, toast, kiss, and get ready to watch the ballgame... figuring we've done our part to appease and appeal to the baseball gods.

I mentioned our pregame ritual to someone the other night at a party. She called me obsessive-compulsive.

Maybe so, but I'm also 17-3... and willing to bear the scorn of my religious persecution all the way through October. ♣

UIC OFFERS FALL WRITERS' SERIES COURSES

Through the External Education Department, UIC is offering a series of courses for writers, but you'll have to hurry to get registered. Some courses begin next week. Here's the lineup:

Travel Writing: See the world for fun and profit. Tuesdays, September 9-October 14

Enhancing the Muse: A creative writing seminar. Wednesdays, September 10-October 15

Writing with a Purpose: A business writing workshop. Thursdays, September 11-October 16

Composing a Life: A journal writing workshop. Saturday, September 20

Technical Writing: A step-by-step introduction (online). October 9-November 13

How to Write a Book: Creating, drafting, revising, and marketing longer pieces. Wednesdays, October 22-December 3

Mastering Grant Writing: How to write a winning grant proposal (online). October 23-December 3

Working with Grammar: A grammar workshop. Mondays, October 27-December 1

Writing Women's Lives: Translating memory into narrative. Saturday, November 1

These are some of their most popular courses. The journal writing workshop is new this year, and Writing Women's Lives has a new format.

You can view course descriptions, read instructors' biographies, find pricing, or register at <http://www.externaledu.uic.edu/writers>.

There is a 20 percent discount for University of Illinois employees, students, or alumni.

If you have questions, you can contact Michele Aymold at externaledu@uic.edu or 312-355-0423.

IWOC's 2008-2009 Slate of Officers to Be Elected at September Meeting

Preceding the September program, IWOC will hold its one and only annual business meeting and election of officers. We are pleased to present the following fine slate of candidates:

President: Roger Rueff

Vice President: Catherine Rategan

Secretary: Jennifer Lyng

Treasurer: Barbara Dillard

Parliamentarian: Harry Karabel

Board Members: Charles Coffin, Noreen Kelly, Joen Kinnan, Martha Turner

Notes

Ed Zotti Introduces New Book

We've just learned that IWOCer Ed Zotti has a new book, *THE BARN HOUSE: Confessions of an Urban Rehabber*. Ed and the book will be featured in a *Sun Times* article and video on Sunday, September 7. Ed appeared on WGN's Milt Rosenberg show on September 1, on the noon news on WGN-TV on September 4, and at a book signing at Barnes & Noble on Webster on September 4.

Ed says, "*THE BARN HOUSE* is about fixing up my old house on the North Side and the revival of the city that occurred around the same time. Pretty good book if I do say so myself, and I think anybody who lives or lived in Chicago will get a kick out of it."

For links to more description, reviews, etc., see: <http://www.edzotti.blogspot.com>. An excerpt of the book, which was published by the *Reader*, is available at: <http://www.chicagoreader.com/features/stories/barnhouse/>.

It's Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers' Line

Browse Resources

See What's Doing in IWOC Events

WWW.IWOC.ORG

Calendar

September 9

IWOC Monthly Meeting. Business meeting and election of officers followed by author Arnie Bernstein, who will discuss the business end of getting a book published. Networking at 5 p.m., program at 6 p.m. IWOC members free; nonmembers \$15; National-Louis University, 120 S. Michigan Ave., Room 5008 (across from Art Institute). Nonmembers cordially invited. Buy-your-own dinner follows.

September 26-27

"Look Professional in Print, Online and In Person," Communication Central's third annual "Build Your Communications Business" conference, Rochester, NY. IWOCers are eligible for a discount if they are able to attend. For a preliminary program and hotel information (rooms are only \$59 or \$69/night, and parking is free to locals and out-of-towners!), and to register, go to: www.communication-central.com.

October 25

All-Day IWOC Writers' Workshop. Choose among nine different sessions that can help you work smarter, better, and more productively. Lunch is included in the low IWOC member fee of \$99; members of other writers' groups pay \$109; others pay \$129; students with ID pay \$64. National-Louis University, 122 S. Michigan, Chicago. Coming Events on the website will have further details soon.

The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted, but call ahead in case of cancellation. The groups welcome nonmembers. If there's no group in your area, why not start one? Contact webmaster@iwoc.org.

September 25 (4th Thursday)

IWOOP Monthly Lunch. Near-west suburbanites meet at noon on the 4th Thursday of the month for lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park. For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. This group doesn't always meet, so be sure to check to see if there is to be a lunch meeting this month before you show up.

October 2 (1st Thursday)

IWORP Monthly Breakfast. Join the Rogers Park IWOC contingent for breakfast at 9 AM at the A&T Grill, 7036 N. Clark St., Chicago. For more info, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.