

So, You Want to Publish a Novel

Bruce K. Byers

Recently, someone asked me about self-publishing and how I went about it. I replied that I had written an autobiographical novel to fulfill a long-time desire to tell a story about my high school experiences and my first trip to Europe as a summer exchange student. I wrote the story I wanted to read and did not think about publishing it. To construct the story I used a diary, old bus schedules, photographs, and letters from people who had been with me on the voyage across the Atlantic.

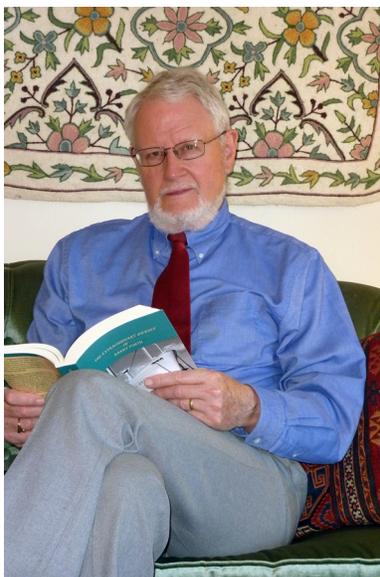
Writing a fictionalized account of my experiences on the long journey to Europe came relatively easy. I began after returning to Albuquerque to meet my high school French teacher for the first time in 52 years. She had inspired and coaxed me into applying for the exchange program. I wanted to write the story as a way of honoring her. I finished the manuscript in 2014 and shared comment copies with a few others who had been on the journey with me. I also shared it with my German “brother” who, himself, came to America as a high school exchange student. Their comments were very helpful.

What about publication? When I thought I had a book worth publishing I sent letters with sample chapters to several literary agencies. They replied that they were not interested. I began looking for a self-publishing opportunity. There were many to consider.

A word of caution: be very careful about signing a publishing contract with a self-publishing company. Know the company and read the fine print about what it will do to help you publish your book. In self-publishing the author retains all rights. Be sure your publishing contract states this explicitly. Don't sign a contract until you are ready to submit a finished manuscript; it will save you time and frustration. After careful research I chose Author House, a subsidiary of Penguin-Random House. A representative described to me different kinds of publishing packages. Still, I hesitated. He called me several times during the spring and summer of 2014. Then, in

August 2014 my project came to an abrupt halt as I had to undergo bypass surgery. At the end of September I signed a contract with Author House.

It included preparation of the finished manuscript but no editing. That would cost extra and was expensive. Instead, I relied upon others to help me edit the manuscript. One mistake a lot of authors make is including too much detail in their manuscripts. I read mine again and eliminated a lot of text. I found numerous mistakes and corrected them. My readers were instrumental in helping me shape a better manuscript and this is absolutely essential before submitting it for publication.



Courtesy, Bruce Byers

In October 2014 I sent it electronically to Author House. A publishing team spent two weeks reviewing it and asked me to change a few things to conform to AH publishing standards. I accepted their changes because they improved the manuscript.

Author House requested documentation of all clearances for copyrighted materials one uses in a manuscript. I submitted a statement from the organization that had facilitated my youth exchange program granting me permission to use its name and to quote from a letter I had received welcoming me to the program. I affirmed that I had taken all of the photographs in the book. I also submitted a design for the book's cover including a descriptive text for the back cover and a brief author's biography. I received a galley proof of the cover and the text to review before final approval.

Responsible for everything

Self-publication places all of the responsibility for the book and its contents on the author. The company does not take any action without the author's signed authorization. It acts as his agent in preparing, printing, and marketing the book. Once I had read the galleys, Author House and I proceeded to the approval stage. At this point I signed a document authorizing AH to prepare the

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book for printing. Any subsequent changes would cost me extra.

I chose a marketing package that included a website, a press release in five different markets, and making the book available through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Good Reads. For each copy sold I would earn as much as 25% royalty; a commercial publisher usually offers a rate of 6%. The project has cost me approximately \$3,500. If I want copies of my book for signings and marketing, I pay a discounted price that decreases depending upon the number I order. I have kept financial records and receipts of all expenses for tax purposes.

Since publishing *The Extraordinary Journey of Harry Forth* in January 2015 I have placed brief articles in several publications, including in Germany, and sent copies "on consignment" to book stores in California and New Mexico (where Part I of the novel begins).

Two Foreign Service colleagues have read the novel and posted reviews on Amazon and through Author House on my website (www.harryforthsadventure.com).

I have enjoyed the challenge of writing and publishing the novel. Signed copies are available for sale upon request at bking11@earthlink.com. I am now working on a second novel that carries the story forward into my student years in Europe.

Welcome New PDAA Members

Katherine BROWN
202-271-1751
katherine.brown@alumni.gwu.edu

Katherine I. LEE
703-461-6933
kilee4242@comcast.net

Leonard A. LEKIEN
603-627-0496
neikel@comcast.net

President's Notes

Dear PDAA members and friends,
I hope all of you have had a very enjoyable and rejuvenating summer, whether you traveled to far-off places or relaxed closer to home. And I hope you are also looking forward, as am I, to beginning an exciting new PDAA program year.

As you read earlier in PDAA Today, we will launch the 2015-16 year with a very relevant and timely program on Monday, September 21, on "Defining Public Diplomacy's Audiences to Meet 21st Century Challenges." This issue is not only the concern of public diplomacy professionals; it is being discussed and debated by the leadership of the entire Department of State and other foreign affairs agencies and organizations as well. We are fortunate to have three senior and experienced public diplomacy officers to discuss this with us. Our November program will focus on the challenges and opportunities for the United States, throughout Latin America, with the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Cuba after more than 50 years. We are also hoping to have a special program with the Confucius Institute or the Chinese Embassy and possibly a program with the French Embassy.

It was a great pleasure to see so many of you at our May brunch and awards ceremony. It is always an inspiration to me to read and hear about the important and creative things our current public diplomacy practitioners are doing. I hope you were able to read the articles about the awardees in both the Foreign Service Journal and State Magazine. We welcome donations to our awards fund to enable us to recognize outstanding achievements with meaningful awards. And while we are on the subject of funding, I urge those of you who have not yet renewed your PDAA membership for 2015 to do so right away (see page 7).

I want to congratulate our new Treasurer, Jim Bullock, and sincerely thank David Whitten, who has served as PDAA Treasurer for four years. We also welcome new Board members Bruce Byers, Claude Porcella, and Wendy Simmons.

Finally, I would note with sadness the passing of long-time PDAA member and one of the leaders of USIA, Stanley Zuckerman. You will find his obituary in this newsletter. I look forward to welcoming you for our exciting program on September 21.

Best wishes,
Greta Morris