



# LAUGHING BEAR 109 NEWSLETTER

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## The Surviving Small Press: Keep Changing

Laughing Bear is going through changes again. I got a new job, a new computer, I'm working on a new web site design, and the newsletter has a new four page format because I'm using new software and as long as I have to create a new layout why not just change everything?

Change can be difficult and disrupting, but invigorating as well. Every once in awhile we need to shake things up – throw out the old stuff that has gotten stale and try something new.

Here are some questions to ask yourself when you start feeling a change may be in the air:

### 1. Are you still excited by what you are doing?

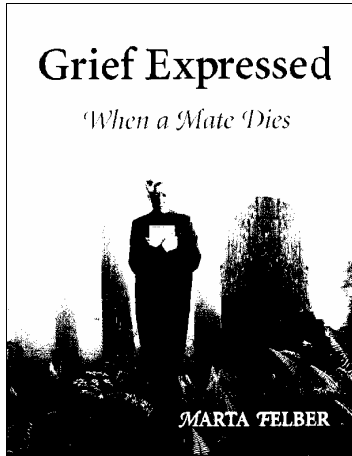
If that old spark is getting dim, it may be time to take a look at your motivations for being a publisher. They do change over the years, but sometimes we stubbornly stick to an original vision even when it's obviously obsolete.

As we mature, we hopefully become better people. The same goes for authors and presses. It may be time for a makeover of your books to fit your more refined insights. Or do a variation on the theme and approach the subject in a new way in a new book.

### 2. Are you happy with your marketing results?

Some publishers stick with the same marketing plan for years.

*(Continued on page 3.)*



## Grief Expressed: When a Mate Dies

By Marta Felber  
LifeWords, P.O. Box 1299, West Fork, AR 72774; 126 pp, 8.5" x 11", perfect, \$19.95 + \$3.00 p&h;  
<http://www.spannet.org/lifewords>

Loss of a mate is probably the worst trauma a person can go through, short of the loss of a child. Marta Felber used her skills as a counselor to work through her grief after the passing of her husband from a lingering illness. With this book, she uses her own experience to lead others through their grief.

*Grief Expressed* is a workbook taken from Marta's journal. It consists of 54 exercises used to bring out feelings and search for solutions. Left hand pages show the writing she did as examples, and the right provide room for readers to do their own writing.

Nothing will make the pain go away, but this book offers a sensitive and positive way to face the difficult times and shows there can be life after a mate's passing.

## Century Dead Center & Other Poems

By George Economou  
Left Hand Books, Station Hill Rd., Barrytown, NY 12507;  
<http://www.lefthandbooks.com>

This collection brings together 18 years of George Economou's poetry, prose, translations, and artwork.

### Century Dead Center



*George Economou*

The heart of the book is "Century Dead Center", a prose poem (for lack of a better description) consisting of 30 short paragraphs that describe perceptions of World War II from the different standpoints of myth, archeology, prophecy, and people who were there. The picture that emerges as each scene is added to this mosaic is complex and contradictory, rich and revealing.

"Century Dead Center" is a powerful poem that sets the tone for a collection of works insightful, thoughtful, and always compelling.

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## How to Get to Heaven Without Going to Church

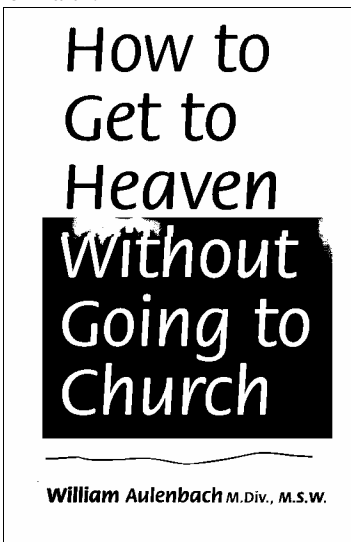
By William Aulenbach M.Div., M.S.W.

Creative Ventures, PO Box 33, Dana Point, CA 92629; 160 pp. 5.5" x 8.5", perfect, \$10.00

More and more we are seeing people who want to have a spiritual life without joining an organized church. There are so many different "brands" of Christianity alone that it is difficult to choose. And some people just prefer to worship outside of organized religion.

Rev. Aulenbach was confronted, not for the first time, by a young mother who came to him for advice. Her baby was almost a year old, and friends were insisting she have it baptized. She and her husband weren't sure what to do. They didn't belong to a church, and didn't care to join, but they wanted to do the right thing for their baby. That conversation was the impetus for this book.

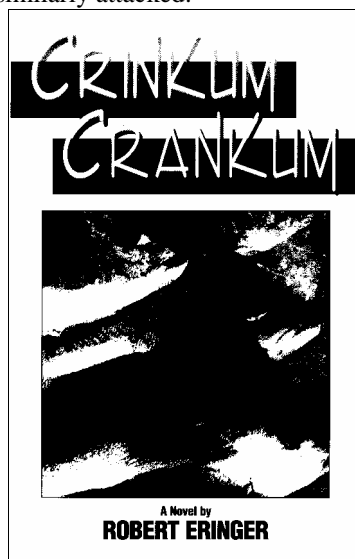
Aulenbach, who has 35 years experience as an Episcopal clergyman, pastor and teacher, challenges longstanding beliefs with sensitivity and humor to give contemporary Christians new ways to view their faith.



## Crinkum Crankum

By Robert Eringer  
Enigma Books, 11141 Georgia Ave., Ste. A-3, Silver Spring, MD 20902; 202 pp, 5.5" x 8.5", cloth, \$18.95

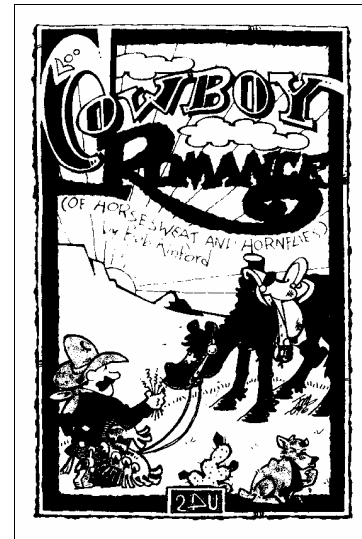
*Crinkum Crankum* starts off as a tense political thriller with a terrorist gunman's assault on a café packed with FBI personnel just across the street from FBI headquarters. Demands are made, and when they aren't met the CIA is similarly attacked.



Then Robert Eringer's already engrossing novel spins off into the surreal – Tom Clancy meets the Firesign Theater – drawing in the IRS, who are harassing a character from another book; Henry Kissinger; a hero with Tourette's syndrome; and the author himself.

What's really surprising is with characters and subplots bouncing off the walls, all this comes together and not only works, but it's hilarious. Eringer uses the book to take satiric stabs at abuse of political power, bureaucracy, the publishing establishment, and other overblown targets.

As a journalist, Eringer infiltrated the KKK for the British press and wrote about Lech Walesa and the Polish Solidarity movement in his first book, *Strike for Freedom*.



## Cowboy Romance (of horsesweat and hornflies)

By Robert E. Kinford  
2lazy4U Livestock & Literary Co., PO Box 12521, Rio Rancho, NM 87129; 176 pp, 5.5" x 8.5", perfect, \$14.00 + \$4.00; <http://www.2lazy4u.com>

Bob Kinford is a real cowboy and a real storyteller. You know he's a real cowboy when his web site sells not only his books, but cattle as well.

In this collection of humorous and even instructive stories from his years in the saddle, Kinford spins tales about everything from busting broncs and branding cattle to acting as a practical veterinarian and animal psychologist.

The cowboy life Kinford describes is not overly romanticized. The work is hard and the rewards few. Still, he manages to tell about it with the kind of humor that comes from talking about a life he obviously loves.

My problem reviewing *Cowboy Romance* is every time I pick it up and flip through it I find myself rereading a story. So I'm just going to set it down long enough to say this is one of the most fun and enjoyable collections of stories I've read in ages.

# LAUGHING BEAR NEWSLETTER 109

## Write and Grow Rich

By Dan Poynter

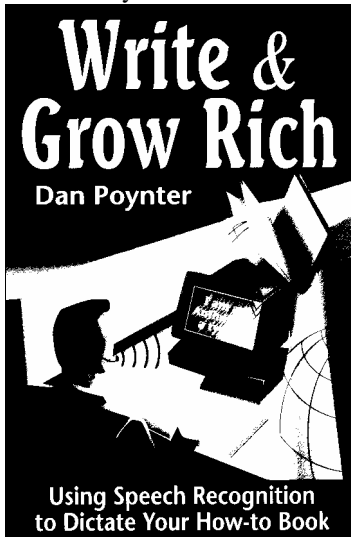
Para Publishing, PO Box 8206, Santa Barbara, CA 93118; 168 pp, 5.5" x 8.5", perfect, \$14.95+\$4.00 p&h

The subtitle of Dan Poynter's latest book on self-publishing is "Using Speech Recognition to Dictate Your How-To Book".

The idea is not that you can speak into a microphone and the computer will belch out a finished book, but you can use the software to dictate and patch together a rough first draft. Then when you start refining the book by more conventional means, much of the text will already be in place.

Poynter's theory of successful self-publishing is deceptively simple. Books don't get written because would be writers procrastinate. Poynter's talent is to get writers motivated to get words on paper by showing them how to break down a project into palpable chunks, establish a schedule, and then bring all the parts together.

In this case, he's suggesting that if you can't face the keyboard and empty screen, maybe you'll be more comfortable dictating the first draft. But no matter how good your ideas are, you will never write a book until you sit down and start.



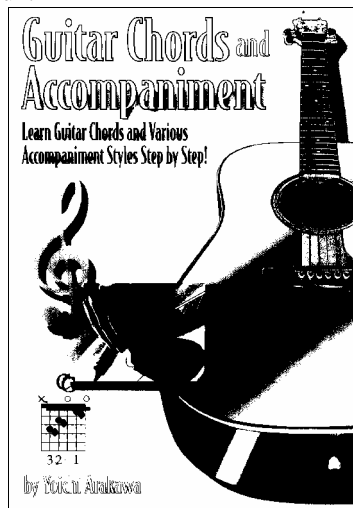
## Guitar Chords and Accompaniment

By Yoichi Arakawa

Six Strings Music Publishing, PO Box 7718, Torrance, CA 90504-9118; 120 pp, 9" x 12", perfect, \$14.95+\$4.00 p&h; <http://www.sixstringsmusicpub.com>

I've played guitar since I was 11, and even taught it for awhile, and I have never found a instruction book that'll get a beginner up and going as quickly as this one.

The problem with most guitar methods is they start with learning the notes and theory, gradually progressing to chords. That's all well and good, but it is also important to make playing the instrument fun.



This method teaches the basics of accompaniment: chords, strumming patterns and various styles of finger-picking, including Travis picking. With these skills, the student can accompany songs, gain confidence, and then if they want to learn to play lead and study music theory later, they'll be prepared.

I gave the book to my 19 year old stepson who had never played guitar. Within an hour he was able to finger three chords and shift smoothly between them. He was hooked, and you can't ask for any more than that.

## Keep Changing (continued)

They run the same ads in the same magazines, the same flyer for their direct mailings, go to the same book fairs, and so on forever.

No wonder they don't get new business. The market is so used to the stuff, the only way they'd notice it is if it stopped coming. And then they'd just assume the publisher died.

Find new ways to get your message across. Change the design, the message, even your logo if you feel like it. Nothing is carved in stone.

### 3. Is your market drying up?

Find a new one. Branch out. If you have had success with a regional book, but sales are lagging, look into the market of people who used to live in that region but moved out. Or people who wish they lived in that region.

This is a nomadic society. There are transplants in Texas who love to read stuff from home in the Northwest and collect books about New England where they'll probably move next.

Expand your market. Use press releases to reach new readers. Niche marketing is wonderful, but once the niche is saturated use what you've learned to reach others.

Or market to the same audience, but through different channels. Try something you haven't done before to reach your market. Go on the internet, speak to groups, teach an evening class.

### 4. Are you doing everything you can to serve your readers?

If you aren't, someone else will and you'll lose them.

I can't think of any book on any subject that couldn't be made more valuable to readers with a web site or addition material in some format. And readers are coming to expect that. Fortunately, it makes your job easier, too.

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## Keep Changing *(continued)*

Offering this additional information makes your book more valuable and easier to market.

A good web site is invaluable for a small press and its books. You can post all kinds of charts, graphs, maps, information about the author, updates to the books, links to more information, and it costs much less than putting all that stuff into the books. Plus, it can attract new readers.

If you feel you can't afford it or are not ready to do a web site, however, you can publish the information in pamphlets or booklets to use in your direct marketing and offer through press releases.

### 5. What were your expectations when you started out?

Very seldom do things turn out as we originally plan. Sometimes that's for the best. You start out in one direction, but something happens that sends you off on another course.

But sometimes it helps to look back, see where your vision got off track, and correct it.

Everyone has expectations starting out in small press, either of becoming independent financially or building a career or changing people's lives. And it's easy to lose sight of those goals as the realities of the business become clear.

Some things we can do nothing about, but others we can and should bring into renewed focus. Like what publishing means to us.

To me, the essence of publishing is to share with others, be it a story or experience or information. Whatever can be done to do that better, makes the experience of publishing more rewarding.

It's your passion for the subjects you publish about that makes your books or magazines valuable to readers. You keep that passion alive by looking for new ways to share it.

## Announcements

- **Bell Springs Publishing** (Box 1240, Willits, CA 95490), publisher of *Small Time Operator* and *422 Tax Deductions for Businesses and Self-Employed Individuals* (which will be reviewed in *LBN 111*) is offering its *1999 Tax Update for Businesses & Self-Employed Individuals* for just \$1 and a #10 self-addressed stamped envelope. In its 20<sup>th</sup> year, the update lists all the changes in tax laws and other business regulations for your 1998 taxes.

- **MarketAbility** (contact Tami DePalma; 813A 14<sup>th</sup> St., Golden, CO 80401; 303-279-4349; <http://www.marketability.com>) is one of the public relations firms that helped out with *LBN 106*. They are starting campaigns for six new small press clients: Time Traveler Maps, CAK Publishing, Front Row Press, Key Publishers, Inc., and Sambershar.

- **The Association of Alternative Newsweeklies** has a web site at <http://www.aan.org>. These are primarily free local interest news magazines. A very good source of addresses for local media that would be open to small publishers' press releases.

- **Laughing Stock** (<http://www.laughing-stock.com>) is a small, customer-friendly business that sells intelligent and lighthearted stock illustrations for editorial, advertising, and web-based use.

- **Independent Publishers Institute** (Jenkins Group, Inc., 121 E. Front St. 4<sup>th</sup> Fl., Traverse City, MI 49684; 800-706-4636; <http://www.bookpublishing.com>) is holding a seminar Feb. 26, 1999 at Loews Hotel in New York on Promotion, Marketing and Special Sales.

- **Bill Meyers Online Independent Publishers Discussion**, <http://www.bmeyers.com/ipub>, is just that – a web site where you can post questions and receive or offer answers about small press.

- **Marketing Directions, Inc.** (50 Lovely St., Avon, CT 06001; 800-562-4357; <http://www.marketingdirections.com>) offers books and a video on how to promote your books on radio and television.

- **Marketing With Speeches and Seminars** by Miriam Otte (Zest Press, 8315 Lake City Way NE #139, Seattle, WA 98115-4411; 888-829-9278; \$16.95 + \$3 P&H) is about how to use seminars to find more clients and referrals.

- **Chatgris Press** (Gary M. Smith, ed.; PO Box 15092, New Orleans, LA 70175-5092) has just published *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, a culmination of 10 years research from Yemen to New Orleans. They also have *The Peer-Review Journal: A Comprehensive Guide through the Editorial Process* (a how-to on setting up and managing a scientific journal) and *The Veranda* (a literary journal of short fiction and essays).

- **Books A to Z** offers a full range of services for print and web publishers. At their web site, <http://www.booksatoz.com>, they have lots of information and links to publishers, distributors, organizations, printers, and other good stuff.

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