



LAUGHING BEAR 115 NEWSLETTER

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The Surviving Small Press: A Great Media Kit

To get the most out of review copies, you need a media (or press) kit to send along with them. The kit gives the reviewer every conceivable bit of information they may need or want to write the review, and it will help ensure the review will be slanted in your favor and contain the main points you want to get across.

A couple weeks ago I received a media kit from Keller & Associates, LLC, the PR firm for Jewel Box & Friends for Jewel Box's new children's book, *The Butterfly King*. This is very nearly a perfect media kit, so I'd like to take some time and dissect it here.

Jewel Box & Friends designed the kit themselves, enlisting the PR firm to help with copy and distribution. This is a more expensive kit than you'll probably be able to justify, but the basic elements of it are items you should include in a kit you put together yourself.

This kit is assembled in a pocket folder printed with the full color book cover front and back (the cover happened to be the same size as the folder). Inside, the pockets are die cut for business cards for the publisher and the PR firm. On the cover there's a sticker stating that this is a media kit and a CD-ROM is enclosed.

I've received media kits in plain pocket folders, and they are

(Continued on page 3.)



Chaco Trilogy

By V. B. Price
 La Alameda Press, 9636 Guadalupe Trail NW, Albuquerque, NM 87114; 88 pp, 6" x 8", perfect, \$12.00

Chaco Canyon in New Mexico was center of the Pueblo Indians' (also known by the Navajo name, Anasazi) civilization thousands of years ago. What remains are multi-story houses built into the side of the canyon, a network of roads, artwork, and an intense spirituality.

Price captures the mysticism of the canyon in his poetry. Awe at what was there, how it disappeared, and what remains. The history of Chaco Canyon began with it under a sea, then the prehistoric civilization, and now empty pueblos and sea shells from which to glean its stories.

Chaco Trilogy is about a man's relationship with the canyon – the parts of his life he brings to lay to rest with the ghosts and the strength he takes away.

Granta

Edited by Ian Jack
 Granata USA, LLC, 1755 Broadway, 5th Fl., New York, NY 10019-3780; <http://www.granta.com>; 352 pp, 5.75" x 8.25", perfect, \$12.95/single issue, \$34/4 issues (you can get better prices from the website)

Granta is one of the most successful literary magazines of our time, and with a circulation of 81,000, it is possibly the most successful literary magazine of all time.



What makes *Granta* stand out among literary magazines is the editing. Each issue is built around a theme (#65 is "London, the Lives of the City"). The topic is approached in essays, fiction, reporting, and photos – each piece adding perspective and together creating a three dimensional portrait.

Anyone thinking of starting a literary magazine should study *Granta* as a model.

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Amelia Earhart: Young Air Pioneer

By Jane Moore Howe, illustrated by Cathy Morrison
Patria Press, Inc., 3842 Wolf Creek Circle, Carmel, IN 46033; <http://www.patriapress.com>; 120 pp, 5.5" x 8.5", hard bound, \$14.95

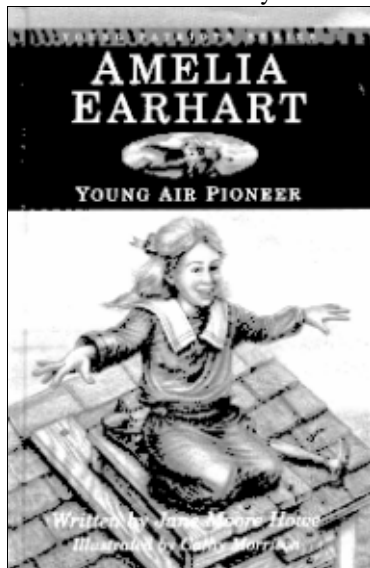
This is the first in a series of fictional biographies of famous Americans for children aged 8-12 called the "Young Patriots Series". The books help children relate to historical figures through stories about when they were young.

The Amelia Earhart book was first published in 1950 under a Simon & Schuster imprint. The author, now in her 80's, corresponded with Earhart's sister Muriel while writing the book, gaining unique insight into what Amelia was like as a child as well as collecting anecdotes.

For the new edition, illustrations have been added and some of the content has been revised.

Stories include Amelia building a roller coaster off a shed, seeing her first aeroplane at the state fair, and her first flight.

Amelia Earhart shows another side of America's most famous female pilot in a series of adventures as fun as Tom Sawyer's.



The Butterfly King

Written and illustrated by Larry Stephenson, co-authored by Patti Weinbrenner
Jewel Box & Friends, 324 Lakecrest Dr., Andover, KS 67002; <http://www.jewelbox-friends.com>; 51 pp, 8.75" x 11.25", cloth, \$19.95

With the great press kit that preceded this book, it would be a shame if it wasn't at least as impressive as it's hype. No problem. *The Butterfly King* is charming.

The story takes place in a faraway kingdom where goodness is measured by the size of the heart sewn on one's sleeve. To celebrate the coming millennium, a boy undertakes a journey. Through his adventures he learns we need not put our hearts on display if we honor what is really good and true.



The Butterfly King is a book your child can grow with. The vocabulary is sometimes challenging, but one reason for adults to read to children is to help them learn new words.

This is also a book that can be read over several evenings. The language is rich, and the story has tickles for adults as well as kids.

Stephenson's illustrations are dazzling, lighting up every page. This is his first children's book, but his work prior to this has been licensed for posters, greeting cards, fabrics, and gift items worldwide.



User Friendly The Ghost Chronicles: Volume 1

By Lawrence Gordon
Karmichael Press, HC3 Box 155D, Port St. Joe, FL 32456-9536; <http://www.karmichaelpress.com>; 176 pp, 5.5" x 8.5", perfect, \$11.95

Frank is a ghost trapped in the "in-between place" for 40 years after a fatal accident on the bayou behind his family's home. He can't leave the property or communicate with the families who have lived in his house until the Eddie, the 15 year old son of the Fields family, receives a computer for his birthday. Frank discovers when he speaks, the words appear on the computer screen. With Eddie's help, Frank and another ghost, Joseph Hawk, seek to solve the mystery of the only ghost believed to have escaped from the in-between place.

User Friendly is a fast-paced suspense novel, fun for young adults and adults as well.

The impetus for this story is taken from the author's experiences with his own house on the bayou and one of the ghosts who haunt it.

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Media Kit (continued)

still effective. They keep all the material concerning the book together and the folder still commands attention, but the printed cover makes the media kit easier to identify and it looks professional.

In the right pocket there are several press releases, the first of which is titled "Children's Classic Will Enchant All Ages". This gives a synopsis of the story and identifies the target audience.

The synopsis is the most important press release in the kit. It not only grabs the reviewer's attention, it also ensures they get the basic gist of the book. As I've said before, reviewers don't necessarily read every book cover to cover. There isn't always time. They may read a couple chapters and skim the rest to get a feeling for it. That usually works, but occasionally they'll read something into it that misrepresents the author's intention.

Even worse, a busy reviewer may have an intern screen books that come in and write up their own synopsis of ones they think the reviewer should consider.

"Publishing Company Introduces Illustrated Children's Book by Artist Larry Stephenson" is the next press release. This one gives background on the publishing company and how it was launched by Stephenson and his sister and co-author, Patti Weinbrenner. It also describes Stephenson's other ventures concerning his artwork.

"Fact Sheet: Jewel Box & Friends/*The Butterfly King*" lists eight principal points the reviewer should be aware of, including the location of Jewel Box & Friends, future plans, and that *The Butterfly King* is a first book. Each point is stated in one sentence, and any one could be used by the reviewer as an angle for their review.

"Larry K. Stephenson, Illustrator and Writer of *The Butterfly*

King" and "Patricia (Patti) A. Weinbrenner, Partner, Jewel Box & Friends; Co-author, *The Butterfly King*" give a brief biographies ("backgrounders") of the partners.

It may seem all that information could be combined into one long press release, but it is more effective to break down your messages so each release covers one subject in a page or two. It makes it easier for the reviewer to find the information they need.

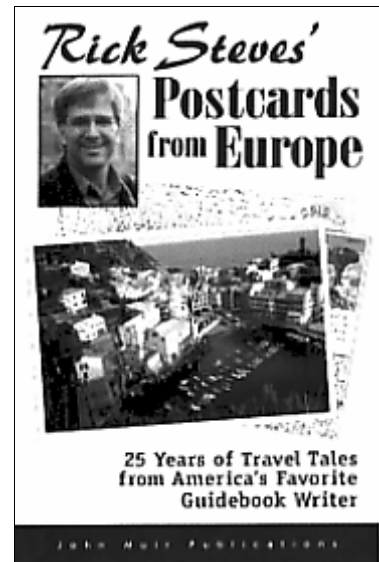
Also in the right folder pocket is the CD-ROM. This is the one place the media kit falls short. The CD contains artwork from the book, I assume. I can't tell for sure because it is formatted for Macintosh and my PC won't read it. While Macintosh is state of the art for graphic designers, that's about all it is used for. Most reviewers won't have one. If you are going to send a CD, try to make it compatible with both Mac and PC.

In the left pocket of the folder there is a full color bookmark with a synopsis of the story and a description of the publisher.

Then there is an unbound sample section from the book including illustrations. This is a good idea since it, with the press releases and other materials, could give the reviewer enough information to write the review even if the book got lost.

Finally, there is a copy of the book cover inside of which is still another synopsis of the book, information about the authors and press, and ordering information.

The day after I received the media kit I got an e-mail saying the book itself would be following in a few days. That tactic gives the reviewer two chances to get the reviewer's attention, whereas if both came in the mail together, they could both be set aside together. The reviewer is essentially presented with the book twice, and will probably be twice as likely to review it.



Rick Steve's Postcards from Europe

By Rick Steves

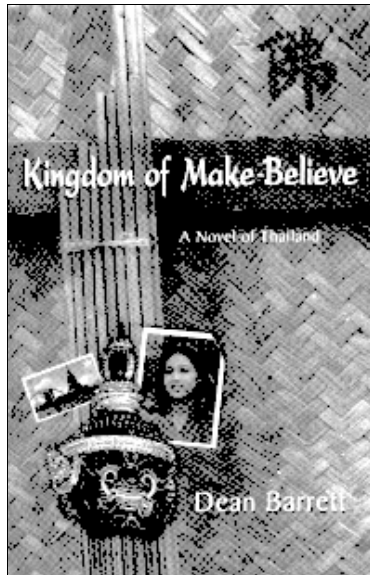
John Muir Publications, P.O. Box 613, Santa Fe, NM 87504; <http://www.ricksteves.com>; 264 pp, 5.5" x 8.5", perfect, \$16.95

Rick Steves has been traveling to Europe since 1973. He spent five years traveling "simply to feel the breeze of accelerated living", then turned that into a living as a tour guide and guidebook writer, and later as host of the PBS series, *Traveling Through Europe with Rick Steves*.

Postcards from Europe is not a guidebook, though it gives a more accurate account of what you may find there than any list of hotels and restaurants. This is a collection of stories about the people he met and adventures he had traveling a 3,000 loop through Europe retracing his steps to recapture two decades of favorite memories. The result is a rich, spicy stew of characters and the essence of European travel.

By the way, John Muir Publications is one of the great success stories in small publishing. Muir's *How to Keep Your Volkswagen Alive: A Manual of Step-By-Step Procedures for the Compleat Idiot* is in its 30th edition.

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Kingdom of Make-Believe

By Dean Barrett
Village East Books, 129 E 10th St.,
New York, NY 10003; <http://www.bookzone.com/asia>; 280 pp, 5.5" x 8.5", perfect, 11.95

Brian Mason, who works for a New York publisher, receives a plea for help from his brother's widow in Thailand. He and his brother had served there during the Vietnam War. They had loved the same woman. The brother married her and then was killed in battle.

With the excuse of putting together a collection of Asian fiction Brian goes to see her and is plunged into an underworld of deception and danger that erodes the nostalgia he felt at going back.

Barrett is a powerful storyteller who has a feeling for language that's lacking in many contemporary novels. His dialog is a pleasure to read, and his descriptions from the nightlife in Bangkok to the Thai countryside are vivid.

He also writes from experience. He served in Thailand as a Chinese linguist for the Army Security Agency during the war. He later returned to Asia and lived 17 years in Hong Kong and Bangkok writing, editing, and publishing.

Announcements

- **International Titles** (Loris Essary, Exec. Dir.; 931 E. 56th St., Austin, TX 78751-1752; <http://members.aol.com/exhibserv>) is an exhibit service that handles direct sales as well as foreign rights. They exhibit at major book fairs around the world, including the ABA, ALA, Frankfurt, London, Taipei, and Prague fairs. You can download sample catalogs at their website to get an idea of the scope of what they can do for you.
- **Writers Ask** (Susan Burmeister-Brown and Linda Burmeister Davies, eds.; Glimmer Train Press, Inc., 710 SW Madison St. #504, Portland, OR 97205-2900; <http://www.glimmertrain.com>; \$20/4 issues) is a new newsletter in question and answer format for writers. Glimmer Train also publishes *Glimmer Train Stories*, an exceptional magazine of short fiction.
- **Book Promotion Power Hour** (MarketAbility, Inc., 813A 14th St., Golden, CO 80401; <http://www.marketability.com>) is a free one-hour, interactive teleconference on marketing for independent publishers. Up to 25 book publishers and industry professionals may participate in two sessions, Oct. 25 and Nov. 1, 1999. While Power Hour is free, you need to call Kelly at 888-55-TWIST to enroll and receive instructions, a course outline, and the telephone number for the teleconference.
- **M&M Printing and Graphic Design** (Donald Masterson, owner; 1101 Pringle St., Henderson, KY 42420; amasterson@excite.com; 270-826-4465) is a printing broker and graphic design firm. They do everything from letterhead and business cards to magazines and booklets.
- **Pubmart** (Tom Williams, ed.; <http://www.PubMart.com>) is a new resource website for magazine publishers from the author of *Kitchen Table Publisher*.

- **Little Leaf Press** (Alan and Beth Blasczyk, pubs.; Little Leaf Press, P.O. Box 187, Milaca, MN 56353; <http://www.maxminn.com/littleleaf>) is a book packager and publisher of short run originals and multimedia CD-ROMs. Their latest title is *Do-It-Yourself Dulcimer Building Start to Finish*.
- **The National Association of Entrepreneurial Parents** (Lisa Roberts, co-founder; NAEP, PO Box 320722, Fairfield, CT 06432; <http://en-parent.com/NAEP.htm>) is a new organization for parents who work at home. Features include a quarterly newsletter, a manual, access to local member support groups, ad space on the website, and a membership directory.
- **Bueno Books**, which publishes bilingual educational materials, has a new website at <http://homepages.msn.com/librarylawn/bueno-news/the-news.html>.
- **Organization Officers**, you can now update your listing (or add a new one) in Laughing Bear's *Directory of Organizations for Small Presses and Self-Publishers* online. Go to the directory at <http://www.laughingbear.com/directry.htm>, and click "Add or Update a Directory Listing".

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