



# LAUGHING BEAR 128 NEWSLETTER

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http://www.laughingbear.com; Keyword: Laughing Bear; \$15/12 issues, \$17.50/Canada, £15/UK, £25/other

## The Surviving Small Press: Starting a Newsletter

I've heard from numerous people who want to start newsletters. They range from non-profit and business letters to politics and family. So here are some pointers that will apply to anyone who wants to publish a newsletter.

You need three things for a good newsletter: content, readers, and design. Unfortunately new publishers tend to focus on design foremost. Really that needs to be the last consideration. It doesn't matter what a newsletter looks like, as long as it is legible, if the content is valuable. However, no matter how much money and time is put into designing and printing a beautiful newsletter, it will be a failure if it doesn't deliver what readers need.

Some newsletter newbies are concerned with the competition. But a good newsletter is unique. The newsletter editor takes information from every source possible and then analyzes it, digests it, applies their own experience and opinions, and writes articles that give readers a view of the subject that they can't get anywhere else.

Naturally, everyone starting a newsletter isn't already an expert in their field, but that is the goal to work toward. A young man asked how he should go about starting a newsletter on Chicago politics. I told him to hang out at city hall,

*(Continued on page 3.)*



## Rattle

Alan Fox, editor; Stellasue Lee, poetry editor  
The Frieda C. Fox Foundation, Inc., 13440 Ventura Blvd., Ste. 200, Sherman Oaks, CA 91423; http://www.rattle.com; 188 pp, 6" x 9", perfect, \$8.00, \$28.00/4 issues

*Rattle* is one of the best independent literary magazines today. Each issue presents poetry, interviews and essays by well-known writers as well as newcomers.

Each issue devotes a section to a particular theme. Issue 14 features a tribute to Native American Writers. Past tributes include Latino/Chicano writers, soldier poets, editors, and children's poetry.

Issue 14 also features interviews of Anne Waldman and Simon Ortiz.

*Rattle's* web site features back issues and news. You can also order individual copies and subscriptions online.

## 96 Inc

edited by Julie Anderson, Vera gold, and Nancy Mehegan  
96 Inc, P.O. Box 15559, Boston, MA 02215; 64 pp, 8 1/2" x 11", stapled, \$7.50/issue

*96 Inc* is the annual literary magazine of the organization by the same name. The magazine features fiction, poetry, artwork, and memoirs by young and established writers and artists. Originally writers were taken from 96 Inc Artist Collaborative's workshops and other programs, but now the magazine accepts work from all writers.



The magazine itself is a pleasure to read, combining young writers looking for their voices along with established ones.

Besides the literary magazine, 96 Inc provides numerous programs; presents workshops and performances; and provides quiet, safe space for students, performers and artists. 96 Inc groups have also been formed in other cities.

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## Auschwitz Lullaby

by James C. Wall

Directed and adapted by Liz Ortiz-Mackes

Plays on Tape and CD, P.O. Box 0152, Powell Butte, OR 97753; <http://www.playsontape.com>; 90 min. audio cassette; \$18.99

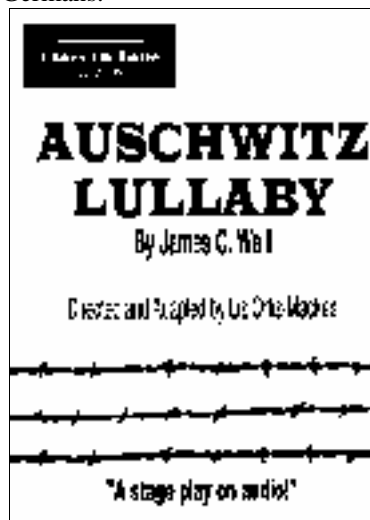
In September 1944, Dr. Isaac Jonah, a Hungarian Jewish doctor, and his wife and daughter are transported to Auschwitz. Dr. Jonah is assigned to assist the sadistic Dr. Mengele in his experiments.

Canada, another inmate, while working in the gas chambers, discovers a young girl who has miraculously survived the gas. He convinces Dr. Jonah to hide the girl in his room and they hatch a plot to help her escape to tell their story to the world.

*Auschwitz Lullaby* is an edge-of-your-seat drama. The secret to any good suspense story is a great villain, and this story has two.

Captain Hans Gunter had been a heartless middle manager before the war. The death camp has turned him into a cold-blooded monster deciding who lives or dies.

Kapo Eva Vacek is a psychopath who once wanted to be a nun. She was raped the night before taking her vows and is now a sadistic inmate working for the Germans.



## Make Money Self-Publishing

By Suzanne B. Thomas

Foreword by Dan Poynter

Gemstone House Publishing, P.O. Box 19948, Boulder, CO 80308; <http://www.makemoneyselfpublishing.com>; 286 pp, 6" x 9", perfect, \$19.95

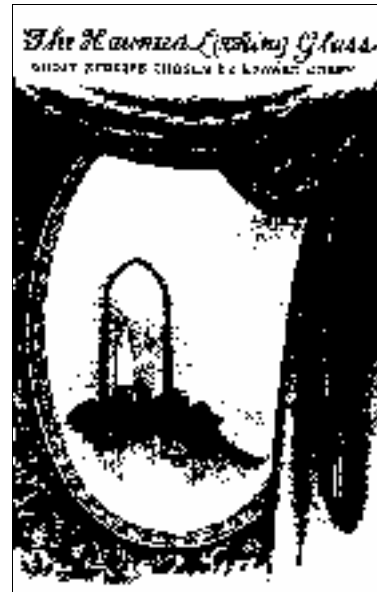
Thomas shows how to make more money self-publishing by profiling 14 small publishers who have been exceptionally successful in their fields.



You'll find lots of useful tips in these pages, on publicity, evaluating your book ideas, finding alternate markets, selling rights, and there are extensive resources listed in the back of the book.

Profiled publishers include Peter Kent, whose *Poor Richard's Web Site* is an excellent book on building a web site. Rich and Sue Freeman's Footprint Press publishes books on hiking. Angela Adair-Hoy publishes and sells eBooks at <http://www.booklocker.com>. Connie Shelton, Columbine Publishing Group, does mysteries.

In each fascinating chapter you'll find out what worked for a publisher, the problems they faced, and how they used talent, innovation, and courage to build a successful business.



## The Haunted Looking Glass: Ghost Stories Chosen by Edward Gorey

New York Review Books, 1755 Broadway, 5<sup>th</sup> Fl., New York, NY 10019; <http://www.nybooks.com>; 5" x 8", 254 pp, perfect, \$12.95

Edward Gorey, who died last year, was known for his quirky, eerie and funny illustrations and stories. When I was in college, I collected his books. Later he became well-known as the creator of the opening animations for the PBS series, *Mystery*, among other things.

This collection of ghost stories selected by Gorey was first published in 1959. Each story is prefaced with a suitably creepy Gorey illustration. The collection includes familiar stories like "The Monkey's Paw"; less-known short stories by Charles Dickens, Bram Stoker, and Robert Lewis Stevenson; and some surprises, like "Man-Size in Marble" by Edith Nesbit, who is better known for her children's books.

New York Review Books produces beautiful new editions of unusual literary works that are long out of print.

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## Starting a Newsletter

(continued)

attend council meetings, and get to know the politicians. If he shows genuine interest and a willingness to learn, he should be up to his knees in articles and interviews in no time. And he'll be well on his way to being a recognized expert.

One talent the newsletter editor needs to nurture is the care and handling of sources. You do need to keep information coming, but you've got to be fair and honest above all. You'll lose readers if it appears you are fawning over a source, and no one will talk to you if you trash them. So, you've got to be fair. If someone tells you something, try to corroborate the information. No one can fault you if what you say is true. Your first responsibility is to your readers.

It doesn't matter how good the newsletter is if no one reads it. Newsletters sell by word of mouth. Of course, it helps to have a best selling book related to the letter, and many letters are tied to books, but short of that, the best way to build a reputation is to get people you write about to read your newsletter. A proportion of the circulation of any periodical is sent gratis to people in the same field. With luck, they'll mention it to their peers and people they influence.

A web site can also attract subscribers while adding value to your newsletter. You can offer samples, sell subscriptions, and reprint articles. From my own experience, nothing has come close to my web site for drawing attention to my letter.

If you are doing a newsletter for a company or organization, the readership is built in, but if you want it to be more than window dressing for the organization, you will still have to send out copies to possible sources. In this situation you'll probably have less say in the content of the newsletter, but if you

don't do what you can to make it useful you'll get bored and so will your readers. You'll end up as expendable as the newsletter.

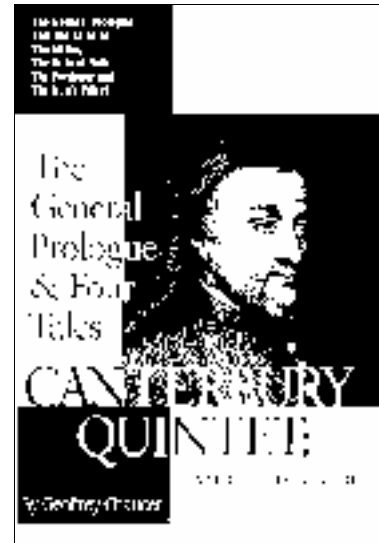
Beware prepackaged content. There are companies that make good money providing generic articles. The articles are bland, usually out of date, and recognizable for what they are. Why pay to make yourself look bad? Anything you write will at least be free. That isn't to say you can't feature a freelance writer now and then if they have something to say, but the newsletter is your voice and that's what your readers expect.

The final consideration is design. Keep it simple, and watch your budget. You can always change the format later, if you want. In the meantime, keep in mind that people read newsletters for information, not for how they look. As a rule, the more elaborate the design, the more useless the newsletter. A slick design can make it look like you are more interested in form than content.

All you need to start a newsletter is a subject and a word processor. You'll need to register your company name with your county or city to protect it. A DBA (Doing Business As) permit usually costs less than \$20, but the requirements vary from state to state.

You should get an ISSN (International Standard Serial Number). You can apply for one for free at <http://lcweb.loc.gov/issn>. The ISSN is used by libraries and other agencies for cataloging, it is usually required to get listed in directories, and it adds a touch of legitimacy to your letter.

Aside from that, you just need a healthy dose of curiosity, research and communication skills, and the commitment to stick with it. It will take time to build your expertise and skills, not to mention your circulation. It takes time to build trust.



## Canterbury Quintet: The General Prologue & Four Tales

By Geoffrey Chaucer  
Edited by Michael Murphy, Ph.D.  
Little Leaf Press, Inc., P.O. Box  
187, Milaca, MN 56353; <http://www.littleleafpress.com>; 176 pp,  
5 1/4" x 8", perfect, \$11.95

Little Leaf's Chaucer series, co-operatively published with Conal and Gavin Press, is not a translation. The language is as in the original, but the spelling has been modified to help modern readers. There are also extensive footnotes, a glossary, and index.

This first book in the series includes the Prologue and the tales of The Miller, the Wife of Bath, The Pardoner, and the Nun's Priest. The other volume available, *Canterbury Marriage Tales*, includes the Wife of Bath, the Clerk, the Merchant, and The Franklin.

Chaucer's tales are immensely enjoyable stories, but the spelling and syntax is very difficult. These new versions make the tales easier to comprehend without losing the meaning or diluting the nuances and richness of Chaucer's writing.

The editor of these books is Professor Emeritus of Medieval English at the City University of New York.

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## Tell It To the Future: Have I Got A Story for You... about the Twen- tieth Century

Edited by Francine R. Cefola and  
Bobbi R. Madry  
Golden Quill Press, 159 Rte. 304,  
Bardonia, NY 10954; <http://www.prowlers.com/~thewritesource>; 186  
pp, 6" x 9", perfect, \$16.95

*Tell It to the Future* a timeline-  
style overview of history combined  
with personal narratives. This  
makes for a fun, informative and  
useful book that will touch readers  
on a personal level.

Each decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century  
has a chapter. The chapter includes  
individual historical time lines for  
presidents, major historical events,  
science and technology, entertain-  
ment, sports, and interesting facts.

Each chapter has a short  
introductory essay that examines  
the mood at the beginning of the  
decade and introduces the stories  
that are presented. Each chapter  
also summarizes the decade.

The stories, poems, artwork,  
and letters included in the book  
range from personal reflections  
on daily life and family stories to  
historical events (like Martin  
Luther King's assassination and  
D-Day).

## Announcements

- **Laughing Bear PO Box still open.** Earlier this month my dyslexic postmaster mixed up 613322 with 613222. Laughing Bear's post office box was closed and all my mail was returned to the senders. That has all been fixed now, so if you had anything returned to you, please send it again.

- **Press-TIGE Publishing** (Martha Ivery, ed.; 291 Main St., Catskill, NY 12414; <http://www.press-tigebooks.com>) is seeking new authors of nonfiction and children's picture books.

- **Carriage House Review** (K. A. Hunter, ed.; PO Box 880, Decatur, GA 30031-1880; <http://www.carriagehoureview.com>) is a new literary magazine of dark fiction. The first issue is slated for November 1, 2001, and the deadline for submissions is August 1, 2001.

- **Why Men Are...** (Diane Inderlin, ed.; <http://www.whymenare.com>) is an online magazine for women featuring stories on married life, health, fitness, entertainment, pregnancy, jokes, weddings, forums, and hunk of the month.

- **Otter Creek Press** (PO Box 416, Middleburg, FL 32030-0416; <http://www.otterpress.com>) publishes books written by William "Bill" Hill, featuring fantasy, time travel, and wizardry for all ages.

- **Able Muse Review** (<http://www.ablemuse.com>) is a very impressive online literary magazine featuring fiction and poetry, literary and art workshops, and discussion groups. Registered members can post poems, stories, topics and enter contests. Registration is free.

- **Boardwatch Magazine** has a new web address at <http://www.ispworld.com>. I wrote about Boardwatch in *LBN 116* as one of the great newsletter success stories. It started as a little newsletter written by a friend of mine. He grew it into a successful magazine and sold it for around \$30 million.

- **PuttPutt Boats.** Laughing Bear is selling a line of steam-powered toy boats from the web site at <http://www.laughingbear.com/bookstore/toys.html>. I discovered these tin boats in my never ending quest to find stuff related to the Seattle ferry boat Kalakala and fell in love with them. They are not recommended for children as they have sharp edges and require open flame. Based on a 1891 design, they have been used in schools to demonstrate the power of steam. They run on a few drops of vegetable oil or a tiny candle. For each of the Kalakala model sold, Laughing Bear will donate \$5 to the Kalakala foundation.

- **pAradOXisM** (Charles T. Le, ed.; <http://www.geocities.com/charlesle/paradoxism.html>) is a literary movement, as an anti-totalitarianism protest, set up by Florentin Smarandache in the 1980's, and based on an excessive use of antitheses, antinomies, contradictions, and paradoxes in creation. The web site supports this movement. A free eBook on "Paradoxism and Postmodernism" can be downloaded from <http://www.gallop.unm.edu/~smarandache/IonSoare2.PDF>.

Advertising: Insert ads, in the form of flyers to be inserted in newsletter mailings, are welcome. Send 200 copies of the ad with \$50, and the ad will be mailed with the next issue of the newsletter. Contest and other events or promotions that solicit money in the form of reading or other entry fees will not be accepted.

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