

**Tears and Triumphs
Of A
New Author**



One Man's Journey

Robert Thornhill

Tears and Triumphs of a New Author

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The Tears And Triumphs Of A New Author

PROLOGUE

I am standing at my book table at a Christmas Arts and Crafts fair.

A sweet lady approaches and says, “Did you write all these books?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“How long have you been writing?”

“About four years.”

“How did you get started? What made you decide to write? Is it hard to write? How did you get published?”

Before I can answer, she looks wistfully at my books, “I’ve always wanted to write a book, but I just can’t seem to get started. Can you give me some suggestions?”

This scene has been replayed over and over at nearly every book signing event that I have attended.

There are thousands of people that write their first book every year, and for each of those, there are a thousand more who have always dreamed of writing one.

We all have something we would love to say

or share and just don't know how to get started.

Every person is unique and there is no magic formula for getting one's thoughts in print, but after being approached so many times, I thought it might be helpful to share my journey.

When I first started writing, I decided to keep a record of my new experiences as an author as they occurred.

I posted them as a blog on my website.

This little booklet is an expanded version of that blog and it tells my story as it occurred --- the good --- the bad --- and the ugly.

A wise man once wrote, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step."

My journey isn't over yet. It has just begun.

For those of you just taking that first step, I hope what you read here will help you past some of the pitfalls that I encountered and maybe point you in the right direction.

If nothing else, it should give you encouragement.

After all, if a sixty-six year old guy can write his first novel, so can you!

CHAPTER 1

So what does a 66 year-old, semi-retired realtor do when he is bored?

Write a book, of course!

After 25 years of real estate in Independence, Mo. and 5 years of real estate in Maui, Hawaii, my wife, Peg, and I moved back to Missouri, bought 70 acres in the country and built a log home.



We signed up with Stewart & Kiefer Realtors, the only real estate company in Osceola, Mo, population 835.

After working 2 years on our dream home in the country, and with real estate in general, and in St. Clair County in particular, in the toilet, I found

myself bored out of my mind.

I had tried to retire three times but just couldn't seem to do it. I had to have something to sink my teeth into ---- something to make me want to get out of bed every morning.

Peg & I are avid readers and we each consume a novel a week.

A friend of ours turned us on to Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum series. We got the first book and immediately fell in love.

We acquired all 14 books in the series and laughed until our sides hurt.

After finishing book #14, I thought to myself, "Bob, you are just goofy enough to do this." So I sat down at the computer, pretended I was Janet Evanovich, and began writing the next Stephanie Plum novel using her characters and my plot.

I wrote three chapters and printed them for my wife to read. I hid in the office while she read, dreading the verdict.

(If you're a Stephanie Plum fan and you'd like to read those three chapters, go to my website, BooksByBob.com, and click on the Stephanie Plum book cover.)

Soon, I heard her cackling in her easy chair. Now, you have to understand my wife. Even though she has a great sense of humor, she's not a laugh-out-loud kind of person.

She came into the office and with a stern look

said, "You've got to stop this right now! Forget Stephanie Plum. Janet doesn't need any help. You need to develop your own characters and plot and write your own novel. I know you can do it."

And so began my journey, writing, publishing and marketing my first novel, *Lady Justice Takes a C.R.A.P. City Retiree Action Patrol*.

It has been an incredible journey so far and I look forward to sharing my adventure with you.

CHAPTER 2

So how do you start writing a novel when you've never written before?

Who are the characters and why are they doing what they're doing? And most importantly, why would anyone want to read about them?

I started with the characters. I knew I wanted the novel to be based around the lives of senior citizens. I'm 66 years old and there's a bazillion of us out there who have made it this far and have shared the same life experiences.

How many old dudes have passed a kidney stone or lost their car in a parking lot? How many people have retired only to find themselves bored with life and eventually begin a new chapter in their lives in an entirely new career?

Plenty! I'm doing it myself!

I had some public speaking experience, and one of the basic rules is to talk about something you know about, so when I began to visualize my main character, Walt Williams, the first person that came to mind was me! I know me better than anyone else and I've had a great life chock full of goofy experiences. So Walt was born and he and I share many of the adventures portrayed in the book.

I had been a Realtor for 31 years, so Walt had just retired from a 30-year career in real estate.

My wife, Peg, is also a Realtor. We had worked together for 20 years in the business. Walt's sweetie, Maggie McBride is also a 65-year-old Realtor, but not retired yet.



In addition to being a Realtor, I was also a landlord for 25 years and there's another whole book that could be written about owning rental property. I sold my rental properties as did Walt when he retired.

My supporting characters are also people from my real life. One is Mary Murphy, a 75 year old who manages Walt's boarding house. Like the Mary in my real life, she rules the Three Trails Hotel with an iron fist, carries a 36-inch baseball bat and doesn't take crap off of anyone.

Willie Duncan, a 65-year-old black dude, is Walt's maintenance man. Willie is a crusty old guy off the streets with a questionable past, but totally loyal to Walt. His exploits with the ladies add some spice to the story.

Everyone needs a mentor and Walt's mentor is 85-year-old Professor Leopold Skinner, a retired university professor. His wit and wisdom guide Walt and his scruffy cohorts through the book's plot.

I had my characters, all senior citizens. Now what are they going to do that's worth writing about?

CHAPTER 3

My characters were in place, Walt, Maggie, Mary, Willie and the Professor.

Now I needed a plot, a storyline that would keep the reader involved from cover to cover.

I knew I wanted to make people laugh.

The world is full of sadness and tragedy. When I read a novel, watch a TV show or go to the movies, I want my escape to make me feel good.

In real life, I always try to find the funny side of things and I believe there is an element of humor in almost everything that happens to us.

In my family there is a contest between my son's father-in-law and me as to who does the goofiest things as we enter our dotage. I was briefly in second place when Jim left his teeth on the counter and a mouse ran off with them. I'm usually in first place if that tells you anything.

I also love mysteries. Along with funny stuff, I enjoy immersing myself in a good who-done-it that makes me think and reason.

In addition to hundreds of crime dramas on TV, I have read and enjoyed Michael Connelly's Harry Bosch series and Robert Crais' Elvis Cole series. Both are engaging mysteries with a touch of humor.

I am not into graphic blood and guts and I

don't need gratuitous sex scenes. For me, when I read a story I appreciate it when the author lets me fill in the blanks with my own imagination.

With these things in mind, it was no coincidence that Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum series was a favorite. They combine just the right amount of mystery and humor to keep me reading, laughing and thinking.

So now I knew the style that I wanted to achieve.

I wanted to write a story about senior citizens who are a long way from being "over-the-hill", who encounter mysteries in their lives and solve them as only an old-timer can.

Along the way, I wanted to explore the humorous side of aging and the challenges of the Golden Years.

I couldn't wait to get started.

Although my real estate career and apartments were in Independence, Mo., I decided to make the setting of my book in Kansas City, just a few miles to the west.

The Three Trails Hotel that I owned was magically moved from Maple Street in Independence to Linwood Boulevard in Kansas City.

The 'Mary' that managed my hotel for many

years became the crusty, Mary Murphy who ruled the Three Trails with an iron fist.

In Chapter 10, we get a glimpse of her bodacious personality:

We pulled up in front of the Hotel. A crowd had gathered and was staring at the front porch roof. A skanky-looking white guy was cowering in the corner of the porch roof. Big Mary was standing over him with her Hillrich & Bradsby. We got there just in time to hear her say, "Go ahead, Punk. Make my day!"

"Jesus, I thought, Dirty Mary! She's been watching those Clint Eastwood movies again."

"Get her away from me, PLEASE!" the skanky guy shouted.

"Shut up or I'll knock your skinny white ass clear over to Main Street," she shouted back.

"Mary," I called.

She looked down, saw me, and a big grin spread across her face. "Hey, Mr. Walt," she exclaimed. "I got me a squatter!"

The next recruit in *Lady Justice's* new arsenal of senior sleuths was Willie Duncan. The 'Willie' character was loosely based on the real maintenance man who had worked in my apartments for years. Walt, who had led a relatively sheltered life, needed a street-wise con man to advise him in the shadier side

of life on the Kansas City streets.

In Chapter 8, Walt is going undercover to catch a mugger in Gillham Park. Willie is there to lend a hand:

I told him about sitting in the park.

Without hesitation, Willie's street experience on the other side of the law kicked into gear.

"What you need is a sidekick," he said. "You gonna need some help. What you gonna do all day? Jus' sit dere wif you' finger up you' ass? If this perp has any brains at all, he gonna be watchin' who's comin' an 'goin'. If something' don't look right, he ain't gonna show. Now jus' think about it. Two grizzled old farts sittin' at a picnic table playing checkers. Fits right in. Dey could sit dere fo' hours an' nobody would notice."

With Willie and Mary on board, the bad guys won't have a chance.

Every hero needs a heroine.

Walt and his sweetie, Maggie McBride prove that romance doesn't fade away as we grow older. There may be snow on the roof, but there's still a fire in the furnace.

In Chapter 8, we get a glimpse of their tender time together:

“Hey, Maggie. It’s your handsome lover.”

“Which one?”

You gotta love her sense of humor.

“Your favorite one.”

“Oh. Hi, Bill.”

“Very funny. Any chance you could spare some time with an old man?”

“I don’t normally consort with the aged.”

“Would you make an exception in my case?”

“Say please.”

“Please.”

“Now pretty please with sugar on it.”

“Hey! How come you’re busting my chops?”

“Sorry. I’m just bored. You’ve been so busy with your new job. I just miss you.”

“Well, I’m here now. Would my famous tuna casserole, a bottle of Arbor Mist, and an evening of mad, passionate love entice you to come to my place?”

“Well, the casserole and the wine sound pretty good.

Two out of three’s not bad.”

“Maggie!”

“Just kidding. I’ll be there in half an hour.”

I loved my characters.

I was ready for the plot.

CHAPTER 4

As I began conceptualizing the main story line I wanted to present, I remembered again: "Write what you know about".

I knew that many authors of crime and mystery novels had a background in law enforcement or were attorneys or in other related fields. They had the first hand, inside information as to how the legal justice system works.

Me, not so much.

If I tried to write a true-crime mystery, sophisticated readers would see through me in the first few paragraphs.

My slant on crime solving would be from Walt's perspective as a retired realtor who is bored out of his mind, witnesses a mugging, and decides at the ripe old age of 65, that he wants to be a cop and give Lady Justice a hand.

All he knows about crime fighting is what he's seen on TV: Dragnet, and Boston Blackie. I can do that!

My expertise was real estate. I had been doing it for 31 years and as Broker/Manager of a large RE/MAX office, I had the first hand, inside information as to how a mystery could work in the real estate world.

The first major mystery plot would center

around the ‘Realtor Rapist’.

As broker/manager of a seventy-agent real estate office, one of my greatest fears was the assault of one of my agents. While, thankfully, I never had to deal with this tragedy personally, there are those who have.

In Chapter 8, the ‘Realtor Rapist’ claims his first victim:

A 42 year-old real estate agent, Nancy Duncan, had gone missing from an open house she was holding. The sellers had returned home, found the door ajar and signs of a struggle, but no Nancy. Her car was found locked on the street in front of the house. This had all the earmarks of an abduction. A yellow alert had been issued and photos of Nancy were passed among the officers.

In a mystery/comedy novel, the more serious storyline must be interspersed with lighter moments.

Along the way, I would dig into my huge bag of weird, funny stuff that had happened to me on my life's journey and let Walt and his friends share the experiences with the reader.

In Chapter 26, Walt is visiting with Bernice Crenshaw, one of his tenants in his six-unit apartment building.

Eighty-six year old Bernice has been feeling the ravages of Father Time more acutely and is

commiserating with Walt:

She pulled a clipping from a magazine out of her pocket.

“I found this today and I’m going to tape it on my bathroom mirror because it’s just the way I feel.”

She handed me the clipping. It read:

The Golden Years are here at last.

I cannot see, I cannot pee.

I cannot chew, I cannot screw.

My memory shrinks, my hearing stinks.

No sense of smell. I look like hell.

The Golden Years have come at last.

The Golden Years can kiss my ass!

OK, I can relate to some of that.

A book has to have a title, doesn't it? I sat for what seemed like hours trying to come up with the perfect title. I knew one theme of the book was seeking justice, so my first attempt at a title was *Justice For All*.

Fortunately, my wife, who was also my editor, reviewer and designer jumped on the Internet and discovered that *Justice For All* was a play, a reform organization, and worst of all, the title of an album by the acid rock group, Metallica. There were thousands of Internet pages for this title. I would be

lost in the maze.

Back to the drawing board.

Nothing came to mind, so I decided to set the title thing aside and wait for inspiration. I hoped that as the story developed, the perfect title would jump off the page.

Boy, did it ever!

CHAPTER 5

As I thought back over my life and analyzed my thoughts on justice, I realized that justice comes in all shapes and sizes and that one's concept of justice, or injustice is a very subjective thing.

I decided to start back in my childhood years and see how my ideas of justice were molded and how they changed over the years.

I typed my first sentence. As the Professor tells Walt in the book, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step". I had just taken mine.

It's now confession time.

First, I have a Master's Degree, but, sad to say, I've never taken a typing class. Yep, I'm a hunt-n-pecker. I typed the entire novel with the middle finger of my right hand. Well, that's not entirely true. I can hit the shift key for capitalization with my left thumb. So for all of you out there who want to write but can't type, jump right in.

Second, while I've done a lot of writing and speaking, I've never written for publication. I write a speech and no one sees it but me. Who cares about punctuation?

My wife, the editor does, that's who!

I would peck out a few chapters at a time and submit them to Peg to approve or disprove. If they passed muster, Peg would re-type the chapters in her

computer. Incidentally, she can type with all ten fingers.

My wife isn't prone to use profanity, but as she set about polishing my work, I definitely heard muttering of a sordid nature coming from her side of the room.

In the Microsoft Word program, misspelled words are underlined in red and errors in syntax are underlined in green. My first pages looked like a Christmas tree had exploded on the screen: red and green everywhere!

We soon learned that if we were going to produce something readable, it was back to school. We searched and read article after article from the Internet on writing and punctuation. I would be pecking away and Peg would interrupt me, "You need to come read this." So I did.

Fortunately, the final editing was her job, but I learned enough for the first draft to keep her mumbling to a minimum.

As the storyline progressed, I saw another main character emerge, Lady Justice.

As Walt and his scrappy senior friends took on the various evildoers, I found the theme had developed into old-timers giving Lady Justice a helping hand, so a new title was born: *Lady Justice, The Wrinkled Years*. Cute, Huh?

I liked it for a while, but soon the title that made Peg double over with laughter was born.

CHAPTER 6

I had always been active and always had something in my life to challenge and excite me, but with retirement came boredom. This may sound dumb to some, but I could only fish so much.

Once I decided to write the book and made the commitment to my wife and myself, an amazing transformation occurred.

It was as if my brain, which had been idling on cruise control at 30 miles an hour, was suddenly switched into turbo and was blazing along at 90.

I had always had difficulty sitting still for long periods of time. In my real estate career, I worked extensively on the computer, but only in short bursts.

Once I began writing, I could not pry my butt off the chair. As the story line formed in my mind, I could not shut it off. It just kept flowing and flowing. I sat for hours at a time and Peg had to beg me to stop for food.

I would wake up in the middle of the night for a potty break and instead of going back to sleep, my imagination would kick in. I would pick up the story from where I left off and lay awake composing in my head. Then I would be afraid that if I went back to sleep, I would lose it, so I spent many 2-3 A.M. sessions, pecking away at the computer.

Soon this nocturnal intermission infected my

wife as well. I would be lying in the dark, wide-awake, my brain churning away and I would hear "You awake?" from the other side of the bed. "I've got an idea for Walt." Then we would both be up.

These middle-of-the-night sessions were not the only adjustments to my normal routine. I would typically sleep until 7:30, give or take a few minutes. I now awoke between 5:30 and 6:00 A.M. and couldn't wait to get breakfast over with so I could start writing again.

Although my story seemed to flow freely most of the time, once in awhile I got stuck. I guess it's called "writer's block". I would come to a point where the next sequence of events just wouldn't come.

I found it was better to just walk away. I would get on my riding mower or tractor and mow for an hour or two and by the time I finished, I knew where I needed to go.

Many times I found that the reason for being stuck was that I was going in the wrong direction. I backed up and re-wrote the sequence and when I was on the right track, the words began flowing again.

What a process!

I absolutely loved writing. The creative juices began to flow and I got that warm fuzzy feeling as I saw my ideas come to life on the page.

It was even more satisfying to hear my wife giggle as she read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

As the story line developed, and Walt was to head up a new division of senior citizens in the police department, the idea of a catchy acronym began to develop. Acronyms need to spell something, right? So I started to play around with various word combinations that would convey the nature of the new patrol and grab one's attention.

Then, there it was, *The City Retiree Action Patrol* also known as *C.R.A.P.!*

It was one of those "Eureka! I've found it!" experiences, like Euripides in the bathtub.

I rushed into the kitchen to share my moment of inspiration with my wife. I handed the page to her and watched expectantly as she read the title. A big grin spread across her face. "I love it!" she said, and *Lady Justice Takes a C.R.A.P.* was born.

After the initial euphoria wore off, we began to examine the pros and cons of such an unusual title.

The main attraction was that you couldn't miss it.

Every year thousands of new books are published. You walk into a bookstore and hundreds of titles are staring you in the face. We wanted something that would reach out from the shelf and grab you by the collar. Our title certainly did that.

The negative, of course, was the possibility that the title would be offensive to some. We did not

want to convey the wrong impression. While my novel contained a few expletives and some adult humor, there was no blood and gore or gratuitous sex scenes. If it were a movie, it probably would be rated PG13.

We lived in rural Missouri in what is known as the "Bible Belt" and we were certainly sensitive to the mindset of our neighbors.

How offensive could it be?

On TV, one of the longest running *family* comedy shows is "Everybody Loves Raymond". In almost every episode, the father, Frank, finds a reason to shout "HOLY CRAP!" In fact, on another TV show, this line was rated among the 25 funniest lines of all time.

We began counting the number of times we heard "Crap" on primetime TV and were surprised at its frequent use.

So after much thought, we decided to go with it.

After the books were published, the results were amazing.

People either loved the title or they hated it, but they couldn't ignore it.

The vast majority smile, giggle or snicker just looking at the cover. That's what we wanted.

Unfortunately, there are also those who roll their eyes and look away. That's OK too. It's a free country. You can't please everyone.

Our title certainly got attention. Later on we found maybe more than we wanted.

CHAPTER 8

We were getting really excited as the story of Walt and Maggie filled page after page. With the new title in place, we actually began to consider how we were going to get the book into print.

Being new to the writing business, we knew absolutely nothing about publishing.

So where did we go to get information about something new? The Internet, of course!

If you do a Google search on "How to publish a book", a bazillion pages pop up in front of you.

So I would write as long as I could and study the Internet when I couldn't write anymore. Between sessions of editing, Peg would study as well.

After exhausting research, we concluded there were three ways to get *'Lady Justice'* into print: to be picked up by a traditional publisher; to be marketed to publishers by an agent; or to self-publish.

Up until now, everything had been fun. I loved writing and Peg loved previewing and editing. We laughed and talked and dreamed a lot.

Then, we got our first reality check.

In the real world of writing, the chances of a new, unknown author being accepted and promoted by a large established publisher are slim and none. And unfortunately, it has absolutely nothing to do with the quality of the manuscript.

Being an author is like any other practitioner of the arts, whether it's music, dance or oil painting.

Peg and I love to watch 'So You Think You Can Dance' on TV. Each season, tens of thousands audition for the show but only twenty actually make it.

Same thing with 'American Idol'.

But at least someone looks at their work.

Likewise, tens of thousands of new novels are written each year and according to statistics on the Internet, less than 2% have any chance of success.

Not great odds.

I began collecting names of publishers and looking at their websites. What I found really put a damper on the whole writing business.

A large percentage of the companies had posted messages saying, "We are not currently accepting submissions". Many others had the message, "No un-agented submissions accepted".

Those companies accepting submissions typically said, "We respond to queries in 2-3 months, submitted manuscripts in 6-9 months, and, if accepted, publish within 2 years. 5000 annual submissions, 30 titles published".

"Sorry, I'm 66 years old. I'm afraid I can't wait that long. I may be dead before you read my book!"

CHAPTER 9

OK, so if your chances of winning the lottery are greater than being picked up by a publisher, what's the next choice?

Research showed that publishers more readily accepted authors represented by an agent, so maybe I needed an agent to promote my work.

It certainly made sense. Even the King of Rock-N-Roll, Elvis Presley, spent two years playing small clubs and state fairs until he met Colonel Tom Parker. Within a year he became a household name and one of the most famous entertainers in American music.

I went back to the Internet and started collecting names of literary agents.

As I perused their websites, it seemed that whoever constructed the publishers websites also worked for the agents.

Same song, second verse. "We do not accept new authors". "Submissions by referral only". "We only represent previously published authors". Etc, etc, etc!

What's wrong with this picture?

It's a closed system! That's what!

Publishers won't look at unagented submissions and agents don't want you unless you are already published. What an impossibly vicious circle!

The only way for a previously unpublished author to break into the inner circle is to be a famous personality.

Publishers are scrambling to print Sarah Palin. I entered a bookstore recently and there were four Sarah Palin books displayed right in the front of the store. She has book signing dates all over the country and none of this is due to her literary skills, but to her celebrity status.

I'll bet there are literary masterpieces languishing at the bottom of some agent or publisher's "slush pile", or even worse, still in the "My Documents" section of some discouraged writer's computer.

As my character, Walt, would say, "Where is the justice in this?"

CHAPTER 10

Our research so far left little doubt that we had the proverbial snowball's chance in H--- to get picked up by a mainline publisher or represented by a legitimate literary agent.

Discouraged? Of course!

Whipped? Not by a long shot!

I'm sure the careers of many writers are nipped in the bud at this point.

Everyone dreams of being accepted by a publisher or agent. Naturally, we had visions of advances and royalties, travel and fame. But when those things didn't come, the only other alternative we found to get *Lady Justice* in print was to self-publish, and that takes hard cash.

Not everyone has the financial resources to self-publish, so I'm sure many great novels die at this point along with the dreams of their creators.

As we began to dig into the tangled web of self-publishing, we had some serious moments of soul searching. "Is it good enough?" "Is it worth the investment?" "Can we make it work?" "Can we afford it?"

Did we have doubts? You bet we did!

When my character, Walt, suffers a serious setback in his law enforcement career, his old friend

and mentor, Professor Skinner offers this advice:

*When things go wrong as they sometimes will
When the road you're trudging seems all
uphill*

*When care is pressing you down a bit
Rest, if you must, but don't you quit.
Life is queer with its twists and turns
As everyone of us sometimes learns.
And many a failure turns about
When he might have won if he stuck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow-
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out-
The silver tint in the clouds of doubt.
And you never can tell how close you are
It may be near when it seems so far.
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit
It's when things seem worst that you must
not QUIT!*

(author unknown)

OK Professor, we won't throw in the towel yet.

We decided to take some time and study the many companies who were eager to take my money to publish my book.

Sucker? Maybe. We'll see.

CHAPTER 11

Although we were discouraged by the lack of publishers who would pay us to publish our book, we were amazed by the vast horde that would take our money to publish.

How to decide?

We personally knew two other published authors, so why not pick their brains and learn from O.P.E., other people's experience?

We met with our two friends on separate occasions. They were both supportive of our efforts and more than willing to share their publishing adventures and advice.

Although neither of these authors was self-published, both shared that while their books were selling well locally, they were not getting the national coverage they had hoped for.

They both cautioned that we should read any contract offers very carefully and be sure to retain the ownership of our manuscript.

We learned that even traditional publishers don't necessarily offer all of the services a new author should have.

The publisher of one of our friends left the job of obtaining the copyright to the author. He applied and had been waiting two years for a response.

Not a happy story.

With their experiences in mind, we began searching the Internet websites of the self-publishing companies.

Knowing absolutely nothing about the publishing business, I had always assumed that once your book is ready for publication, your company will print the first edition, store multiple copies in a big warehouse and have them ready to ship when the orders come pouring in.

DUMMY!

What I found was that all self-publishing companies are P.O.D., print on demand.

What's that?

In my limited experience, I pictured printing a book to be a long, laborious process.

In POD, apparently a single book can be printed and shipped in 72 hours.

Live and learn.

As I continued my research, I discovered why self-publishing companies are POD instead of printing multiple copies to warehouse ---- they don't expect to sell any!

I also found that there was another name for the self-publishing companies --- vanity publishers.

Apparently, there are lots of folks out there who just want the thrill of seeing their work in print and don't give a hoot if they sell anything.

Then there are those who publish poorly written and unedited manuscripts that are doomed to

failure from the beginning.

But the message to the author is the same --- you pay the price, we'll publish it.

Because this is the nature of the business, the self-published author is at the bottom of the food chain, the step-child of the publishing industry.

Unfortunately, all self-published authors, regardless of the quality of their work, carry this stigma.

You can't submit to a mainline publisher without an agent and a legitimate agent won't take you if you don't have a track record.

So, you bite the bullet and self-publish, and like Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*, you are branded with the big "SP".

Where is the justice in that?

CHAPTER 12

After spending hours on the Internet checking self-publishing websites, we compiled a short list of five possibilities, which included *Authorhouse*, *X-Libris* and *I-Universe*.

As I was scrolling through the web pages, I found a page that read, "don't sign with *Authorhouse* until you read this".

It turned out to be a page from the website of a publishing company called *Dog Ear*. They had a whole section of their website dedicated to comparing all of the packages of the top self-publishing companies side by side.

We found that each company offered multiple publishing programs from "bare bones" to "all the bells and whistles".

The *Dog Ear* website compared the packages and prices of their various programs to that of their competitors. Just looking at the prices published on the various websites, it looked like *Dog Ear* was offering a pretty good deal.

Each website had a link to request more information and I sent my name and phone number to each company.

I soon received calls from each of them, eager to explain their services, programs and prices.

When they discovered I was not signing up

immediately and that I was shopping several different publishers, I was informed that they were conducting a year-end close out (this was in September) and they could give me a special deal if I acted quickly. *Imagine my surprise!*

I soon started receiving e-mails detailing the "specials" and follow-up phone calls.

I have never been a hard-ass when it comes to buying something. I look at the product and the price and if it's what I want and reasonable, I get it ---- if not, I don't. But I soon found that if I shared with one publisher what I was offered by another, the deal became sweeter.

After a week or so of negotiations, I decided on *Authorhouse*. They were the largest company and offered the most for my money. I wound up with their most expensive, fully loaded package for \$600 less than the website price.

The only company that would never negotiate the price was *Dog Ear*. Their price was the lowest in the beginning, but by the time negotiations were over, it was all about the same.

I saved EVERY email, especially the last one that detailed all that was to be included at the final negotiated price.

One detail that is not included in any company's package is the price they will charge you, the author, to purchase your own book for resale. *Dog Ear* was one that used their price as a selling

point and I had negotiated a two-cent per page plus \$1.28 for the cover.

In my final pitch to *Authorhouse*, I said I would take their package if they would match that price. After several days, I received an e-mail confirming the price.

We had a deal.

It turned out that *Authorhouse* had a separate department for each phase of the process, selling the package, building the book, marketing, book orders, etc, and I discovered that in many cases the right hand was not aware of what the left hand was doing.

Thank God I saved all those emails with the details of our final negotiations.

They came in handy later on.

CHAPTER 13

Having determined that we were going to publish with *Authorhouse* and negotiated a price, we decided to give the book a test run before we spent the big bucks.

We printed the manuscript and took it to OfficeMax and had ten copies printed and spiral bound. We distributed the copies to friends and family and held our breath.

Mixed reviews.

One copy went to my 46 year old son who was a 22-year police veteran. He immediately pointed out that police departments in the real world don't operate like depicted in my story. DUH! I reminded him that this was not a "true crime" drama, but a comedy mystery. It doesn't have to be real! Naturally, I was disappointed, but then he gave the manuscript to my daughter-in-law's eighty-something grandmother who LOVED IT. Right On!

We gave a copy to another published writer in our small town. Her book was an autobiography of her life growing up and published by a Christian based publisher. She liked the book but couldn't write us a review at that time because it had a few off-color words. OOPS!

We gave a copy to some "senior" friends of ours who are avid readers and own an orchard on the

highway to Branson, Mo. When they read the chapter where Walt and Maggie take a trip to Branson, they wondered why they didn't stop at the orchard, so I re-wrote the chapter to include the orchard. They loved it!

We gave a copy to Peg's 87-year-old mother who lives in a retirement village and reads a novel every two days. She has read hundreds of books and knows every author. She was the one who needed to love it because she was our target audience. She absolutely ate it up and passed it around the complex for her other senior friends to read. She said one lady laughed so hard she almost peed her pants. BINGO!

We soon discovered you can't please everyone, but we pleased our target audience and you can't beat that.

FULL SPEED AHEAD!

CHAPTER 14

Now that we had selected our publisher, *Authorhouse*, and tested the market, it was time to pay the piper and get the book in print.

We paid our fee and soon began receiving e-mails.

The first was from the team assigned to transform our manuscript from a word document to a *real* book. The e-mail was quite lengthy and gave us detailed submission instructions including type size, indentions, spacing, page breaks, etc. PAGE BREAKS! WHAT'S THAT?

Back to the Internet.

After reading everything we could find relating to their instructions, it was back to editing.

We had opted not to pay the HUGE fee for professional editing, so my poor wife and I had been over the manuscript a bazillion times. Each time we found corrections. It's amazing how many times you can read and re-read something and whiz right by glaring errors.

It's really quirky, but your eye 'sees' the word as it's 'supposed' to be, not as it 'is'.

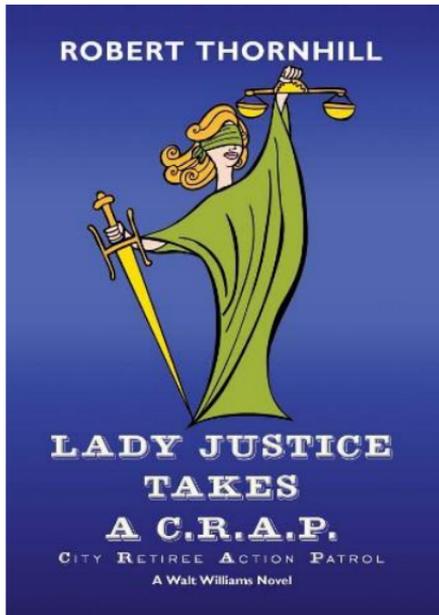
Sometimes after conceptual editing, it helps to read the manuscript backwards. That way your 'eye' will see the word as it 'is' and not how the mind 'sees' it.

Just when you think you have done it enough --- do it again --- and you will still find more errors.

So we read it again, and again, and again, until we were relatively comfortable that all the commas, quotes and page breaks were in the right place.

My poor sweetie read the whole thing at least eight times. She's a trooper!

The next challenge was the full color cover. This was included in our package price. We had been working on ideas during the writing process and knew with a title like *Lady Justice Takes a C.R.A.P.*, we needed a "wow" cover.



My wife and I had a combined 51 years in

real estate sales and I was blessed to have a partner who had mastered Photoshop and Publisher and had created beautiful postcards and flyers.

Authorhouse gave us a website to look for images to use on our cover. We soon discovered that it would cost us \$100 to purchase the rights to an image at that site. Wow!

Back to the Internet.

We found *www.Dreamstime.com* and purchased the rights to the perfect image for our book for \$5.00. It pays to shop.

Peg put together a beautiful cover.

We attached the manuscript and cover to an e-mail, and pressed "send" and our journey had begun.

CHAPTER 15

My manuscript was now in the hands of "Team Pearl" of *Authorhouse*.

I had negotiated a "rapid release" in the package I purchased. Knowing that most publishers state in their website, "If we accept your book, we will publish within 2 years", I wondered if rapid release meant a year and a half.

Imagine my surprise when I received an email in just one week with my completed galley and cover.

The next step was to read the whole thing again looking for errors or editing we had missed. Yep, we had missed some!

We were told that everything was on hold until we either accepted what had been sent or submitted corrections.

We were cautioned that once we sent our approval, it would cost our firstborn child to make any other corrections. We felt pretty secure since we were both over 65.

Finding no glaring errors, I sent the email confirming acceptance of the galley and cover and we were on to production.

I was told I would receive my author's copy in about a week.

With *Authorhouse*, I was given the right to set my retail price and I was given a program to calculate my royalty based on varying retail prices.

Tough decision.

Naturally, anyone wants to make as much as possible but if the book is priced too high, no one will buy it.

I decided on \$10.95 for the paperback and \$14.95 for the hardcover, my royalty being just over a dollar a book if it was purchased from *Authorhouse*.

At that point, I was introduced to two new departments at *Authorhouse*, marketing and book sales. The package I purchased included a marketing kit and a book signing kit. I was sent an email requesting the verbiage I wanted on the materials. The marketing kit contained flyers, postcards and business cards and the book signing kit contained a large poster, bookmarks and more postcards. We decided on the verbiage and sent the email.

My next contact was the gal in charge of selling me my own book. Her first order of business was to negotiate a price per book depending on the number of books I wanted to order. I informed her that I had already negotiated a price and told her the terms. She seemed surprised and asked that I forward the email with the negotiated price, which I did. Whew! Sure glad I saved those emails.

In a few days she responded and said they

would honor the price for an order of 1,000 books or more. I asked for a price breakdown on lesser amounts and the increase per book was astronomical!

I had negotiated two cents per page plus \$1.28 for the cover, making my 180-page novel cost \$4.88. With shipping, my price per book was \$5.35.

If I was going to sell books on my own, it only made sense to order a thousand.

What the heck! In for a dime, in for a dollar, and I placed the order.

CHAPTER 16

In about 10 days, UPS showed up with a package from *Authorhouse* —my author's copy!

It was a long and arduous process from conceptualization to writing to editing and finally, to waiting for the finished product.

We excitedly opened the package and held in our hand the fruits of our labors.

Lady Justice wasn't just a figment of my imagination anymore ---she was real!

Feelings of joy, pride, accomplishment and fulfillment flooded us as we held our new creation.

Not to be overdramatic or to trivialize the comparison, but the feeling was not unlike bringing new life into the world.

We hugged and laughed and examined our baby from cover to cover. She was beautiful ---everything we had hoped for.

I had received an email from *Authorhouse* saying they would not start production of our order until we had received and approved our author copy. I sent the email and called my book sales representative.

By this time it was nearing the end of October and my goal was to have the books in hand for the Christmas shopping season, so I begged her to rush the order and she said she would.

During this down time, two things happened:

First, my mind wouldn't shut down and the next adventures of Walt, Maggie and the other senior characters started popping out. I began writing the sequel to *Lady Justice* before the first book was in print.

Second, Peg and I spent hours on our deck, rocking and planning our sales campaign.

Since the story was senior oriented, we decided on book signings at every senior citizens complex within 100 miles. We lived in a small rural town, but had spent most of our life in the Metro Kansas City area, and we knew of dozens of libraries that could host a signing for us. And, of course, we were sure that once the book was available, all the bookstores would be excited to sponsor a local author.

So we rocked on our deck and planned and dreamed --- moving a thousand books would be a piece of cake.

My philosophy has always been, "*If you can dream it, you can achieve it*". Unfortunately, sometimes reality gets in the way.

Finally, the day arrived and we saw the UPS truck coming down the driveway. He backed up to the garage and started unloading box after box after box. When it was all over and 1,065 books were stacked in our garage, we looked at each other and a wave of panic hit us.

What had we done?

CHAPTER 17

The creation of novel #2 stopped abruptly with the arrival of *Lady Justice* #1.

It was time to launch our marketing campaign.

First on the list was the local senior center. We were regular attendees at the Thursday afternoon tea dance and knew there were at least two hundred seniors there for lunch every day. I was almost afraid we wouldn't have enough books to go around.

I shouldn't have worried.

After talking to the senior center administrator, we learned that the company that manages the activities there doesn't allow vendors.

Wait a minute! I'm not a vendor, I'm an author!

No, you're a vendor and you can't sell your book here!

To our dismay, we discovered that the same company managed virtually all the senior centers within driving distance.

So much for that idea.

Our next outlet was the local libraries.

The closest large town is about thirty miles from our home, but close enough for us to be called "local". We contacted the library to set up a book

signing date and were informed they only do book signings once a year when they sponsor a large event for any local author who wants to participate. The event was in September. We missed it by a month.

Better luck next year.

OK, Peg and I spent thirty years living and working in the Independence, Mo area, so we contacted the Mid-Continent library in our hometown. It turned out the Mid-Continent manages thirty branches in the Greater Kansas City area and we could submit our book for consideration at their next branch manager meeting.

We sent them a book and waited and waited -- nothing.

OK then, I grew up in Harrisonville, Mo and attended school there through Freshman year until my parents moved to Blue Springs, Mo. I had attended several high school reunions and kept in touch with several old classmates.

I called the Cass County library and was totally shocked when they readily agreed to a book signing.

Cool! Our first gig!

We also contacted the library in our little town of Osceola, Mo. population 835. They also agreed to sponsor a book signing.

So, two down, but where next?

In early October, before my book was in print, I had attended a book signing at the huge

Barnes & Noble store in Overland Park, Kansas. The author was a friend of my step-son. I was elated when the author introduced me to the Community Relations Manager of the store as a new author, and he promptly handed me his card and said to call when the book was available and he would set up an event for me.

I figured this one was in the bag.

But when I called a month later to schedule the event, after my books were delivered, all I got was a run-around and eventually an email saying that all available time slots were taken for the rest of the year. Call back next year ---oh well.

So far, the only books leaving our garage were the ones we were giving to friends and family.

Not much profit there.

Three of our prime sources for sales had evaporated almost before we opened the first box of books.

Then, our copy of *Rural Missourian* came in the mail. They have a section where they spotlight upcoming events in the communities they serve. With the Christmas Season approaching, the events calendar was loaded with Christmas Arts and Craft Fairs.

We said, "What the heck. Why not?"

So we contacted the event co-coordinators and scheduled four craft fairs around our two library appearances.

It wasn't exactly the book tour I'd hoped for,
but it was a start.

CHAPTER 18

My next contact with *Authorhouse* was a person who could help me set up a website.

This was not a part of my original publishing package. The fee to set up a site was \$399.00 plus a monthly hosting fee.

Wow! More dollars out and none coming in.

I searched the Internet for other companies that sold, constructed and hosted websites hoping to find better deals.

Most were sites that required you to use one of their stock templates and were really cheap looking.

The company recommended by *Authorhouse* was *American Author*. They specialized in websites for authors.

I looked at a number of websites that *American Author* had created for other writers and the quality was really superior to what I had found for not that much more money. So I gave them the green light and bought the site.

The first thing they wanted was to sell me a domain name for what I later determined was a rather exorbitant price.

I had gone online to *www.godaddy.com* and bought the perfect domain name for \$9.95.

BooksByBob.com

Authorhouse sent the information and graphics on *Lady Justice* to *American Author* and in about a week, my site was up and running.

One of the things I really wanted was complete control of my site content and the ability to change and add things as needed.

As a Realtor for 31 years, I had considerable experience with Realtor websites and knew what I wanted.

I was thrilled when my site first popped up. It loaded quickly and was really beautiful.

After studying the tutorial, I found it had all the features I needed and I had total control of the editing process.

I went to work and in the next few days, customized my site to exactly what I wanted.

Now comes the task of letting the world know that *Lady Justice Takes a C.R.A.P.* is on the market.

CHAPTER 19

My next contact with *Authorhouse* was with a guy in the marketing department.

They had a full line of services to help you promote your book --- for a fee, of course, --- a really hefty fee!

The guy I talked to was really helpful, but his job was to sell me more stuff. He said he would send me an email outlining some of the marketing programs that were available. The email came and I looked at the packages ---YIKES!

One program was a "social media" package. For a mere \$799.00, they would create pages for me and *Lady Justice* on a whole slew of media sites and create a 'blog' that I could use to drive traffic to my website where, hopefully, people would click on "order book".

At age 66, while I was quite competent with the computer and the Internet, I've never cared about any of the social interactive sites.

Never needed to.

I've never Tweeted or blogged or any of that stuff, and now my publisher was saying I should do it if I wanted people to know about my book, or, they could do it for me for a measly \$799.00.

As I perused the sites they would set up, it occurred to me that all of them were free. Why pay

them the big bucks to do something I was perfectly capable of doing myself?

So I began.

Three days later, I had accounts on Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, Booktour, Classmates, Shelfari, Goodreads, LibraryThing, Yahoo, Google, LinkedIn, WeRead, Gather, Amazon, Bebo, Wordpress, AuthorsDen, MyLife and WritersNet.

WHEW!

No wonder they charged \$799.00. It was a heck of a lot of work to set up a complete profile with photos and links to your website.

But I did it and it didn't cost me a dime!

CHAPTER 20

The day of our first Arts & Crafts Fair arrived.

It was late October and the event was outdoors. Since we had signed up at the last minute, we were delegated to an 'overflow' site. It turned out to be several miles from the actual event.

We were directed to a patch of grass between a hot dog stand and a table full of garage sale crap.

We set up our booth and waited anxiously for the flood of fans that would buy my book.

Someone must have given them bad directions, because no one came.

The few people who dropped by for a hot dog walked by our booth and never even looked in our direction.

We sat there four hours, froze our butts off and didn't sell a single book.

Not a very auspicious start.

Our next event was at the Harrisonville, Cass County Public Library. I had emailed and sent postcards to every old classmate that I could find. The library had posted a book-signing notice on the door and the local newspaper had run an announcement for us.

This was bound to be a success.

On the night of the event, I was thrilled when about a dozen old classmates showed up. Each bought a book and we had a great class reunion.



But not another single soul other than my old friends came.

I learned a valuable lesson. If people don't know you or you're not a celebrity, they just don't care.

Our next event was another Christmas Craft Fair. This one was inside and we had a more captive audience.

We noticed right away that people weren't drawn to our booth even though it was decorated to the hilt.

It was difficult to ignore our 12" x 18" poster advertising *Lady Justice Takes a C.R.A.P.* and if that didn't get your attention a second poster admonishing *Give Someone C.R.A.P. for Christmas*, was hard to ignore.



**GIVE SOMEONE
C.R.A.P.
FOR CHRISTMAS**

(acronym for)
(CITY RETIREE ACTION PATROL)

This is a book written about Seniors by a Senior and is PERFECT for those 'hard to buy for' Seniors on your Christmas List.

For information about the book, ordering signed copies, previews and videos, go to:

www.BooksByBob.com



A Few Reviews from Senior Fans!

"This book is laugh-out-loud funny, on par with today's most popular writers! It's great to see that old age and wisdom triumph over youth and exuberance again. Walt and his senior friends prove that there are still new adventures and opportunities for senior citizens. We can't wait for the next set of adventures! Go get 'em Walt!" M.D. California

Bob's book proves that dreams don't die with age and that seniors (or, as I like to call those of us of a certain age—people with lots of experience) can stay active and involved with life. The characters in his book push against the invisible boundaries set for people in their later years." T.P. Missouri

For more reviews, check out the website!

We soon discovered that nothing was going to happen unless we made it happen, so we stood at our table and spoke to anyone who even glanced in our direction.

We found that once we got their attention, and our infectious personalities kicked in, most would listen to the story of *Lady Justice*.

We also found that if we could engage them in conversation, about 60% of them would buy a book.

We sold 37 copies that day --- a victory!

Our next event was in the library of our small town of Osceola, Mo, population 835.

Again, we posted notices all over town and the local paper had run ads for two consecutive weeks. We even sponsored a promotion for the local Food Bank; "Bring in a can of food and receive a 10% discount".

Four families showed up, all were close friends. No one else cared.

The rest of our events at craft fairs went much the same as the second one. Once we figured out how to attract the shoppers, we could sell the book.

We sold books at our ten events, but we could tell right away that if *Lady Justice* was going to be a best seller, it was going to take more than craft fairs.

CHAPTER 21

Somehow, we had to let the world know about *Lady Justice* and it was up to us to do it.

Authorhouse had done a fantastic job producing the book, but after that, it was all on us.

Obviously, our connection to the outside world was the Internet. Somehow, we had to get people to our website, BooksByBob.com.

We were on all the social networking sites, but we needed more.

The marketing guy from *Authorhouse* had sent us an email with links to sites he thought might be useful to us.

One was a website listing all of the newspapers in the United States, state by state.

I had read that *Authorhouse* would prepare a press release for me --- for a fee, and submit it to selected papers, but again, I could do that for myself, so I studied press release construction and prepared my first press release.

The process was grueling. I had to pull up the newspapers in a particular state and then open their website and find the appropriate email address for press release submission.

I spent as much time as I could spare, and over a two-week period, I sent press releases to EVERY newspaper in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas,

Oklahoma, Arizona, Florida and New York.

I have no idea if any paper actually published the releases, but they certainly received them. We did get responses from a couple of newspapers that offered to review *Lady Justice* if we sent their book editor a copy, which, of course, we did. We haven't heard back from them yet.

We did learn a trick. After I sent all the emails the first time, I pulled up the sent messages and put the email addresses in a special newspaper address book. It would save me hours of labor on my next press release barrage.

I had also found websites on the Internet, I-Newswire.com, PR.com, Free-Press-Release.com, and Prlog.org, on which I could post my first release. I used them all.

If the world didn't know about *Lady Justice*, it wasn't for lack of trying.

CHAPTER 22

I realized that if I was ever going to get the exposure for *Lady Justice* that I wanted, I was going to have to find a 'traditional' publisher who would take my book.

I read about a book titled *Writer's Market* online and found a copy in our local library.

Virtually all of the publishers, both traditional and self-publishing, were listed with their submission guidelines.

The vast majority of traditional publishers said either that they don't accept unsolicited or un-agented submissions.

So maybe I should find an agent to represent me

I turned to the literary agent section and was surprised to read that most of the agents didn't want to talk to you unless you were already a successful author.

Hold on a minute! Publishers don't talk to you without an agent and agents won't talk to you if you're not previously published.

WHO MADE THESE RULES???

It became quite obvious that the deck was stacked against the new author unless, of course, he or she was a celebrity.

Oh well, nobody said it would be easy.

I went through the *Writer's Market* and pulled up the websites of all the publishing companies and literary agents that would accept unsolicited submissions and followed the directions on each site.

I received a few replies thanking me for my submission, but regrettably, the subject matter of my novel didn't fit into their current plans.

I did receive positive responses from one literary agency and several small publishers, but when I did my research on them, they all had reputations for taking anything that was sent to them. I figured that I should stay with the company I already had.

Another dead end.

CHAPTER 23

We had made stops at two large Barnes & Noble stores in our area. Even though *Lady Justice* was available online at Amazon.com and Barnes&Noble.com, it was not in the brick and mortar stores.

We kept getting the brush-off from the managers and finally we discovered why.

Evidently, individual Barnes & Noble store managers don't make decisions on which self-published novels to stock. Everything comes from the corporate headquarters in New York.

One kind manager told us to go to the Barnes & Noble website and look for the self-publishing submission section.

We found the site and sure enough, if you were self-published, you were required to send a copy of your book along with other submission requirements, if you wanted your book considered for inclusion in the brick and mortar stores.

So we sent what was requested and actually received a reply that our book was somewhere in the huge stack to be reviewed. They promised to let us know --- some day.

So, if that's how the system works, maybe it's the same for Borders. We went to the Borders website and were shocked to read that Borders will

absolutely NOT stock a self-published book!

HOLY COW!

If you're self-published, you might as well have leprosy, because nobody in main-line publishing wants to have anything to do with you.

It's really sad. How many REALLY great pieces of literature will never see the light of day because they are written by a new author?

So, the big book chains are a long shot. How about the small, independent bookseller?

I found a website for the ABA, American Booksellers Association, comprised of small, independent bookstores.

Like the newspapers, we pulled up the websites of each store, one by one, and state by state.

We had prepared a sales campaign brochure which we emailed to *EVERY* member of the ABA in *ALL* fifty states; over four hundred independent bookstores.

We did the same thing as with the newspapers and saved the emails in a special address book for our next attack.

By this time, we were getting feedback from our previous sales. Readers were emailing us, saying how much they enjoyed *Lady Justice* and were looking forward to the sequel.

Armed with positive reviews, we sent our next barrage of press releases to all the newspapers in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Arizona,

Florida and New York.

We waited two weeks and sent a follow-up solicitation with reader reviews to the 400+ independent bookstores.

We're nothing if not persistent.

CHAPTER 24

After the first of the year, things slowed down. The Christmas Craft Fairs were over and book signing events slowed to a trickle.

We sold lots of books at these events, but it was quite apparent that if *Lady Justice* was to be a best seller, it would take more than a booth at a high school gymnasium.

It was encouraging, however, that those who had purchased *Lady Justice*, loved it!

Authorhouse had produced a fine book and it was available nearly everywhere online, but, as a self-published book, it was not going to be in the brick and mortar stores.

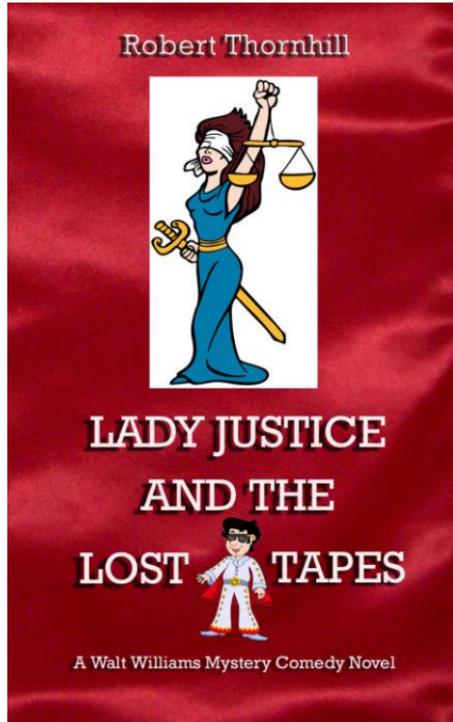
I had purchased my own copy of *Writer's Market*, dug it out, dusted it off and started all over again.

I went to the websites of every legitimate publisher that would accept unsolicited submissions and sent query letters again.

"If at first you don't succeed ----"

With nothing else to do but wait for a response --- that would probably never come, I continued writing the sequel to *Lady Justice Takes A C.R.A.P.*

The title of the new book was *Lady Justice And The Lost Tapes*.



All of the characters from the first novel, Walt, Maggie, Willie, Mary and the Professor, were all there.

Two new characters were introduced.

The first was Jerry Singer, a seventy-two year old guy who had been referred to Walt for an apartment by a 'friend'.

Jerry turned out to be a Rodney Dangerfield wannabe and nearly drove everyone crazy until Walt introduced him to the local comedy club's 'amateur

night’.

In Chapter 6, Jerry meets his new neighbors:

I returned home that evening, exhausted, frustrated and a little apprehensive.

As I entered the foyer, I met Jerry.

“Hey Walt,” he said. “What does a seventy-five year old woman have between her breasts that a twenty-five year old doesn’t? ----- HER NAVEL!”

He bent over double laughing.

Well, OK then. That was unusual.

I went upstairs to my apartment and remembered that I had forgotten to get my mail, so I trudged back to the foyer.

Jerry was still there and when he saw me, his eyes lit up.

“Hey, Walt. I was talking to a friend the other day. He said he had it all - money, a beautiful house, a big car and the love of a beautiful woman, and then ‘BAM!’ it was all gone.”

“Gosh, that’s awful. What happened?” I asked.

“His wife found out.”

Oh no. This couldn’t be good.

I got my mail and when I returned to my apartment, Willie was waiting outside my door.

“What’s up?” I asked.

“It’s dat new guy! He’s drivin’ me crazy. Evva time I steps out of my apartment, he’s on me wif

some dumb joke.

Dis monin' he says to me, 'You hear about the cannibal what went on a diet? --- He only eats midgets.' What's dat all about?''

The second new character was Pastor Bob.

Having been an ordained minister for several years myself, and having officiated weddings, funerals and baptisms, I could relate to this character.



In Chapter 8, after Walt is nearly killed by a

mobster, he goes to the cleric for counsel:

I really liked Pastor Bob and we became close friends.

His philosophy of life and mine seemed in tune. Plus, he has a great sense of humor. Whenever his flock gets too uptight, he loves to use the John Wesley quote, 'Sour godliness is the devil's religion'.

You know a guy is OK if he has a church bowling league who call themselves the 'Holy Rollers'.

We often go to Mel's Diner and discuss life and theology over a plate of biscuits and gravy.

Once, I was feeling some guilt about my lack of church attendance and wondered if my soul was in mortal danger. I'll always remember his reply, "Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car."

Again, I was reminded of the old axiom, "write about what you know", and in this sequel, poor old Walt is drafted into going undercover several times.

In Chapter 10, Captain Short asks Walt to don a dress and wig and go undercover in drag:

"We need someone inside the bar to watch and record who's coming and going."

“That’s not a problem. Ox, Vince and I have done undercover work before.”

I turned to Ox for confirmation and was surprised to see his face buried in his meaty hands.

“What?”

Ox and the Captain exchanged worried looks. They obviously knew something I didn’t.

“WHAT?” I asked again.

The Captain looked at Ox. “You tell him”.

Ox just stared at me.

“WHAT? DAMN IT!”

“The Foxy Lady is a tranny bar.”

“A tra---- NO! Absolutely not! I’ve been a john in a strip club and a homo in a gay bar, but there’s no way in hell you’re getting me into a dress!”

Please don’t get the wrong idea here. I’m totally straight, but I have had some experience in drag myself.

When a friend turned fifty, I just couldn’t help donning a dress and wig to help him celebrate this birthday milestone.



In Chapter 11, Walt and Ox help sponsor a Christmas charity event that turns sour when thieves steal the donations. Walt and Ox just happen to be dressed as Santa and his elf:

“I’m not naive. I’ve been to Macy’s and seen the Santa there. He’s got this cute little chick dressed in a short red skirt trimmed in white fluffy fur as his assistant. I want one of those.”

The sales clerk, overhearing our conversation, stepped right in. “Let me help you out here. I don’t have any more Santa’s helper’s skirts, but I do have one elf suit left.”

“Elf suit? Why in the world would we want an --- OH NO!”

“Perfect!” Ox replied. “We’ll take it.”

I wouldn't ask Walt to do anything I wouldn't do myself. When I was broker/manager at the RE/MAX office, the owner and I would dress as Santa and Herman The Elf for our Christmas party. You guessed it. I was the elf.



As the name of this novel implies, old reel-to-reel tapes are discovered that contain previously unheard recordings by the King of rock-n-roll.

When the owner of the tapes is kidnapped Walt must go undercover once again to save the day:

“Walt, we need your help. We need you undercover.”

“Undercover as what?”

“As an Elvis impersonator.”

“No --- NO! I can't do this!”

“You had me as an undercover john at a strip club because I looked old and needy. Then you had

me in a gay bar because Vince and I made a great couple. Then I had to be a transvestite because I was the only cop who looked good in a dress. What in heaven's name makes you think I can be an Elvis impersonator?"

I realize that there are not a lot of sixty-seven year old Elvis impersonators. But just so you know that it *IS* possible and that Walt's heroics are sometimes based in fact, I must confess that I, myself, am one.



I was persuaded by agents in my office to dress as Elvis and serenade another agent that was getting married. It was a blast! I loved it and I've been doing it, just for fun, for fifteen years now. I was even dressed as Elvis when I proposed to Peg.



I mostly do it at private parties, but when Peg and I lived on Maui, I performed once a month at the Kaanapali Beach Hotel and I actually won the Maui Elvis Look-Alike contest.



If you find that hard to believe, go to YouTube and type “A sixty-seven year old Elvis” in the search field.

As before, once I started writing, it just kept

coming.

The cold winter days wore on and *Lady Justice And The Lost Tapes* was finally finished.

Now, the question was, "what should I do with it?"

I wasn't real excited about publishing another book with *Authorhouse*. I didn't need another book that would not be getting into the bookstores.

Then, one morning, I opened my email, and the answer was there!

CHAPTER 25

When I opened my email, there was a message from *Tate Publishing* --- They wanted my book!

The acquisitions lady from *Tate* had read *Lady Justice Takes A. C.R.A.P.*, and liked it. She was offering me a contract.

The first reaction was, of course, elation. This was the big break I had been waiting for --- or was it?

I had been excited before when I had received contract offers from *Publish America* and *WL Literary Agency*, but that excitement was short lived when I did my research and discovered that both of these companies will take almost anything from anyone, and had horrible reputations.

So, back to the Internet to research *Tate Publishing*.

My initial findings were positive.

"Tate Publishing is one of the largest publishers in the world and has the production, distribution, marketing and publicity that leads the industry for our authors.

Tate Publishing is a large publisher that delivers what no one else does. We are selective and can only sign around 3% of the manuscripts submitted to us, but when you become a member of the Tate Publishing family you truly join the

elite.

Tate Publishing is the fastest growing publisher in the industry and has been over the past three years."

Apparently, *Lady Justice* fell into that 3%. How cool was that?

Then as I read the blogs and websites, my enthusiasm turned to skepticism. *Tate* charges their authors to publish their books!

So how is this any different from what I already have with *Authorhouse*?

More research.

I had an author friend who had two books published with *Tate*. It was time to pick her brain.

I had told her previously that I had submitted *Lady Justice* to *Tate* and she had doubted that they would be interested in it. *Tate* is a Christian-oriented publisher and while *Lady Justice* has no gory bloodbaths or gratuitous sex, it is an adult mystery novel.

She was surprised by *Tate's* offer.

The conversation with my friend was positive.

Tate had done everything for her that she had hoped. They had both copy editing and conceptual editing and had created a beautiful cover for her book. She had been assigned a marketing/publicity person who had set up book-signings and, best of all, her books were stocked in the brick and mortar stores. She said that she was amazed when she

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walked into a Target store and saw her book on the shelf.

I had none of those things with *Authorhouse*.

So what is with the fee they charge?

I had read over and over in the literary blogs that a traditional publisher should pay the author an advance for his work. If the author has to pay, it's just another vanity press.

More research --- more reading.

While my research may have been influenced by the fact that *Tate* had offered me a contract, here is what I have concluded:

1. It would be wonderful to have a truly professional literary agent sell your work to a large publishing company for a hefty advance, but it would appear that the established agencies are only interested in previously published authors. I would rather go it alone than sign with a company like *WL Literary Agency*.

2. The big guys are only interested in established authors and celebrities and most won't even accept unsolicited submissions. They want you to have an agent, but you can't get a decent agent as a new guy, so it's a vicious circle.

3. There are a bazillion vanity publishers like *Authorhouse*, *X-Libris*, *I-Universe*, *Dog Ear*, etc. You get two things with any of them, a book to hold in your hand and the listing of your book in the book channels. You also get the stigma of being self-

published, which prevents you from getting your book in brick and mortar stores. There are tens of thousands of self-published books, many of which are really bad. Even if your book is better than most, it's nearly impossible to make it rise above the crowd. It's like swimming in a sea of peanut butter.

4. There seems to be an alternative to the above scenario, the subsidy publisher. *Tate* falls in that category.

I have learned one thing in my brief career as an author --- it is impossible to succeed if you don't make a personal commitment to your book.

I understand now, that a traditional publisher invests a lot of money in producing a book. With a new author, it is a gamble.

Even if the book is good and even if the publisher produces a great finished product, if the author isn't willing to invest his time and effort, the book will not sell.

The subsidy publisher offers all of the services of the big guys, editing, artwork, marketing, book store placement, etc, but as a new, unpublished author, they want a commitment, both in time and dollars, to insure that the new guy will do his part.

The flaw in this scenario is that not every new author can afford the financial commitment.

I have developed friendships with several self-published authors who have written great novels, but are struggling for acceptance just as I have.

They just don't have the financial resources to pay the subsidy, so their work will probably languish in the purgatory of self-publishing.

Fortunately, I have been blessed with the means to take the next step in my writing career.

I have been down the dead-end road of self-publishing and have been ignored by the elite publishers and agents, so if I want *Lady Justice* to see the light of day, my next step will be with *Tate*.

CHAPTER 26

I signed my contract with *Tate Publishing*, submitted the manuscripts for *Lady Justice Takes A C.R.A.P.* and *Lady Justice And The Lost Tapes* and so began my journey with *Tate*.

I had read the submission information on dozens of traditional publisher's websites and they all seemed to have one thing in common --- don't be in a hurry to have your new book in your hands.

Most said that the book would be published within one to two years! What's up with that?

When I signed with *Authorhouse*, the first *Lady Justice* was delivered in about a month. I realize that they simply bind the book that you have submitted and there is no editing, and they pretty much used the cover my wife had created, but why so long?

I soon found out.

I submitted my manuscripts in February. I received an email welcoming me to the Tate family with a notation that work would begin on my books in June.

The first month was designated for copy editing. This is where they check for spelling, grammar and punctuation. Even though my wife and I had been through the manuscripts more than a dozen times, the *Tate* editors found stuff that we had

missed. Fresh eyes *do* make a difference.

In the second month, the manuscripts were assigned to a conceptual editor. I had no idea what that was all about until I received an email and the attached manuscripts were full of red, green and gray highlights with suggestions of how the books could be improved.

This is the phase where an author's ego could certainly get in the way. I mean, after all, the books were perfect when I sent them in to them, weren't they?

Apparently not!

After my initial shock subsided, I felt a call to the conceptual editor was in order.

Lady Justice Takes A C.R.A.P., my very first attempt at writing, was so red and green it looked like a Christmas display had exploded.

Lady Justice And The Lost Tapes, not so much.

Maybe that was an indication that I was getting better with practice.

The editor was very kind and patient and after I switched from ego mode to learner mode, I could clearly see how many of her suggestions were valid. I revised and re-wrote where it was necessary and in the end, both books, especially the first one were much improved.

In the third month, the books were sent to the creative department where the covers were to be

designed.

My wife and I had designed the cover for the *Authorhouse Lady Justice* and we really liked it. I sent it to the cover designer with high hopes they would use it for the Tate edition.

Not a chance.

The character of *Lady Justice* that we had used was a stock photo we had purchased from *dreamstime.com*.

We had also purchased another *Lady Justice* for the second book that was a bit different.

They, of course, didn't want either one.

Instead of using stock photos, they designed a whole new *Lady Justice* figure from scratch that would be used throughout the *Lady Justice* series.



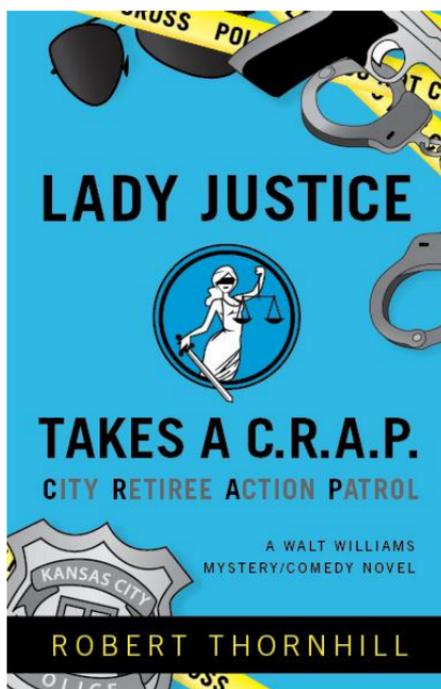
We really didn't like the first covers that *Tate* sent, but since we were the greenhorns and they were the experts, we were reluctant to say anything.

The more we stared at the new covers, the more dissatisfied we became, so I called, prepared to

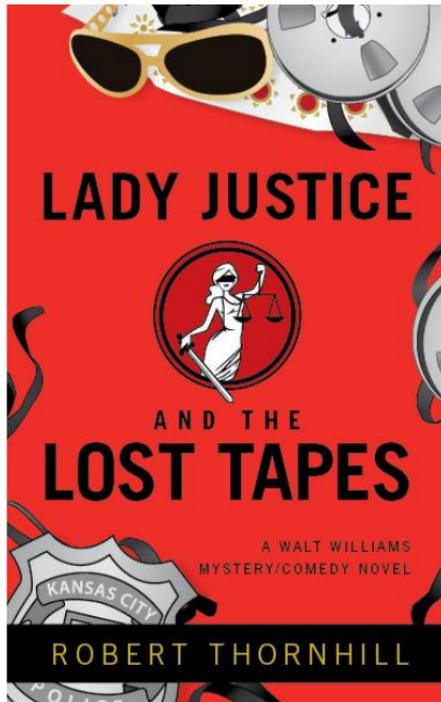
defend my wife's beautiful covers.

After a lengthy conversation, two things emerged:

First, *Tate* did know more about designing book covers than we did and second, they were more than willing to 'tweak' the design until we were satisfied.



Again, after checking my ego at the door, I realized that the 'new' *Lady Justice* was pretty cool!



The fourth month was designated for book design. This was the phase where they select type size and font and the cool little extras like the new *Lady Justice* figure at the beginning of each chapter and little justice scales between time breaks.

It had now been eight months since I submitted my manuscripts and they told me we're almost there.

I was *really* excited!

CHAPTER 27

Wait ---- wait for a response to your submission query from a publisher that never comes.

Wait --- wait for a response from a literary agent that never comes.

Then, when you finally sign a contract with a credible publisher and submit your manuscripts ---- you wait again for the year it takes to get your book in print.

Obviously, if you aspire to be an author, patience is a virtue.

As fate would have it, I was blessed with incredible good looks and a razor-sharp wit rather than patience. (Just kidding)

At the ripe old age of sixty-seven, I don't imagine that I have a lot of time to dawdle.

Actually, I have always subscribed to the redneck credo, "Get 'er done!"

Once I have formulated a plan and a goal, I can't rest until I see it to fruition.

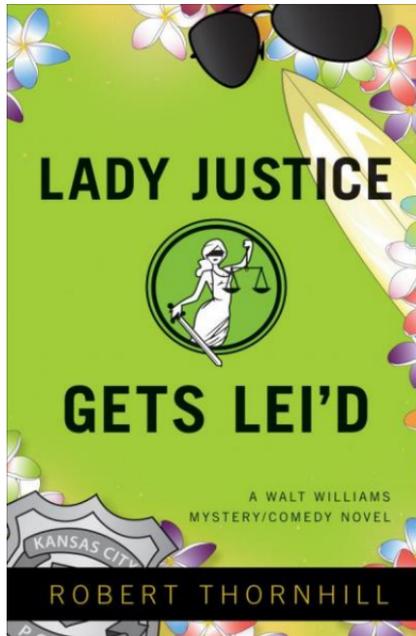
My approach to my writing is the same. Once I started on *Lady Justice*, I couldn't quit. I wrote all day and laid awake at night thinking about what I was going to write the next day. On more than one occasion, when my nocturnal musings were particularly inspirational, I left my bed and typed, fearing I would forget by morning.

My poor wife would stumble into the office at three A.M., shake her head and mutter, "You've got to be kidding!"

So what does a retired realtor turned frustrated writer do while he's waiting for his books to be published?

Write some more, of course.

As soon as *Lady Justice Takes A C.R.A.P.* and *Lady Justice And The Lost Tapes* were in the system, I started on the third installment of the *Lady Justice* series, *Lady Justice Gets Lei'd*.



I was really anxious to get started on Walt's newest adventure.

As you might suspect from the title, the story takes place in *Hawaii*.

My wife and I lived on Maui, Hawaii for five years, from 2002 through 2007, and I had planned from the beginning for Walt and Maggie to visit this beautiful paradise.

As with the previous two novels, once I got started, I couldn't rest.

In this third installment, another new character is introduced, Walt's eighty-six year old dad whom he hadn't seen for years.

In Chapter 6, Walt meets him at the airport after he's been kicked out of the Shady Glen retirement home for lascivious behavior:

When it seemed that everyone had exited the aircraft, I began to worry. Where was my father?

Just then, an elderly gentleman with a full head of wavy grey hair exited the runway --- in handcuffs!

I was approached by a stern-looking gent and a very comely flight attendant.

"Mr. Williams?"

"Yes, that's me."

"Is this your father?"

I looked at the old gentleman I hadn't seen in years and he nodded.

"Yes, I suppose it is."

"My name is Grant and I'm a federal air

marshal. Your father is under arrest for assaulting a flight attendant.”

My mouth dropped open and I just stood there dumbfounded.

Finally Dad spoke, “All I did was pinch her on the butt.”

In this novel, Walt and Maggie go to Hawaii to be married, but ancient Hawaiian artifacts and something from Maggie’s past interfere with their plans.

Walt and Maggie are abducted and taken deep into the tropical rainforest.

In my five-year residence there, I had hiked miles and miles of trails.



In my mind’s eye, I could see the path they took the day of their abduction:

The four of us climbed through the gate and after walking only a few dozen yards, it felt like we had entered the movie set of 'One Million Years B.C.'"

Huge trees with trunks three feet thick rose a hundred feet and philodendron vines with leaves as big as your hand hung from the tallest branches.

The humidity was so thick you could cut it with a knife and tiny droplets of water hung on the tips of leafy ferns.

A thick, green carpet of moss covered everything and it seemed that at any moment some huge creature from that bygone era could come crashing through the forest.

Walt and Maggie are drugged and taken to a burial cave in the sheer face of a dormant volcano.



Again, having hiked this beautiful spot, I could relate to their wonder and awe as they awoke from their drug-induced slumber:

Just then, the rocks around us changed color as they reflected varying shades of crimson and gold.

We looked to our left just in time to see the morning sun burn through the clouds that hung low beneath the summit of the great mountain --- sunrise on Haleakala.

As the sun rose in the sky, its rays fell upon the craggy peaks and cinder cones in the caldera, which in turn cast their eerie shadows on the crater floor.

It seemed that we were in another world as the ethereal shadow ballet unfolded before us.

Walt and Maggie are finally married by the lagoon in the Coco Palms resort where fifty years earlier, Elvis and Maile Duvall were married in the movie, *Blue Hawaii*.



My wife, Peg, and I were also married in

Hawaii, and like Walt and Maggie, re-created the Elvis, *Blue Hawaii* wedding.



As I took Maggie into my arms and our lips met, the words from the 'Hawaiian Wedding Song' filled the air,

*This is the moment I've waited for
I can hear my heart singing ---*

My heart was indeed singing. I was standing with the love of my life by my side, in the very spot that fifty years ago Elvis had stood and sung those very words.

It was a moment that was indelibly pressed between the pages of my mind and one that in years to come would bring me untold joy and happiness.

I took Maggie in my arms and we danced our wedding dance to the beautiful 'I Can't Help Falling In Love With You'.

At last, Maggie and I were one.

Before the first two novels had cleared copy editing, *Lady Justice Gets Lei'd* was ready to submit.

I called the acquisitions rep at *Tate Publishing* and asked if she wanted to see volume three.

Within a week, *Lady Justice Gets Lei'd* was under contract and in the system.

Three novels were being edited and made ready for publication, but the first two wouldn't be out for at least two more months.

So what does an impatient writer do while he's waiting?

Keep writing!

CHAPTER 28

Three *Lady Justice* novels are with *Tate Publishing*, being prepared for world-wide distribution. (One can always dream.)

The first two installments wouldn't be ready for print for at least two months, so there I was again, wondering what to do next.

I had just started doing research and formulating an outline for the fourth *Lady Justice* novel, when fate intervened again.

My eight-year old grandson stopped by and proudly declared, "Grandpa, I'm going to write a book!"

His second grade class had been given the assignment of writing a story and he was excited to share the news with his author grandfather. Peer bonding, I guess.

A few days later, he re-appeared with his five-page book complete with illustrations.

His story was about a rainbow, a leprechaun and a pot of gold coins, and it was a pretty good little story.

After bestowing the appropriate accolades and encouragement, off he went with visions of writing grandeur. I wonder where he gets that?

My wife, who had created the covers for my three *Lady Justice* novels, promptly created a cover

for his book and we had it bound at OfficeMax. First class all the way.

During the previous year, when Blake was in the first grade, we had been introduced to 'chapter books'. He would come to spend the night and he would usually have one of these little 50-70 page booklets that were designed as the first 'real' books after the picture-book stories of kindergarten.

It was on the way home from OfficeMax that my wife was inspired to say, "I'll bet you could write a children's chapter book. After all, you're just a big kid anyway." Flattery will get you every time.

I let the idea percolate in the old gray matter. Having spent countless hours with Blake, playing the make-believe stuff that grandpas and grandchildren play, I was well aware of his vivid imagination.

Kids today, like Blake, are really into their super heroes, like Spiderman, Ironman and Superman, with all their super powers.

I can fondly recall my own fantasies at that age, only my heroes were the good guys of the wild and woolly west. My friends and I would argue about who got to be Roy Rogers or Gene Autry.

I pretended that I could ride and rope and shoot just like my heroes, so what kid today doesn't fantasize about having the super powers of these modern day heroes?

Hmmmm, rainbow, leprechaun, pot of gold, super powers. Maybe there is a story there.

I sat down at the computer and started banging away.

An eight-year old boy and his six-year old sister follow a rainbow and discover *Rainbow Road*. It leads them to the home of Lucky Leprechaun. He has a pot of gold coins that bestow super powers, and on their first visit, Blake (wonder where that name came from) is given the power of X-Ray Vision. In the story he learns how to use his special power to help people, and so the adventure begins.

Lucky went to the big black pot and stirred the gold coins. He picked up one and then another and finally he said, "Ahhh, here it is, X-Ray Vision."

He returned to Blake and Breonna with the coin.

"Now before I tell you how this works, we need to have an understanding. Why do you think super heroes have these special powers?"

"That's easy. To kill the bad guys."

"No! No! No! See what I mean? You just don't get it yet. Now let's do this again, only think before you answer. Why do super heroes have special powers?"

Blake thought long and hard before he answered this time.

"I think they use them to help people."

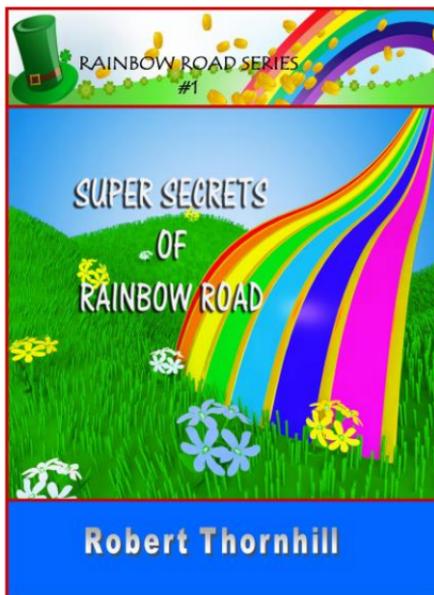
Lucky beamed. "I knew you had it in you."

I printed the story and handed it to my greatest critic, my wife.

She loved it!

So what do we do with it now?

My little story got Peg's creative juices flowing and she created a beautiful *Rainbow Road* cover.



I had really just written the story for fun to impress my grandson, so we took her cover and my story to OfficeMax and had it bound as well.

I was apprehensive about giving the book to Blake. He was, after all, a veteran reader of the

highly successful *Magic Tree House* and *Encyclopedia Brown* chapter books.

Then, at last, the verdict came in.

"Grandpa, I loved it! Can you write another one?"

So I did, and the *Rainbow Road* series of children's chapter books was born.

CHAPTER 29

In the first installment of the *Rainbow Road* series, Blake, the eight-year old boy was given the super power of X-Ray Vision.

Not wanting to be perceived as sexist, I decided that in the second book, *Super Powers Of Rainbow Road*, little six-year old Breonna, (named after my granddaughter, of course) would get Super Hearing.

Lucky rummaged around in the big pot, examining coin after coin until he found just the right one.

“Ahhh, here it is. It’s just right for you, little lady”. He handed the gold coin to Breonna.

“OH WOW!” She squealed, “Super Hearing!”

“HEY!” Blake wailed. “I’m the super hero. Don’t I get another coin?”

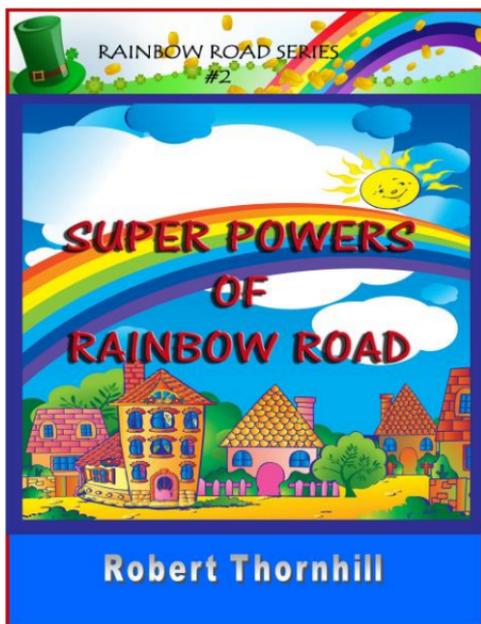
“Not this time my young friend. You see, there is still another lesson that you must learn before you may advance.”

“What’s that?”

“Co-operation. You must learn that there is so much more that can be accomplished when two heroes of like mind join together.”

“But she’s a GIRL!”

While I banged away, one finger at a time, on the computer, Peg busied herself creating another beautiful cover for the book.



When both were finished and bound at OfficeMax, we presented the second installment to my grandson for his critique. Kids his age, after all, are my target audience.

He loved the second book as much as the first and encouraged me to keep pumping them out. I hoped he wasn't just saying that to make his poor old

grandpa happy. How old do you have to be to learn to lie to people so that they feel good?

Then a thought occurred to us. We had been involved in craft fairs, art expos and book signings for almost a year with *Lady Justice Takes A C.R.A.P.*

Not everyone is interested in mysteries and we had just the one book on our big eight-foot table.

Maybe if we had a couple of kid's books, it would attract more readers to our table.

The OfficeMax version was OK for the grandson critique, but we needed something better to sell.

We decided that since this was a kid's book, we needed some illustrations, so we went back to *Dreamstime.com* and purchased some really cute images that fit into the story line.

We were quite happy with the book that *Authorhouse* had produced, but there was no way we were going down that road with the little kids books.

We had met a young lady at the Lowry City, Mo. Library Author's Fair.

We love going to those events. We love meeting other authors and comparing notes.

This lady had written a novel and published it with an on-line service called *Createspace.com* which we discovered was a company affiliated with *Amazon*.

We logged on to the website and were amazed to see how easy it was to upload a .PDF file

and a front and back cover, and the cost, compared to all the other ways we had found to publish, was insignificant.

We realized, of course, that what we were doing was the bottom of the publishing barrel. Besides having a book to hold in your hand, all you got was the title available on *Amazon.com.*, but we didn't care. All we were interested in was having the kid's books on our table to attract a wider range of readers.

We submitted the two volumes of the *Rainbow Road* series, followed their on-line directions and within a week the books were in our hands. Wow! That's fast!

Frankly, we were not expecting much for the price we paid, but when we opened the box, our little books looked every bit as good as the *Random House* and *Penguin* chapter books on the Barnes & Noble bookshelf.

I have to admit that I was excited about these little books and with my grandson's encouragement, I couldn't stop writing the darned things!

CHAPTER 30

The third book in the *Rainbow Road* series of children's chapter books was *Hawaiian Rainbows*.

I had been looking forward to writing this one. Peg and I had lived on Maui, Hawaii for five years and we loved it.

My third mystery/comedy novel in the *Lady Justice* series, *Lady Justice Gets Lei'd*, was also set on that beautiful island.

In *Hawaiian Rainbows*, Blake receives the gold coin for Super Strength.

Blake and Breonna couldn't believe their eyes.

They had stepped through Lucky's door into a beautiful tropical world.

The road ahead was lined with palm trees and on one side, lush green mountains reached up into the sky.

On the other side of the road, was a huge body of water that must have been an ocean. Across the channel, an island rose out of the sea.

"Where do you think we are?" Bree asked.

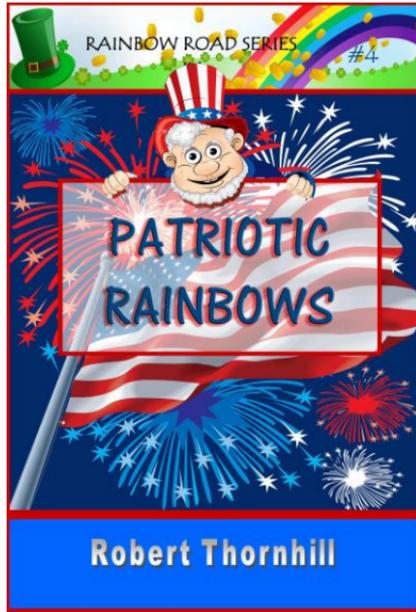
After receiving another nod of approval from the grandson, Peg created another cover and we sent it off to *Createspace*.



Three down --- and how many more to go?

As with the *Lady Justice* books, once my mind was fixated on *Rainbow Road*, it wouldn't shut off. I found myself again laying awake in the middle of the night conjuring up the kids' next adventure.

The Fourth of July holiday was approaching and I thought that an adventure based on a patriotic theme seemed appropriate, so the fourth installment of the *Rainbow Road* series, *Patriotic Rainbows*, began to form in my mind.



In this adventure, little Breonna receives the gold coin of Truth. In each story, the previously bestowed super powers are passed on to the next story, so in this book, each kid now has two super powers. With these newfound abilities, they are able to save the Liberty Bell from being destroyed by terrorists.

They went together to Lucky's big pot of gold coins.

"Ahhh, here it is. The gold coin of Truth."

"So what can I do with that?" Bree asked.

"When you develop this power, you will be

able to tell instantly whether someone is telling the truth or lying.”

“You mean if Blake tells me that syrup comes from earthworms, I’ll know if he’s telling the truth?”

“Exactly.”

“Oh, nuts,” Blake murmured.

“I’ll take it!” she said.

Even though the *Lady Justice* series was fiction, these were adult novels and the plots had to be believable.

I felt no such constraints with the *Rainbow Road* books. Having played with my grandson, I was quite aware of the dazzling stories that are constantly being conjured up in the fertile imagination of a kid, and I let my own imagination run free, pretending I was an eight-year old. My wife says I act that way most of the time.

It was actually kind of scary when I realized just how easy that was to do. They say that grandpas are just really old kids, and I began to think that maybe there was some truth there.

“If I were a kid, and could have a super power, what would I do?” It was just like going back sixty years and being Roy Rogers again.

Blake loved *Patriotic Rainbows*, so off it went to *Createspace* and *Rainbow Road* now had four volumes.

Our next event was the Bingham-Waggoner

Festival and we had four *Rainbow Road* chapter books ready to sell along with *Lady Justice*.

The new books had the affect we had hoped for. We now had kids dragging their parents to our table and grandmas who didn't really want to buy a mystery for themselves, would buy a book for their grandchild.

Bingo!

After receiving great reviews from our new *Rainbow Road* readers, I began to wonder if maybe there could be some commercial value to our new series.

On a whim, I sent the manuscripts of the four *Rainbow Road* books to the acquisitions lady at *Tate Publishing*. Since I already had three novels under contract with them, I thought they might at least take the time to look at them.

I have to admit that I was surprised by her response.

"I have had an opportunity to review your juvenile reader books (The *Rainbow Road* Series.) I liked the books. The dialog between Blake and Breonna is perfect for young readers. You have really captured their personalities in your writing. One part that stood out was when Breonna called Blake a "smarty pants." You are right on with the age range of readers you are trying to reach. You

have written their adventures to be fun and exciting. There is fine line between trying to put too much into a story and just the right amount of adventure. With too much you lose the reader and they become confused with what the ultimate goal of the writer is. Often when this happens it is difficult for a writer to find the proper ending to their story. If there is not enough adventure and personality to the writing the reader gets easily bored and we all know what happens then... the book is put back on the shelf. I think you have a good balance with your story. I am not surprised that parents and grandparents were purchasing the book. It can be difficult to find a book for this age range. Juvenile reader books are highly successful in the industry at the moment."

I was offered a contract for the *Rainbow Road* series.

While this was certainly a boost for my ego, and a validation for the series, Peg and I decided that with three *Lady Justice* novels being published, we would hold off until we were certain that *Tate* would come through as promised.

At that point we were absolutely happy with our experience with *Tate*, but we wanted to see if the marketing and promotion would develop as we had hoped.

I had decided to stop writing more *Rainbow Road* books and get back to *Lady Justice #4*.

In the meantime, my grandson was sharing his little books with some of his friends, and soon, fate would intervene once again.

CHAPTER 31

My eight-year old grandson had been playing baseball all summer and Grandma and I had attended most of the games.

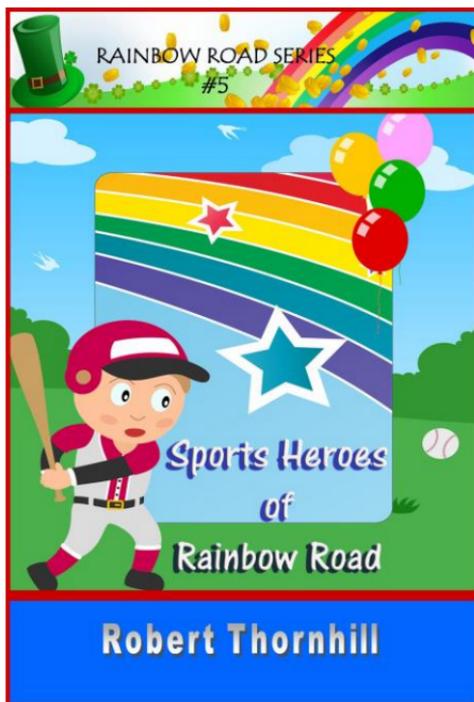
It was the next to last game of the season and Blake's team was playing for the championship.

During the warm-up drills, Blake lost a high fly ball in the sun and wound up catching it with his forehead.

As he lay on the ground stunned and bleeding, one of his teammates quipped, "Wow! Cool! You're grandpa is an author. Maybe he can write a story about this."

I hadn't planned on writing any more *Rainbow Road* stories for a while, but this kid had thrown down the gauntlet and my creative juices began to flow.

The next day, I started the fifth volume in the series, *Sports Heroes Of Rainbow Road*.



Blake is given the gold coin for Invincibility.

“One more thing before you go. I’m just curious what you’ve learned playing baseball all summer.”

Blake thought for a moment. “Well, I learned its a lot better to catch the ball in your glove than with your forehead.”

“Lucky smiled. “A valuable lesson indeed. What else?”

“If I practice real hard, I get better. I’m a lot

better player now than I was at the beginning of summer."

"Good. What else?"

"I really like the guys on my team. We've become good friends."

"Fantastic! I bet you really like to win, don't you?"

"Well sure. Who doesn't?"

"You'd probably do just about anything to win, wouldn't you?"

Blake started to answer, then stopped and thought.

"That was a trick question, wasn't it?"

"Was it?"

One of the things about my writing that is so special, is that I get to share the process with my wife.

I let her read each chapter after it's finished and often she has conceptual suggestions that make the story even better, and she creates the covers for all the books.

After my work is finished, she spends hours editing for all the missed commas and misplaced quotation marks. It's quite a job.

As the series developed, we added more and more illustrations. After all, "a picture is worth a thousand words".

We spent hours on *dreamstime.com* together,

purchasing the rights to dozens of illustrations and even went back to the original four volumes of the series, added more pictures and republished. The process is so simple with *Createspace*.



Sports Heroes Of Rainbow Road turned out to be my favorite of the series and after it was finished, I couldn't shut down the old imagination.

Soon, with fall approaching, volume number six, *Ghosts And Goblins Of Rainbow Road*, began to form in my mind.



By this time the kids had three super powers each, and the opportunities to use them were endless.

So far in the series, *Rainbow Road* had transported them to different cities in the U.S. and even to Maui, Hawaii, so in *Ghosts And Goblins*, *Rainbow Road* took them back in time to the year 1692, and with their super powers, they were able to change the course of history. How cool is that?

“This is the most exciting Halloween we’ll

probably ever have," Bree said.

"Yeah, that was a close one, all right. I can't believe they would have actually burned that nice lady."

"What makes people be like that?" Bree asked.

"They just don't know all the stuff that we know today," Blake said. "We studied in our history class that people used to think that the world was flat and that the sun rotated around the earth. I guess that's why it's so important that we study hard."

Bree looked at her big brother with admiration.

"Even though you're a goofball most of the time, sometimes you're pretty smart."

Blake smiled, "Thanks, I think."

I thought that maybe after *Ghosts And Goblins*, I would be finished, but how can you have a Halloween story and not have a Christmas story?

In this seventh installment, I was at a loss as to what new super power the kids should have. Instead of wracking my poor old brain, I went straight to my original inspiration for the series, my grandson. Without hesitation, he told me that the next super power should be Shape-Shifting.



In *Christmas Crooks Of Rainbow Road*, evil thieves steal Blake's gold coin that bestows the super power of Shape-Shifting, kidnap Santa, assume his identity and threaten to destroy Christmas for the entire world.

Blake and Breonna are, of course, up to the task and in this North Pole adventure, save Santa and Christmas.

“Santa, we’re Blake and Breonna. I think maybe we can help.”

“So just how do you think you can help with our problem?”

Herman the elf spoke up. “Blake and Breonna

are friends of Lucky Leprechaun. He has given them -
-- uhhh --- some special powers.”

“Ahhh, so our little leprechaun friend is at it again. He may just find a rock in his stocking this year.”

“Please don’t be too hard on Lucky,” Blake said. “This wasn’t his fault. And I have a plan.”

There are now seven volumes in the *Rainbow Road* series.

Done! Finished! No more *Rainbow Road* stories for awhile.

I'll have a couple of months to market the new children's chapter book series before the new *Lady Justice Takes A C.R.A.P.* and *Lady Justice And The Lost Tapes* are released by *Tate Publishing*.



School has started and my grandson has been taking the chapter books to school and selling them to his classmates. I give him a dollar for every book he sells.

Who says I don't have a distribution network?

When I started writing the first *Lady Justice* novel, I had no idea where it was going to take me, and here I am now with three mystery/comedy novels and seven children's chapter books.

Who wudda thunk?

CHAPTER 32

There are so many things in life that one just can't understand until they've lived it.

Writing a book and getting it published is one of those things.

A year and a half ago, I would have bet anything that getting the story out of my mind and onto paper would have been the biggest challenge.

Nothing could have been further from the truth.

I loved the writing process.

Once I got "into the zone", it was like I had diarrhea of the brain. Once it got started, I just couldn't shut it off. (Hmmm, I hope that metaphor doesn't extend to include what actually came out!).

As any writer knows, the hardest part is getting the book published.

Like the vast majority of new writers, I was totally ignored by the big publishers and the successful literary agents, and chose the road of self-publishing.

It is not a decision I regret.

Everything happens for a reason.

So often, when things come too easily, we don't appreciate them, and conversely, when we have to work hard, we more fully understand the value of what we have accomplished.

By traveling this road for the past year, I have learned a lot about the publishing business, but even more important, I have learned that I have so much more to learn.

Sometimes things happen that we just don't understand.

I submitted query letters to many large publishers and agents, but *Tate* was the last I had expected to hear from.

Tate is a Christian-oriented publisher and my *Lady Justice* novels just didn't seem to fit into their traditional offerings, but I wasn't about to argue with them.

If my experience getting my book in print with *Authorhouse* was Chapter 1 of my writing career, then marketing my book for a year as a self-published author was Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 began nine months ago when I signed my contract with *Tate* for *Lady Justice Takes A C.R.A.P.* and *Lady Justice And The Lost Tapes*.

Even though I had seen on every publisher's website that producing a book takes one to two years, it's still one of those things you can't understand until you've lived it.

Hmmmm! Nine months --- I wonder if it's just a coincidence that the gestation period for my first two novels was the same as for my two children?

Wait three months to get on the schedule; one month for copy editing; one month for conceptual

editing; one month for cover creation; another month for layout design --- whew!

You know you're about ready to give birth when you get the email that says, "*The editing department has received and reviewed your final proof and we are nearing the printing phase!*"

And finally, "*I look forward to wrapping up production. A member of our marketing team will contact you by the end of next week.*"

This was the message I wanted to hear.

If I may use a football metaphor, promoting my book as a self-published author was like being a running back and trying to move the football without the benefit of an offensive line or a blocking back. You'll get caught behind the line of scrimmage every time.

I had read online about the marketing support for *Tate* authors:

In 2009, for the first time in history, more books were sold outside the walls of brick and mortar bookstores than inside. Certainly this reflects the strength of online retailers such as Amazon and bn.com, but it also reflects the truth that there are a variety of ways for an author to reach the intended, target audience. Bookstores are one element of success, but in bookstores, readers must find the book and author. Finding the target audience for a book involves taking the book to the reader,

engaging the reader, and being proactive, not reactive, in the pursuit of success. No one attacks the niche market for their authors the way Tate Publishing does for our fine authors. This month alone we have scheduled over 500 niche events for Tate authors, helping our authors engage the community and create broad visibility in a variety of markets.

*And remember, if you are a Tate Publishing author, you **NEVER** have to go it alone. You have a Marketing Representative at your right hand with a team that rep can mobilize to try something new. Our expertise (some of it formed through our own trial and error) should be a wealth of wisdom about what works and what doesn't, and we can help place you on the path to success as we work toward that end.*

I now have two *Lady Justice* novels ready to go and the third will be ready in a few months.

I'm ready to carry the ball, only this time, *Tate Publishing* will be my offensive line of seasoned veterans and my marketing rep will be my blocking back, opening big holes into the brick and mortar stores and other venues that had been denied me up to this point.

Every ball carrier wants a touchdown, but after a year and a half of negative yardage, I would be thrilled to get a few first downs.

It has been a long and winding road from that day I said to my wife, “I think I can write a book,” and sat down at the computer, to the day my first two novels, printed by a major publisher, were delivered to my door.

I’m ready for Chapter 4 and can’t wait to see what lies around the next bend.

CHAPTER 33

At last the day arrived!

February 1st, 2011 was the official release date for my two Lady Justice mystery/comedy novels.

Tate Publishing re-released a revised edition of my first self-published novel, *Lady Justice Takes A C.R.A.P.*, and the first edition of the second installment, *Lady Justice and the Lost Tapes*.

Both were now available online and through every bookstore.

It was a long process.

It had been exactly a year since I signed my contract with Tate Publishing.

So far, Tate had done everything they had promised; a month of copy editing, a month of conceptual editing and the creation of beautiful covers for the books.

The finished products were everything that I had hoped for.

Now that the books were available through all of the distribution channels, it was time for the next phase, marketing.

I had been assigned marketing, publicity and media representatives by Tate and I had high expectations for the coming year.

They were preparing video trailers for the books that would be aired numerous times on

commercial television.

For the past year, as a self-published author, my book signing events were limited to craft fairs and art shows, but this year I was looking forward to being featured in major bookstore chains and other media exposure.

The third novel in my Lady Justice series, *Lady Justice Gets Lei'd*, was released on March 22nd, 2011.

Lei'd, along with the first two novels in the series were all available worldwide.

It had been two months since Tate released the first two novels and I'll admit that I was somewhat skeptical about the marketing and publicity support that was promised.

As a beginning self-published author, I couldn't get the biggies like Barnes & Noble to give me the time of day.

I was truly excited when I received an email from Tate Marketing notifying me that they had scheduled an event at the Hastings Bookstore in Lawrence, Kansas in April and at Barnes & Noble on the Country Club Plaza in May.

The multi-media department at Tate had prepared video trailers for the first two books and were working on the trailer for number three.

The trailers were 15 second spots that were to be aired on Discovery, Fox News, History Channel, Lifetime, Food Network, TLC, A&E, HGTV, ESPN,

USA Network, CNN, Headline News, AMC, Angel One, Animal Planet, The Weather Channel and CMT.

I was informed that press releases had been sent to radio and television stations as well as newspapers in the Greater Kansas City area.

I was really pumped!

With all of this publicity and being backed by a major publisher, I was sure that my book sales would soon explode.

It wasn't long before a big dose of reality took the wind right out of my sails.

Our first bookstore event was on April 11th, 2011 at the Hastings Store in Lawrence, Kansas.



Peg and I were so excited as we drove the two

hours from our home in Independence to Lawrence.

Having never done a major bookstore event, we really didn't know what to expect. All of us have seen news reports with authors sitting at a table with their adoring fans lining up for blocks to purchase the latest offering signed by their idol.

We had no illusions that that would happen, but we certainly weren't prepared for what did occur.

We discovered that about a third of the Hastings store was actually books --- the rest was video rentals and games.

The traffic was sparse and most of the customers were there either to rent or return videos.

Having had the benefit of a year and a half at craft fair venues, we knew what we had to do to sell the books, but you can't even do that if there's no one to talk to.

After three hours of sheer boredom, we threw in the towel.

We had sold three books.

Not a very auspicious start to our new marketing program.

Although we were disappointed, we had bigger fish to fry.

Peg and I had lived on Maui, Hawaii from 2002 through 2007.

Since the *Lady Justice Gets Lei'd* story takes place in Hawaii, we figured that would be the perfect place to launch the book.

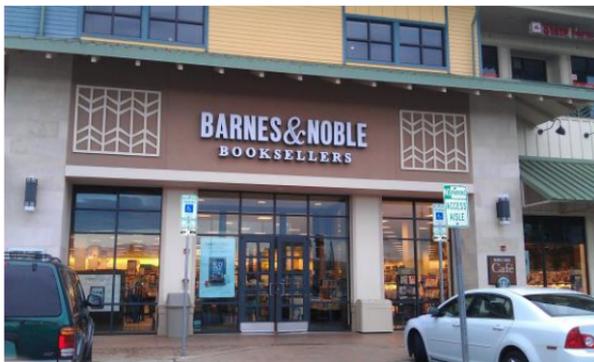
Tate Publishing had secured an event for us at the new Barnes & Noble in Lahaina. Having lived on the island for five years, I made contact with shopping malls throughout the island and after hours of preparation we were set up with four book signing events spread out over two weeks.

Barnes & Noble ordered their own books from their distributor, but I had to make arrangements for the books for the other three events.

We shipped one box of books to a friend on the island and stuffed our three suitcases full of Rainbow Road books and Lady Justice novels.

I sent email invitations to our friends and acquaintances on the island as well as to all of the Goodreads members that I could find.

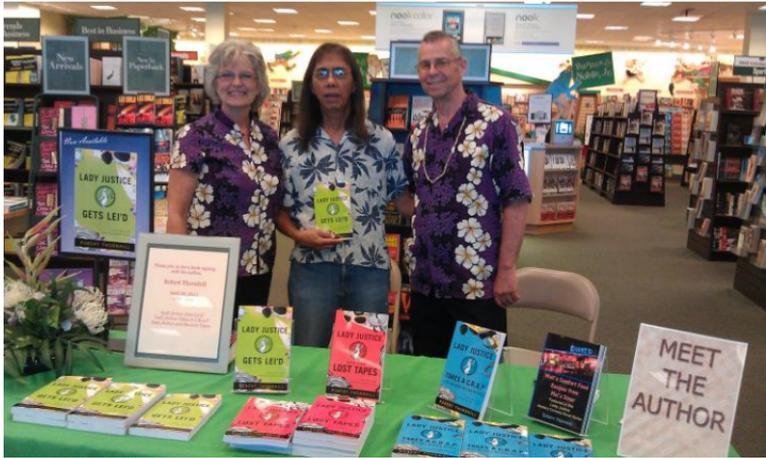
At last the big day arrived.



It's difficult to describe the thrill of walking into a major bookstore for the first time and seeing your name, a huge poster with the cover of your book

and a stack of your novels on display.

Old friends that we knew from our Maui days came by as well as some of my Goodreads friends.



All in all, it was a successful day.

We sold some books, made some new friends and were generally pleased with our first Barnes & Noble event.

We arrived home just in time to prepare for our next bookstore events.

We were scheduled for the Barnes & Noble on the Country Club Plaza on May 7th, 2011 and for the Borders in Springfield, Mo. on June, 4th.



These events went without a hitch.

While the customers weren't exactly lined up out the door and down the sidewalk like they were with Sara Palin and Steven Tyler, we had good days and sold some books --- enough that they scheduled more events later in the year.

While we had been very happy with the fact that Tate had gotten us in the door with the big bookstores, we were soon to have a big let-down concerning their other marketing efforts.

Their multi-media department sent us the links to the video trailers that they had prepared for each of the three books.

I realized that you can't put a lot of content in a 15 second video, but I was REALLY disappointed with what was produced.

http://youtu.be/rS_70z0y3iI

There was absolutely nothing in that video that would have encouraged me to buy the book.

In fact, I was so upset, I decided to create my own video which I think is pretty cool.

<http://youtu.be/c676kxuEmpE>

My next disappointment came when I received an email telling me that those wonderful videos had been aired on national TV.

Their promos for this part of their package had promised the USA Network, CNN, the History Channel, AMC and Animal Planet.

What I got was Ovation TV, the Military Channel and Sleuth. I had never even heard of any of them.

To make matters worse, I noted that most of the airing times were between midnight and 5:00 A.M.

The Tate report card up to this point would be:

Production of book ---- A
Book store events ----- B
Video trailer ----- D-
TV spots ----- F

One bright note was that, unlike Authorhouse, the books that I ordered from Tate were the same price whether I ordered one book or a hundred and they paid the shipping.

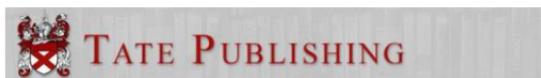
At that point in my career as an author, I was

generally pleased with my association with Tate Publishing.

I had learned a lot about writing from their editors and my books were far better than what I had self-published.

While their marketing was less than I had expected, they did break down the barrier that had kept me out of the big bookstores.

Overall, I believed that signing with Tate had been a good move.



At one of our book signing events, a woman had a booth where she sold nothing but a cookbook that she had published.

Throughout the event, we watched with interest as dozens of ladies stopped to take a look at her cookbook --- it seemed to be a woman magnet.

Always looking for another angle to get folks to stop by our booth so that we could talk Lady Justice, I pondered the idea of putting together a

cookbook of my own.

Unfortunately, like Walt, my idea of a good meal was limited to mundane things like mashed potatoes and gravy, so the notion of creating a serious cookbook was out of the question --- but who said that it had to be serious?

In all of the first three Lady Justice novels, it was made perfectly clear that Walt's favorite place to eat was Mel's Diner because Mel specialized in 'comfort food' --- so why not create a book titled *Walt's Comfort Food Recipes From Mel's Diner*?



It wasn't like I hadn't dabbled in food stuff before. In *Lady Justice Takes A. C.R.A.P.*, Walt shares that one of his favorite meals is tuna casserole.

Since, coincidentally, it is one of my favorites as well, I made a video about making Walt's tuna casserole and posted it on YouTube.

You can find it at <http://youtu.be/AAu1R5DdlE0>.

So far it has had over 2,200 hits.

Although the cookbook does contain dozens of really fine recipes, it was meant to be tongue-in-cheek all of the way.

“One day your dog dies, your wife runs off with your best friend, your custom pick-up with the chrome wheels gets hit by a train, your dad gets five years in Leavenworth ---- Hold on! --- This sounds like a really bad country song.

For most of us, life isn't that bad, but who hasn't had a dead battery, or the bottom fall out of the trash sack, or toilet paper stuck to the bottom of their shoe?

It's just life. Right?

So what happens when the fickle finger of fate pokes us in the eye?

We need to be comforted.

If you're one of the lucky ones, maybe you have a spouse or best friend who will give you a hug or a pat on the back and tell you everything will be OK.

For the rest of us, we turn to the very thing that has been ingrained in us from birth.

Think about it.

When a baby cries, mom sticks a bottle of warm milk in its mouth and everything is great until it comes out the other end.

When a kid has to go to the doctor, he gets a lollipop to take the fear away.

A kid grumbles because he doesn't want to go to Aunt Franny's house, but is bribed by a stop at Micky D's.

Let's face it. We get through the rough spots in life by putting something yummy in our mouths.

It's called "comfort food."

All of us do it, except maybe the most die-hard health fanatics.

It's not the best thing for your body, but it's better than turning to demon rum or a nervous breakdown.

Just like the alcoholic who has a bottle stashed away for emergencies, we each have our personal source for comfort food.

If you are a good cook, you can whip up your own treats.

Maybe you go to Grandma's house.

I go to Mel's Diner.

Actually, the sign over his door should read, "Mel's Comfort Food".

Everything Mel serves tastes really yummy.

Why?

Because none of it is healthy.

Everything is full of calories, cholesterol, MSG, sugar, butter and grease.

So, if you're looking for new healthy recipes, this is not the cookbook for you.

But if your kid just threw a baseball through the neighbor's window and you need a little something to make you feel better, something from Mel's Diner will do the trick."

Like the Rainbow Road series, we published the cookbook through Createspace, and it just cost us a couple of bucks per copy.

We haven't really tried to market the cookbook, although it is on Amazon. We typically give it as a gift to readers who have purchased multiple Lady Justice novels or as a promotion to induce them to do so.

While it certainly isn't great literature --- actually it isn't even a great cookbook --- Walt fans love it and it works for us!

CHAPTER 34

After finishing the Rainbow Road series and in between all of the bookstore events, I had been working on the fourth volume in the Lady Justice series, *Lady Justice and the Avenging Angels*.

The first two books in the series were rooted firmly in Kansas City and *Lady Justice Gets Lei'd*, the third, was set in Hawaii where we had lived for five years.

When we moved back to Missouri, we built a log home on 70 acres of timber in St. Clair County just outside of Osceola.

I own a fishing cabin there, right on the banks of the Osage River and my grandfather had been born and raised in Monegaw Springs, a little hamlet a few miles to the west, that has virtually disappeared over the years.

Still believing in the rule to 'write what you know about', I decided to link Walt's next adventure to the Ozark Hills of St. Clair County.

I made another change as well. In the three previous books everything was seen through Walt's eyes only. In this novel, I decided to experiment with a third person narrative to set the stage for Walt and his friends.

"The last rays of the setting sun shone

through the massive oaks of the Ozark hills and cast long shadows on the grassy field that had been carved from the dense forest. Locusts buzzed in the treetops, and the shadow of a great horned owl beginning his evening hunt drifted through the trees. Nearby, mist was rising from the Osage River that wound its way through Missouri's St. Clair County past the little villages of Monegaw Springs, Roscoe, and on to Osceola.

In an old barn built at the turn of the century, a group of men began to gather.

A brown haze hung in the air from the dust of the old gravel road, stirred up by the tires of a dozen pickup trucks, each with a rifle mounted in the cab.

The men were of hardy stock, well muscled from hard labor, and their skin was parched and tanned from long hours laboring in the sun. They drifted into the old barn and found seats on bales of straw, awaiting the arrival of John Blackwell. They talked with one another about their crops, their cattle, or the big catfish they had pulled from the river, but the room fell silent when John Blackwell strode into the room.

Blackwell was the kind of man that commanded respect, a natural born leader. He stood six feet, four inches, and his two hundred-and-fifty-pound body filled his Big Smith bib overalls. His once-black hair was now streaked with silver and hung to his shoulders. But it was his eyes that caused

men his size and bigger to cower in his presence. They were almost iridescent blue, as hard as steel, and as cold as the ice that covered the ponds on a January morning."

This approach seemed to work very well and the editor at Tate said that this was my best work so far.

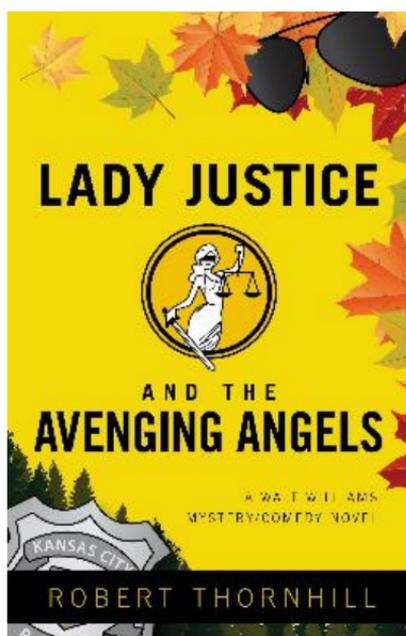
I had hoped that since this was my fourth book with Tate that the process would go much quicker --- but it didn't.

I still had to pay the very substantial fee and it still took nine months for the book to be in my hands from the day I submitted it to Tate.

The good news was that the conceptual editor had very few recommendations for changes, a far cry from the first novel that had to be completely overhauled.

It looked like I was actually getting the hang of this writing thing.

I received final approval for *Lady Justice and the Avenging Angels* on 9/11/11, a date that was significant for a number of reasons.



In the nine months that Tate was working on *Angels*, I couldn't stop writing. The old 'diarrhea of the brain' kept me at the keyboard.

Long before I had received final approval for *Angels*, I had actually finished two more installments in the Lady Justice series, *Lady Justice and the Sting* and *Lady Justice and Dr. Death*.

We were faced with a dilemma; send them to Tate or try something else.

We were very happy with the Tate books and were thrilled that they had knocked down the barriers that had kept us out of the big bookstores, but the thought of spending more big bucks and waiting

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another year was just too much.

If Tate's marketing had been as good as we had hoped, it might have been a difficult decision, but it wasn't. The book trailers were worthless and the TV and radio spots on obscure channels in the wee hours of the morning had brought us nothing.

The Tate experience was costly, but it gave us something we would not have had otherwise --- legitimacy --- they had helped us remove the 'self-published' stigma.

Now it was time to move on.

We had been very pleased with our experience with Createspace in publishing the Rainbow Road series, so we decided to use them for the next Lady Justice novel.

We knew, based on our Rainbow Road books, that the finished product would be of good quality.

The two things that we would not have with Createspace that we had with Tate were the editing and the cover creation.

For someone with just a first draft manuscript and no artistic skills, it would not be easy to use Createspace without outside help in both editing and cover creation.

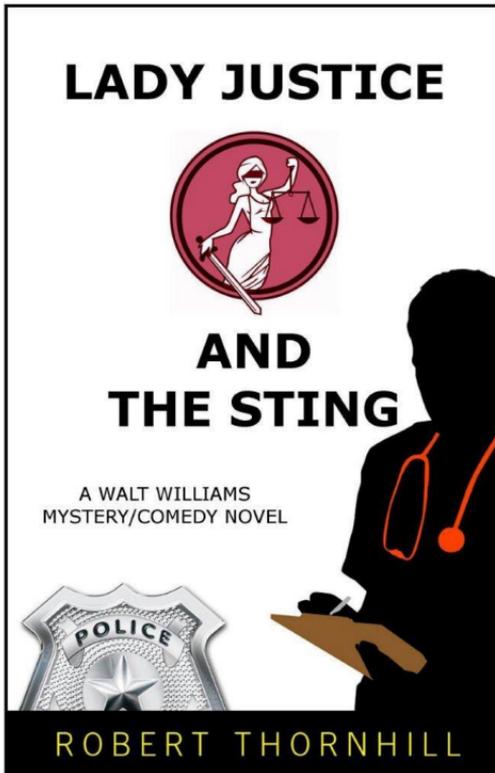
Thankfully, I had a secret weapon --- my wife!

Using the skills that she had learned in her many years as a real estate agent, creating brochures with Photoshop and Microsoft Publisher, she had

created beautiful covers for the Rainbow Road books.

Now, she was faced with the challenge of creating a cover that would look professional and fit alongside the four Tate covers.

She did it with flying colors!



Fortunately, my wife and I are opposites in many ways.

My philosophy has always been like the old

redneck saying 'Get'er done!'"

I will attack a project with a vengeance and won't quit until it's finished --- maybe that's why I had cranked out six novels and seven children's books in two years.

Unfortunately, the speed tends to leave things a little rough around the edges sometimes.

My wife, on the other hand, is a perfectionist. She is an artist who would spend months painting the tiniest feathers on a bird and still worry that it wasn't quite right --- the perfect person to be my editor!

Talk about cross purposes --- I am chomping at the bit to get the book in print and my sweet wife is insisting on editing it for the fifth time.

She is right, of course, but patience has never been one of my virtues.

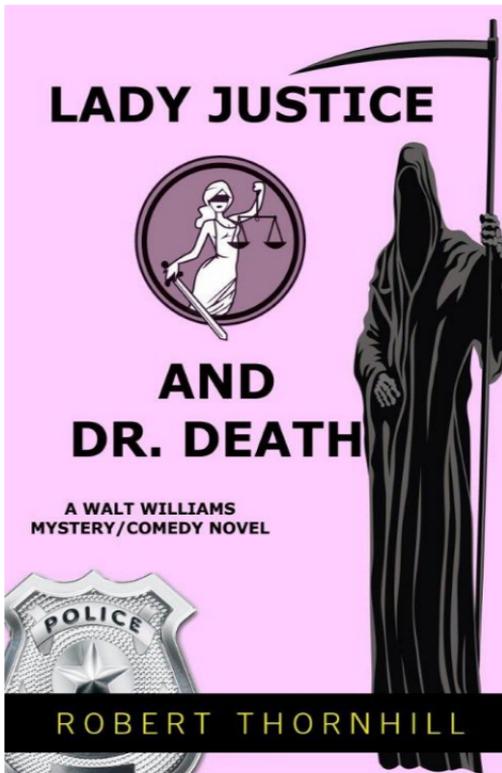
When, at last, she reluctantly gave me the go-ahead, we submitted the book to Createspace online and in ONE DAY received approval.

We ordered proof copies and in just a week we were holding *Lady Justice and the Sting* in our hands.

The book was beautiful and we had it in a week instead of nine months, and the whole process cost us \$39.00 instead of thousands, AND the books were \$2.00 less expensive than the ones from Tate!

Buoyed by our success, we got busy with *Lady Justice and Dr. Death* and by the end of October, 2011, we had six Lady Justice novels and

the seven Rainbow Road children's books ready for the holiday season.



CHAPTER 35

Lady Justice and the Sting was our first departure from Tate Publishing, and it was also my first venture into something different for Walt and the gang --- tackling controversial subjects.

The first three novels were primarily humor based with light mysteries holding the story line together.

Avenging Angels, with its radical religious zealots, had started moving into the more controversial arena, but with *Sting*, I decided to go all the way.

Peg and I are very health conscious and are aware of the dangers in over-the-counter and prescription drugs and we had also read volumes about the collusion between government agencies such as the FDA and the giant pharmaceutical companies.

In *Sting*, a holistic physician is murdered and Walt becomes entangled in the high-powered world of corporate giants and corrupt politicians.

"Ox and I introduced ourselves and we were led into the doctor's private office.

"I --- I just didn't know who to call --- when I heard the horrible news about Dr. Mitchell. Dr. Johnson said you could be trusted."

"You did the right thing," Ox said. "Doc

Johnson told us you might have some insight into the murders."

"More than insight," Pearson said, holding up a USB Flash Drive storage device. "They killed him for this."

"Is that the clinical study that Doc Johnson mentioned?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied. "Martin had been conducting his study for nearly two years and was about to publish the results."

"Why is it here and not at Dr. Mitchell's office?" I asked.

"For the very reason he was murdered. The information on this flash drive is very damaging to some very powerful people. Martin knew it was just a matter of time before someone would be looking for it. Every day, he would email additional data to this office and I would add it to the study. I --- I just didn't believe they would go this far."

"Finally Ox asked the big question. "Exactly who is 'they'?"

"I can't actually tell you who pulled the trigger, but I can tell you who sent the person who did --- Putnam Pharmaceutical Company."

While the story line was more complex and controversial, the thing that I did not want to lose was the humor.

Reviews from my readers confirmed that

everyone loved the bumbling, real-life situations that Walt and his cronies experienced.

The thing that had made the Lady Justice series different from all of the other mystery stories was the funny stuff that was interspersed throughout the book.

"After a lifetime of sleeping alone, it was quite different to wake up in the middle of the night and hear the deep rhythmic breathing of the person next to you.

I discovered early on that Maggie snores. Not a nasty obnoxious snore, but kind of cute little snorts.

When I lay there listening to her, it gave me a warm comforting feeling knowing my sweetie was there beside me.

One morning I mentioned the snoring thing.

"Maggie, did you know that you snore in your sleep?"

"Oh really?" she replied. "Did you know that you fart?"

I could only hope that if she's lying there awake listening to me pass gas, it gives her the same warm feeling.

Another area of adjustment was centered around my potty training.

Aim, for a guy, has always been a 'hit and miss' situation, so to speak. Normally, I'm a pretty fair marksman, but occasionally, particularly in the

dead of night, I will aim Mr. Winky in one direction and he will shoot thirty degrees to the port or starboard. I've never quite figured out why. It's just one of those great mysteries of nature.

If Maggie happens to follow too soon after one of these misfires, I'll hear a "Eeeeewwww! My foot!"

Then there's the lid thing.

When a guy has lived his entire adult life by himself, there's absolutely no reason to put the lid down. If you think about how many times you pee in a day and multiply that by your age, just think of how much time and energy you've saved by not putting the lid up and down every time.

But being a sensitive husband, I've tried my darndest to keep it down.

Daytime; no problem. Night time; that's another story.

It all depends on my level of consciousness. Fully awake; definitely down. Half awake; probably down. Barely awake; anybody's guess.

If I happen to hear Maggie slip out of bed and head for the potty, I lay there wondering, "Did I or didn't I?"

Most of the time, I did, but occasionally, a blood curdling scream will emanate from the loo, "WAAAAAAAAALT!"

*OK, so I'm not perfect, but I'm trying.
Let's just call it a work in progress."*

In *Lady Justice and Dr. Death*, I tackled the subject of euthanasia.

A series of terminally ill patients are found dead under circumstances that point to a new Dr. Death practicing euthanasia in the Kansas City area.

Walt and his entourage are dragged into the 'right to die with dignity' controversy.

As in *Sting*, I jumped right into the thick of things.

“This is how it will work,” Thanatos said. “I will connect this IV tube to a syringe that I will insert into your vein.

“When you are ready, simply press the toggle switch to activate the machine.

“The first chemical to enter your system will put you to sleep; the second will relax your muscles and the third will deliver the relief you have been seeking.

“This is your time, so take as much time as you need. Enjoy your video and your music.

“I will leave you to be alone with your thoughts.”

“What about my family?” Beckham asked.

“When you have finished, I will remove everything connected to your final act. Your family will simply believe that you passed away during the night.”

*Beckham looked deep into Thanatos' eyes.
"Thank you for this; for letting me die with dignity."*

*Thanatos smiled with genuine compassion.
"That's what we do."*

Thanatos left the room and Beckham turned on the computer.

Images of his childhood, his early years, his wife and his children passed before his eyes while the notes of Elvis' haunting "Memories" filled the room.

The only thing that could have been more perfect was if his daughters and grandchildren could have been with him in his last moments, but with the laws as they were, he knew that it could never be.

He quietly sang along:

"Quiet thoughts come floating down and settle softly to the ground, like golden autumn leaves around my feet.

"I touch them and they burst apart with sweet memories. Sweet memories."

A photo of him and his wife on their wedding day filled the screen and he pressed the toggle switch.

His last words were, "I'm coming, dear. I'm coming."

The subject of death, of course, caused Walt and his friends to examine their own mortality.

In one scene, they're discussing possible end-of-life scenarios.

"Then Willie spoke up.

"I got me a question 'bout dis cremation stuff. What about ghosts? Say I might want to hang around a while and haunt some folks. Can I still do it if I ain't nothin' but ashes? The ghosts I've seen always come back in bodies."

"That's an easy one," Jerry said. "Buried ghosts come back in their bodies, but cremated ghosts come back in white sheets."

"I guess that makes sense," Willie said. "I've seen both kinds."

"But you don't EVER want to goose one of those ghosts," Jerry said solemnly.

"How come?"

"Cause you'll get 'sheet' on your finger!"

"You're just sick!" Bernice said.

"And while we're on the subject," Jerry said, "here's one for you.

"If a ram is a male sheep and an ass is a donkey, how come a ram in the ass is a goose?"

"Can't you EVER be serious?" Bernice said.

"OK. I've got another question," Jerry said. "If Willie and I were both cremated, would our ashes be different colors?"

"That is an interesting observation," the Professor said.

I could tell that the conversation had drifted to the absurd and it was getting later by the minute."

A real danger in tackling controversial subjects is the possibility of offending your readers.

To blatantly support or attack a subject like euthanasia would undoubtedly turn off a lot of people, so I had to realistically present both sides of the issue and let the reader reach his own conclusion.

From my reader reviews, I think that I succeeded.

"Euthanasia, which is the main focus of this novel, is a touchy subject to deal with. However, the author, Robert Thornhill, does it in a way presents all sides fairly evenly. I don't want to spoil the ending for you by telling you how it ended. I think that your personal views on euthanasia notwithstanding, you'll appreciate the ending."

"This is a controversial subject and the book brings about both sides of the issue. Some people feel "Dr. Death" is a hero, putting the terminal patients out of misery and allowing them to die with dignity. Others feel he is a cold blooded murderer. Walt is faced with these moral issues as it is one of his toughest case yet."

"The moral dilemmas posed in his books reflect the real world the reader faces. We might like to think that justice is a black-and-white issue, but in

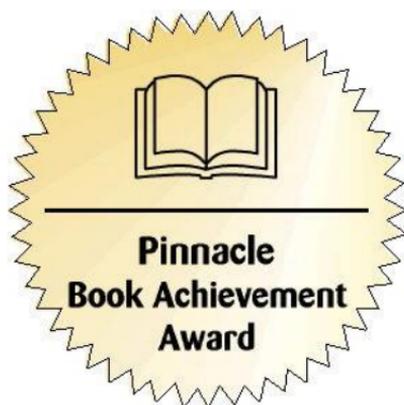
reality, there are millions of shades of gray...some lighter, some darker. It is good for us to be able to reflect upon our own opinions without feeling we have been subjected to a lecture. Entertaining and thought-provoking...what more could one ask from a book?"

We were absolutely thrilled with the final result when we held *Lady Justice and the Sting* and *Lady Justice and Dr. Death* in our hands.

On a whim, I entered both books in a contest held by the National Association of Book Entrepreneurs.

I was surprised and overjoyed when I received the email message that they had won the Pinnacle Book Award for the Best New Mystery Novels for the fall of 2011 and the winter of 2012.

I guess we did something right!



If we had any misgivings about leaving Tate Publishing and going back to self-publishing, most were erased by the quality of the books and the reception of our fans.

One thing that did trouble me was the distribution of the Createspace books. I was afraid that *Sting* and *Death* might not make it into all of the channels that the Tate books were in.

One of the things that I had done religiously was to check the Amazon and Barnes & Noble websites to make sure all of my books were available online.

While the paperbacks were available immediately, I was discouraged to see that none of the Tate books were available to download on Amazon's Kindle or B&N's Nook.

I called and questioned my Tate marketing representative about the issue.

I was told that all of my books were available on the Tate website as downloadable e-books to all of the commonly used devices.

I was also told that it was very time consuming to convert the books to an e-book format that could be placed on the Amazon and B&N websites, but that they would certainly work on it for me.

Now that I was self-published again, I was worried that *Sting* and *Death* were not going to be available as e-books on these popular sites.

I did some research online and discovered that there were two programs available, Kindle Direct Publishing that enabled me to load *Sting* and *Death* onto Amazon for Kindle, and Pubit that allowed me to load them onto B&N for use on the Nook.

I studied their programs, which, by the way, are free, and in two days both books were available as e-books on both sites.

I watched with curiosity to see how long it would take Tate to get their four novels available in the e-book format.

Months later, *C.R.A.P.*, *Lost Tapes* and *Lei'd* finally showed up on Amazon, but almost a year later, *Angels* is still not available.

C.R.A.P. and *Lost Tapes* are available on B&N for the Nook but *Lei'd* and *Angels* are not.

It took me two days to get *Sting* and *Death* in e-book form, but one of the largest publishers in the country hasn't done it in over a year.

“Hmmmmmmm!”

CHAPTER 36

With six Lady Justice novels and seven children's books, we were ready for the holiday shopping season.

We had scheduled events every weekend from the first of November right up until Christmas.

The events were a mixture of holiday craft shows and bookstores.

During the summer we had done events at Hastings, Barnes & Noble and Borders stores.

The Hastings events were duds and by this time, all of the Borders stores nationwide had closed their doors, so we concentrated on Barnes and Noble.

The way the process worked, our Tate marketing representative would contact the bookstore, use their influence to get us accepted for a book signing and then send us the name and number of the contact person at the store to arrange the details.

In every case, our contact was the store's CRM or Community Relations Manager. This person's job was to co-ordinate all events associated with any individual or group outside of the store including schools and, of course, authors. She was always a very busy person.

We scheduled events at the Barnes & Noble stores in Independence, the Zona Rosa Shopping Mall and the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City and

even in Chesterfield Oaks in St. Louis.

These events were set up months in advance and our whole holiday schedule was centered around them.

The first venue was the Country Club Plaza.



What we had discovered from our summer bookstore visits was that the table that had been set up for us was tucked waaaaay back in the corner next to the Starbucks.

By this time, Peg and I were veterans at selling books. If we could talk to someone, we would sell them a book probably 60% of the time. The trick is getting them to talk in the first place. When you are tucked away in a corner, the opportunities are not plentiful.

We soon realized that the bookstores did not

want us close to the traffic flow to jam up the aisles, so we had to resort to other means to get people to our table.

We printed up hand-out cards and Peg wandered around the store handing out the cards and inviting people to 'meet the author'.

I had to roam several aisles away from my table to engage people in conversation.

Even with these handicaps, we sold books.

I made it a point to always call a week in advance to make sure that everything was in place for our visit. It was a good thing, because when I called the Independence store, the CRM with whom I had made arrangements had quit and didn't bother to tell the manager that I was coming. After some scrambling, they were able to get the books shipped in and we had our event.

I called the CRM at Zona Rosa only to discover that she forgot to order the books and for some inexplicable reason, the warehouse did not have any. We rescheduled that event for December 23rd -- - two days before Christmas.

After eight bookstore events, we learned several things.

First, the bookstores really don't care whether you, the author, are there or not. Unless you are a REALLY big name that will draw hundreds of people to the store, you are tolerated, but not really welcome.

Second, you are given a spot away from the traffic flow where you won't bother anyone.

Third, even if you sell books, the reward isn't worth the trouble.

Here is a direct quote from our Tate marketing representative, *"It seems like you might be putting a little too much stock in the bookstore process in general. We certainly don't want to ignore bookstores, but the fact is, a copy of one of your books sold through a B&N gets you about a dollar in royalties sometime down the road once we get paid for it. If you sell that same copy at a niche event you could see almost 10 dollars in profit for it, on the spot. You're doing the work anyway, why not focus those efforts on events that are the most profitable for you?"*

We found out what 'down the road' really meant.

Bookstores have at least ninety days from the event to settle up with the publisher and the publisher only pays royalties every quarter, so if you sell a book at a bookstore event, you MIGHT see your whopping dollar royalty after six months or longer.

We sold LOTS of books at these events and in two years with Tate Publishing have received royalty checks amounting to a whopping \$121.52!

What we have concluded is that an appearance at a Barnes & Noble is good for two things, to give you a warm fuzzy feeling and to give

you some credibility when you say that you had an author book signing event at a big store.

Otherwise, it's a waste of time.

On the other hand, developing a relationship with a small independent bookstore can be VERY beneficial.

On our trip to St. Louis for the Barnes & Noble at Chesterfield, we also set up an event at a tiny independent bookstore called All On The Same Page run by Dennis and Robin Tidwell.

This little store is about the size of the Starbucks coffee shop at B&N, but in nine months we have received \$665.00 in commission checks. The difference is that Robin and Dennis care about us and promote our books while the CRM at B&N would say "Robert who?"

The rest of our holiday season was filled with Christmas craft show events that have proved to be very successful.

At one event we sold 110 books.

This is our third time around at some of these events.

The first year, all we had was the first Authorhouse *Lady Justice Takes A C.R.A.P.*. The second year when we returned we had six Lady Justice novels and the children's books, and now we have nine Lady Justice novels.

One of the most satisfying things about all of this is when a reader sees you at your table and says,

"I loved your book and I want everything you have!"
It makes it all worthwhile.

CHAPTER 37

Each time I write a Lady Justice novel, I send a copy of the first draft to several people to get their input and write a review for the front of the book.

Lady Justice and the Sting was about a holistic physician and the collusion between the FDA and the giant pharmaceutical companies, so I sent a copy to Dr. Edward Pearson, a holistic medical doctor in Florida that we knew through Peg's son Dr. Britt Batchelor, a Chiropractor.

Dr. Pearson loved the book and wrote back, *"As the Founder of the New Medicine Foundation, I stay quite busy delivering scientifically backed healthcare solutions to clients around the world, and await the great transformation of our failing drug and surgery based systems. Rarely having time to read for 'fun', it was to my great surprise that Bob delivered to me a manuscript of 'The Sting' just a few days ago. Within just a few sittings I thoroughly digested and enjoyed his work while smiling ear to ear, laughing, and with excited anticipation as he efficiently and amusingly described the foundational and malicious problems behind our failing system.*

With 'The Sting' we will have something wonderfully fun and easy to provide for people to read, not only for enjoyment, but to make them aware of how misled the American public has been over the last many decades, as we are literally drugged and

fed fake food to our early demise. Nearly more importantly given the current global crisis, the financial criminality and unsustainability behind the system is not only bringing on its own demise, but the demise of our entire country and possibly the current global economic system as we wallow in debt, sickness, mental and physical ailments, and the poor relationships, geopolitical problems, and life experiences that arise from these underlying issues.

This may very well be the “Rich Dad / Poor Dad” for the healthcare interested masses who are sick and tired of being SICK AND TIRED!

Phenomenal work Bob, you have found a calling and have much more to do!”

Dr. Pearson told me that he had been looking for a vehicle to use in his practice that would convey the message that was being sent in *Sting*.

While people probably wouldn't read a dry medical treatise, they would certainly read the mystery/comedy and get 'the message' while enjoying a good novel.

He suggested the possibility of me writing a novel like *Sting* for him to use in conjunction with his New Medicine Foundation.

After giving it a lot of thought, I realized that Walt's adventures as they related to doctors, health, medicine, drugs and hospitals, were not confined to just *Sting*, but were scattered throughout all of the Lady Justice novels.

Why try to re-create the wheel?

I shared my idea of combining all of Walt's health related adventures in one book titled *Wolves in Sheep's Clothing*, and Dr. Pearson loved it.

Dr. Pearson had a patient that was connected to Hay House Publishing, so he started making contacts there while I started combing all of the Lady Justice novels for health related stuff and merging it all into one big book.

As time passed, I learned that the division of Hay House Publishing that would be handling *Wolves* was called Balboa Press.

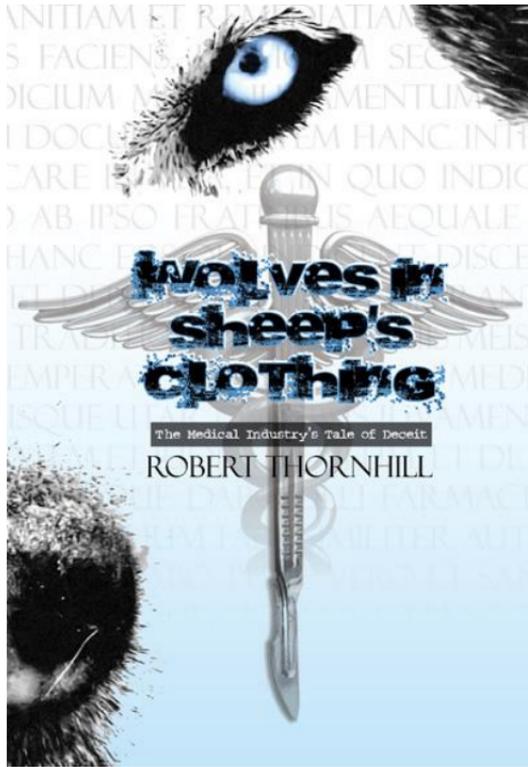
I did some research and found that they were another vanity publisher like Authorhouse, X-Libris and Lulu.

I shared our experience with Authorhouse with Dr. Pearson and told him of our success with Createspace, but he made the decision to go with Balboa. He was, after all, footing the bill.

He purchased the publishing package with all of the bells and whistles and it cost more than what I had been paying Tate.

Even though his package included the creation of a cover and the interior formatting, he had another patient that he hired separately to do both of those things.

Zard Tompkins and her company, Zard Art, created a beautiful cover for the book.



I sent the manuscript to Zard and she did the formatting.

When the cover and the formatting were done, she sent both to Balboa. Putting the book together should have been a breeze.

It wasn't.

For the next month, we went round and round with Balboa trying to get them to put the book together the way we wanted it.

Finally, after much hair pulling, it came together.

Balboa set the price for the paperback at \$19.95 and gave us the wonderful option of buying the book at a 50% discount if we purchased 350 of them --- if you do the math, that's \$3,500.

Working with Balboa was a nightmare and I certainly wouldn't recommend them to anyone.

When it was all said and done, it had cost Dr. Pearson thousands of dollars and we had an overpriced book.

Had we gone with Createspace using Zard's beautiful cover and formatting, we would have spent \$39.00 and had books available to us in any number for about four bucks each!

Still, we have a lovely book.

Dr. Pearson wrote a dedication in the front, *"For many years, it has been my goal to produce a book that that would focus attention on such important topics as nutrition, alternative healthcare practices, the dangers of prescription and non-prescription drugs and the corruption and collusion that exist between our politicians, our governing medical bodies, our very medical educational system and the large pharmaceutical companies.*

I have not realized the authorship of this book because I'm a physician, not an author, and while I write extensively on many topics in the health care field, I felt that there was a need for a novel that

would capture the imagination and the hearts of its readers and, at the same time, deliver a powerful message.

Through a long time close friend and colleague of mine, Dr. Britt Batchelor, I became acquainted with author, Robert Thornhill, and was captivated by his Lady Justice mystery/comedy series in which he touches on the topics mentioned above.

Bob is an incredibly talented writer who creates books that captivate the readers and truly have that 'I can't put it down' effect. His stories draw you in as you grin ear to ear with his hilarious comedy and suspense as to what will happen on the next page. And, as a previous patient, he now has a very firm grasp on health and is enjoying his vitality as he 'works' his way through retirement sharing his gift of laughter along the way.

I have commissioned Robert to write this novel in the hope that many more people will become aware of these important issues. "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing" is a book that appeals to anyone who appreciates both comedy and suspense, while pulling back the curtain on some of our most troubling issues today. Our failing health and our unsustainable healthcare system (that is truly bankrupting the country) are putting in jeopardy our very future. Our species may very well not survive in harmony with our planet if we stay on this path of consumption and

chronic disease."

I hope that *Wolves in Sheep's Clothing* will fulfill its purpose and get 'the message' to those who need it.

CHAPTER 38

I hadn't concerned myself much with the marketing aspect of my books since signing on with Tate.

They had a whole marketing department whose job was to let the world know about my Lady Justice novels.

I knew they had sent out press releases to newspapers and TV and radio stations in my area.

I also figured that they would send information about their newest releases to bookstores around the country.

Now that I was on my own again, I realized that if people were to know about my latest Lady Justice novels, it was up to me.

Tate had sent me copies of their press releases, so using their format and adding some touches of my own, I created three different press releases for both *Sting* and *Death*.

On the Internet, I found about twenty web sites that posted free press releases and started posting.

It was very time consuming, but when it was all done, the results were amazing.

Today, if you Google any of my Lady Justice titles, there will be at least ten pages of content that spring up.

I found a website that listed all of the

newspapers in the country by state. I clicked on EACH newspapers' website and made a database of 750 newspapers including their email addresses.

It took days just to compile the list.

When I was finished, I logged onto Vertical Response, an online company that allows you to create and send mass emails for just over a penny each.

I created a press release email and sent it to all 750 newspapers.

I have no idea whether any of them actually published the release in their paper, but at least I made the effort and sent them the information.

I found a website that listed all of the independent bookstores in the country by state.

I clicked on each bookstore's website and again, made a database of 915 stores with email addresses.

This process also took days to complete.

I created another email in Vertical Response with all of the details about each of the new books and sent it off to the bookstores.

I have no idea whether my email encouraged any of the stores to order and stock my books, but at least they had the information.

I had also created an email database of everyone that had purchased one of my books.

I created an announcement about the new titles with links to my website where they could

purchase the books with PayPal, and sent that off to my readers.

I know that worked, because orders started coming in immediately.

Now it was time to focus on social media.

The site that I used most was Goodreads. It has over 7 million members and all of them read books.

I started inviting friends to my page where all of my books are listed.

That, too, is a long process as the site restricts you to about a dozen invitations per day.

I made it part of my daily ritual to log on to Goodreads and invite new friends.

As of this writing, I have over 4,700 friends on Goodreads.

Another feature of the Goodreads site that I started using was the Goodreads Giveaway.

Readers could register to win one of the books that I entered into the Giveaway.

I was thrilled when over 500 people signed up to win a copy of *Death* and *Sting*.

The cost of the book and the postage was about \$7.00. That's pretty cheap advertising to get 500 people to notice your book.

Another wonderful feature about this program is that the winners will usually post a review on the Goodreads site as well as Amazon and B&N.

Here is a typical review.



[Feb 02, 2012](#)

[Gail Demaree](#) rated it ★★★★★

I loved this book! Never a dull moment with Walt and his friends. Lots of different twists and turns and a fast paced read. It keeps you guessing through out the book. I can't wait for book #7 to be written to see what happens next. Thanks Robert for another amazing book!

I also started adding more friends and postings on FaceBook.

I started working other book sites such as Shelfari, Worthy of Publishing, Published.com, Yumeworld and Mutt.

All of this took hours and hours.

I soon discovered that the promotion of the books took more time than actually writing them, but if you're going to take the time and effort to write and publish a book, you might as well spend the time to tell the world how great it is!

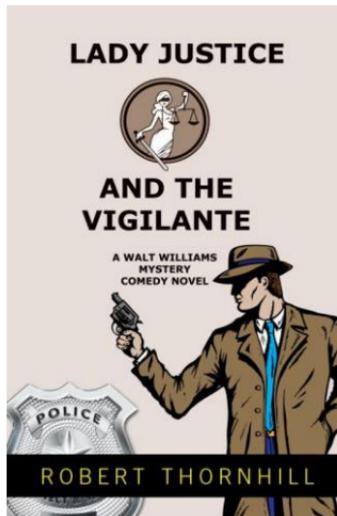
CHAPTER 39

With the holiday book event season being over and facing the frigid days of January, I figured that it was time to start writing again.

Since my foray into more controversial topics in *Sting* and *Death* had proven a success with my readers, I decided to continue in that vein with another hot potato, vigilantism.

Before I put pen to paper, I checked out my favorite vigilante movie, Charles Bronson's *Death Wish*.

Using this classic as a jumping off point, I started writing *Lady Justice and the Vigilante*.



Ed Jacobs, a retired widower, of course, found himself frustrated when the man that assaulted
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his neighbor fell through the cracks of the legal system and decided it fell upon him to administer justice when the justice system failed.

"Finally, at one-thirty in the morning, a car pulled to the curb and LeShawn Grimes climbed out.

He shouted some parting words to the driver then leaned in and did one of those hand slapping, knuckle-knocking things that hoods do.

The car sped away and Grimes stood at the curb looking up and down the street.

Apparently he decided to have one last smoke before turning in and Ed saw him reach into his pocket and pull out a pack of cigarettes.

He saw the flare of the match and the glow of the ash as he inhaled deeply.

Then, in the glow of the streetlight Ed saw Grimes reach into his pocket again, only this time his hand held a small revolver.

He broke open the cylinder to check his load, and then snapped it shut and placed it back in his pocket.

As Ed Jacobs lined up his shot, he wondered how many people would be spared pain, degradation and humiliation at the hands of this animal because of what he was about to do next.

As he slowly squeezed the trigger he whispered, "This is for you, Beth."

LeShawn Grimes dropped to the ground and

Ed Jacobs believed with all his heart that justice had been served."

In this installment, a new character is introduced, Officer Judy DeMarco, with whom Ox is immediately smitten.

In all of the other Lady Justice novels, poor Ox had been alone, not that he hadn't tried.

In *Angels*, Ox was double-dating with Maggie and Walt with a waitress from Denny's.

Unfortunately, before the evening was over, they were involved in a high-speed chase that almost got them killed, resulting in the poor girl peeing her pants.

When Ox asked if he could call her again, she replied that his dates were a bit too intense for her, so, sorry, no thanks!

Fortunately, Judy DeMarco was not intimidated by the prospect of dating another cop.

"We had clocked out and were heading to the parking lot when I saw Judy DeMarco unlocking her car.

I giggled Ox in the ribs and nodded my head in her direction.

In the two years that I had known Ox, he had been fearless in the face of danger, but I could see the terror in his eyes as he watched the lovely Ms. DeMarco across the parking lot.

“Well, what are you waiting for? Go on,” I urged.

“But --- but!”

“But nothing!” I said, giving him a shove.

“Uhhhh --- Officer DeMarco. Do you have a minute?”

She looked up and gave him a smile. “Hi Ox. What’s on your mind?”

“Well --- Uhhh ---- do you remember yesterday when you said you had heard the Pizza Shack was a pretty good place?”

“Ox, are you asking me for a date?”

I thought my old friend was going to drop a load.

“Well --- Uhhh --- yes! I guess I am.”

“I wondered how long it would take you to grow a pair and ask me out.”

She gave me a glance and a wink. “I suppose that grandpa here is coming along for moral support.”

“Well, Walt and Maggie are my best friends. If you don’t mind ---”

“Sure! The more the merrier.”

“How about Saturday night? Pick me up at six. I live in one of those new loft apartments in the River Market District. Here’s my address,” she said, slipping him a piece of paper.

Ox just stood there with his mouth open.

“Oh, by the way, no more of this Officer

DeMarco crap. My name is Judy."

Without another word, she climbed into her car and drove away.

I clapped my partner on the back.

"Nice work. I think you had her with 'Uhhhh'."

This novel was full of twists and turns and, based on the reader's reviews, they loved it.

"Lady Justice and The Vigilante" gets a double thumbs up! First, it's well written with a tight plot, complete with several sub-plots that keep you wondering how Thornhill is going to bring the tale to a satisfactory conclusion. Second, it provides an opportunity to ponder the ethics of vigilantism in our seemingly crime ridden world. Where is the line that separates protection of the victim and protection of the individual's rights when accused of a crime?

How will this issue be resolved? The conclusion is sad, but satisfying; Walt's faith in Lady Justice is still secure. Bring on the next adventure!"

One of the most satisfying things about working with Createspace is the fact that once the writing and editing are finished, you can hold the finished product in your hand in nine days instead of nine months.

With *Vigilante* in hand, I began the arduous

task of marketing all over again.

Press releases were sent to all of the newspapers as well as online, bookstores were notified and another Giveaway on Goodreads netted another 500 people that wanted to win a copy of the new book.

I submitted *Vigilante* to two book contests and was thrilled when I received the notification that it had received the Pinnacle Book Award for the “Best New Mystery Novel” for the Summer of 2012.



It also received Honorary Mention from the Southern California Book Festival.



During the two weeks of intense marketing for *Vigilante*, another adventure for Walt began to

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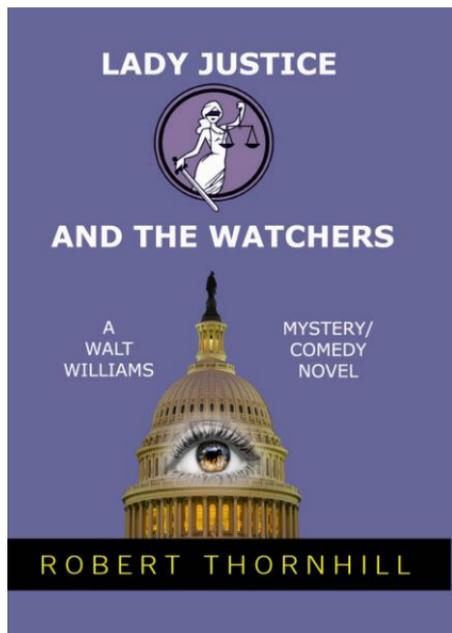
form in my mind.

Some items in the newspaper started me thinking about how big our government has grown and how much it has inserted itself in our individual lives.

I had remembered reading George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Both were novels about a dystopian society of the future.

I decided to check them out again and see if any of their predictions had become reality.

What I read sent chills up my spine and I immediately started writing *Lady Justice and the Watchers*.



Oscar Levant said that there's a fine line between genius and insanity and what Walt discovers in this novel is that there's also a very fine line separating the life of freedom that we enjoy today and the totalitarian society envisioned in these classic novels.

In this new novel, Walt learns the truth about 'Big Brother' from a group of citizens who call themselves 'The Watchers', and whose purpose is to watch those who are watching us.

“Most of us wander through life so absorbed with our own situation that we are oblivious to what is happening around us.

We hail new technological advances as the greatest thing since sliced bread and marvel at how much better our lives are with the new toys that are presented to us.

Who in their right mind would want to give up their cell phone or their high-speed Internet access?

Who hasn't used GPS technology to find an address or the closest Mexican restaurant?

How many of us pay a monthly fee to have the security of an Onstar that can start our cars remotely or unlock doors or report our location and condition if we're in an accident?

How many of us use plastic to pay for nearly

everything so that we can rack up those airline miles?

None of us want to give up any of those things, but we must understand that each of them come with a price tag --- and that price is the surrender of our privacy.”

Of course, no matter how serious the subject, it wouldn't be a Lady Justice novel without interludes of comic relief.

“Wednesday had been designated as ‘grocery day’ in our household because the local HyVee supermarket had proclaimed Wednesday to be ‘Senior’s Day’ with all shoppers over fifty-five receiving a five percent discount.

Since we routinely spent a c-note stocking up, we saved a whopping five bucks.

Another reason we go on Senior’s Day is that the music that is piped into the store is all 50’s rock ‘n’ roll. This brilliant marketing ploy was a blatant attempt to pander to the tastes of old farts like me and it worked.

If I have to shop I would much rather be serenaded by the likes of Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis than Taylor Swift or Justin Beber.

I absolutely love the music of the 40’s and 50’s and as far as I’m concerned, the recording industry had very little to offer after 1965.

I have a fantastic collection of 45's and LP's dating back to my high school years of the fifties.

I know every song by heart and much to Maggie's chagrin, I am constantly singing around the house.

The fact that I am tone deaf only adds to her frustration.

On more than one occasion she has pleaded, "Please, not this morning. Anything but Little Richard!"

We grabbed our shopping cart and dutifully performed our pre-shopping ritual which consisted of Maggie securing her purse into the cart with one of those cursed straps that we can never get undone and me wiping the handle of the cart with a little sanitizer wipe just in case the previous shopper had picked their nose and left a booger for us.

A part of my wiping ritual involves intoning a mantra that I devised to remind me why this is so important.

I boogied in the parking lot

I boogied in the mart

I boogied on my finger

And I wiped it on my cart

Having completed our pre-shopping ritual, our first stop was the produce department.

Maggie and I have developed a shopping

strategy that seems to work for us.

I do the fruit and she does the vegetables.

The bananas were on board and I had headed to the grapefruit section when Gene Vincent's raspy voice filled the store.

I immediately felt compelled to sing along and I began bouncing to the beat singing, "Be bop a lula, she's my baby. Be bop a lula, I don't mean maybe."

Then I noticed out of the corner of my eye that a young mother had grabbed her child and was hurrying him away from the old guy bouncing up and down with a grapefruit in each hand mumbling strange words.

On reflection, I probably would have done the same thing."

Again, the reviews from my readers were positive.

"Conundrum: A logical postulation that evades resolution, an intricate and difficult problem. That is the essence of Robert Thornhill's latest Mystery / Comedy Novel, "Lady Justice and the Watchers", featuring retired real estate agent Walt Williams. How can the American populace enjoy all the freedom and safety brought to us by advanced technology and still maintain our privacy from those who would do us harm or seek to manipulate us: the crooks, the terrorists, our own government? Does the

average person realize the cost in personal freedom? Do they care? Should they care? These are the questions posed in this thought-provoking and thoroughly disquieting story.

This should be a "Must Read" for every person, young and old, regardless of their political persuasion. Told with his usual humor and fast pace, Thornhill's book challenges the reader to think deeply about where we've been and where we are going.

His best work yet"

With book in hand, I started the exhaustive marketing process all over again. Over 600 Goodreads followers signed up to win a copy of *The Watchers*.

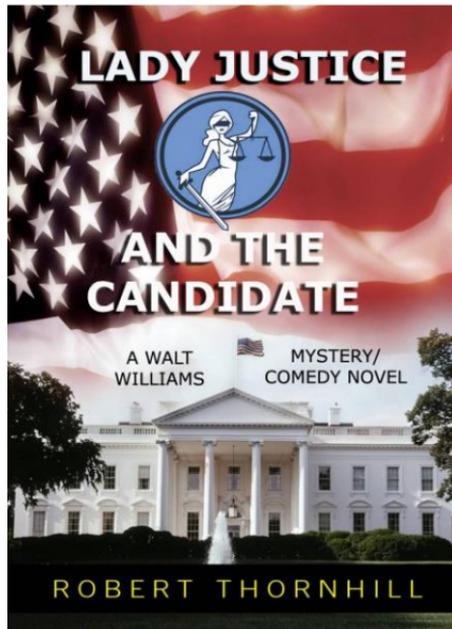
I thought that after finishing and marketing two novels in four months, that I would take a breather from the keyboard, but the Republican Primary elections were in full swing and I knew we had another seven months of politicking to endure before the 2012 Presidential election.

As usual, I was amazed that out of a population of over 300 million people, we were going to again be faced with the prospect of voting for 'the lesser of two evils' rather than a candidate that was genuinely qualified to be the leader of the free world.

It got me to thinking about our political process and how it would be, if, for a change, a

candidate stepped forward with the balls to challenge the establishment and run on a platform of change and reform.

I couldn't wait to start writing *Lady Justice and the Candidate*.



The man to step forward was Benjamin Franklin Foster.

Walt was recruited as part of a Secret Service plan to protect the new candidate on the campaign trail, but before coming involved, Walt had some questions for the Presidential challenger.

“I looked Foster squarely in the eye. “Ben, I mean no disrespect, but given the woeful track record of third party candidates, do you really believe that you have a chance to win this thing?”

“Fair question,” he said, smiling. “If I told you that I thought that I could win this election, you would think me either a fool or a liar.

“So your next question should be, ‘If you don’t think you can win, then why are you risking your life and asking me to risk mine?’ That, too, is a fair question.

“I will tell you, honestly, why I’m doing what I’m doing.

“I have lived in this great country for seventy years and I have always been proud to be an American, but I have seen many changes during those years and not all of them have been good.

“I believe that slowly but surely, we have strayed from the path that once made our country the envy of every other nation.

“I believe that the basic freedoms on which our republic was founded are being eroded away.

“I no longer trust that our government is acting in the best interests of its citizens, and worst of all, I don’t believe that the other candidates running for office are committed to anything but maintaining the status quo.

“Will Durant said, ‘A great civilization is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself

from within.'

"I think that is happening before our very eyes and unless someone sounds the alarm, our country will continue down this destructive path.

"Can we win this election? Only time will tell, but win or lose, the American people will have the knowledge to make informed decisions for the future and vote for the candidates that will right the course of this great ship."

As part of Ben Foster's entourage, Walt finds himself doing some things that he never dreamed that he would do, including schmoozing with one of Ben's fans and potential contributors.

"Ben is very busy preparing his remarks for the address this evening and would like for you to meet with Miss Haversham."

Just the name gave me the willies. "But I don't know anything about schmoozing old ladies out of their bucks."

"There's nothing to know. She just wants to meet her hero and shake his hand so that she can go back to her bridge club with a new story. I'm sure you can handle it."

"Great! What time is she coming?"

"Actually, she's waiting for you in the hospitality suite. Smile!"

This reminded me of the time when I was just

a green, scared kid at Boy Scout Camp and the older boys threw me into the pool and yelled, 'SWIM'.

My first look at Miss Haversham confirmed my suspicions. She was a portly matron in her sixties. Her hair, obviously dyed a brilliant crimson, was piled high on her head and her face had been under the knife more times than Joan Rivers.

More frightening than anything was the huge poodle that was attached to her arm by a leash.

"Oh, Mr. Foster," she gushed, "I've wanted for so long to meet you!"

I extended my hand, "Pleased to meet you, Miss Haversham."

"And this is Fifi," she said proudly, giving the leash a jerk.

The dog was sporting one of those ridiculous haircuts where part of his fur was completely missing except for big balls of fluff here and there.

Fifi dutifully stepped forward and buried her nose in my crotch.

I have no idea why my genitalia are so attractive to dogs. Mr. Winkie and the boys seem to have the same effect on canines as catnip does on felines.

"Whoa, down girl," I said, gently extracting her nose from between my legs.

She responded with a big slurpy kiss on my hand.

"Isn't she adorable?" Miss Haversham said

proudly.

I was about to make a comment when I saw Paul make a grimace.

“Absolutely, Ma’am. She’s definitely one of a kind.”

Miss Haversham plunged ahead, “I read in the paper that while you were in New York, you and Mrs. Foster attended Jeremy Siskind’s performance at Carnegie Hall. I was there too. Isn’t he fabulous!”

I had absolutely no idea who Jeremy Siskind was. “He was indeed. We both enjoyed it very much.”

“The way he interpreted Debussy on the piano was extraordinary, don’t you think?”

Actually, my idea of a great piano player was Jerry Lee Lewis. I guess there were some things that Ben and I just didn’t have in common.

“Extraordinary, indeed!”

In the next fifteen minutes, I spewed more pure crap than ever before in my life.

As I reflected on the encounter, it brought to mind the old adage, “If you can’t dazzle them with brilliance, baffle them with bullshit.”

When the whole ordeal was over, we had a fat check in our hands and I didn’t even have to promise her that I would protect her interests in big oil or where ever it was that she got her big bucks, so I guess that I did all right.”

You always wonder when you are tackling tough subjects like politics, if people with opposing views might be offended, but thankfully the response was positive.

“In the ninth installment of the Lady Justice series, we find another controversial subject --- politics!”

Walt Williams is called on a top-secret special mission to protect an independent candidate for the presidency, Benjamin Franklin Foster, but Ben is not your average politician.

His radical departure from the 'politics as usual' position of the major party candidates has made him a target of powerful special interests.

Walt embarks on one of his most dangerous and rewarding missions.

All the lovable characters are back and Walt finds that his decisions deeply affect his friends and family.

A fantastic read and the timing could not be more perfect with the upcoming presidential election.

Once again, Mr. Thornhill blends serious current issues with his off-the-wall humor.

I was left to wonder, what if...just what if a candidate like the fictional Ben Foster were to run for President?

A must read.

Once again Robert Thornhill has created

another thought provoking hit!”

Again, I was pleased when *Candidate* received the Pinnacle Achievement Award from the National Association of Book Entrepreneurs for “Best New Mystery Novel” for Fall 2012.



In the last six Lady Justice novels, Walt has had to deal with religion, government corruption, euthanasia, vigilantism, ‘Big Brother’ and politics, all very controversial subjects.

I’m wondering if maybe volume number ten might be just for fun.



I'm sure that every author dreams that one day his book will be made into a movie or TV series.

I hadn't really considered that possibility until one of my readers wrote, "*I eagerly anticipate the next installment of the Lady Justice series, Don't stop now Bob I see a T.V. series out of this!!!!*"

The more Peg and I thought about it, we realized that currently there is NOTHING either on TV or on the big screen anywhere close to the Lady Justice series.

Coincidentally, another author that we had met at a book signing event told us that she had hired a consultant to promote her historical civil war era novels to movie producers.

I asked her for the name and followed up with a call.

After a lengthy conversation, we decided to hire Carder Brecht Communications in Hollywood, California to represent us to the entertainment industry.

Over a period of weeks Stacy Brecht prepared a proposal that would be submitted to producers and directors of both the TV and movie industries.

So far, the proposal has been submitted to Betty White, David Kelley, the producer of *Harry's Law*, the producer of the *Psych* TV series on the USA Network and the screenwriter that worked on Janet Evanovich's movie, *One For The Money*.

There has also been interest from the

producers of *The Bourne Identity* movie series.

As yet, nothing concrete has developed, but one can always dream.

One day, out of the blue, I received an email.

Dear Mr Thornhill

Briefly to introduce myself, my name is Justine Watson and I work in development for US producer Caryn Mandabach (NURSE JACKIE, ROSEANNE, THIRD ROCK FROM THE SUN) in her London office.

We have thoroughly enjoyed your LADY JUSTICE series and wondered whether the TV rights were available – could you confirm if they are?

May I speak to you about this directly or do you have an agent you'd prefer I speak to please?

Thanks so much and all best

Justine

Naturally we were thrilled with this, but, as usual, nothing has come from it yet.

Something Stacy learned was that producers were more likely to look at a project if a screenplay had already been prepared.

We were dismayed to discover that screenwriters charge from \$5,000 to \$10,000 to turn a novel into screenplay. OUCH! There was no way that

I could afford such an investment.

Then a thought occurred to me.

At that point, I had written nine *Lady Justice* novels. No one knew the plot or characters better than me.

I figured that if I could write a novel, I could write a screenplay.

So, it was back to the Internet and I read everything that I could find about writing screenplays.

I even found a program, *Screenwriting Pro*, which formatted the words in the proper form as I typed them.

Armed with my new program and the screenplays from some successful screenwriters, I began transforming the first novel in the series, *Lady Justice Takes a C.R.A.P.* into an hour-long TV pilot screenplay.

Coincidentally, just as I was putting the finishing touches on the script, I received an email.

Holiday SCREENPLAY and WRITING Festival

TV PILOT or SPEC screenplay contest - Get FULL FEEDBACK on your script.

I sent them a .PDF file of the screenplay and in a few weeks I received the following reply.

Thank you for your submission to the WILDsound Writing Festival. Here is the feedback on your submission. A great read I hear from the reading committee:

This is a great script, it's entertaining, professionally written and it's a unique idea.

The writer is clearly a professional as all of the basics for script writing and storytelling generally are all there. A lot of the mid-level stuff is there too. Going into it would be a waste of everyone's time and so we'll just say that the writer knows what they are doing and therefore most of this issues that we get into later are really just nitty gritty things (some are even matters of opinion) as this script is pretty much ready to be sent off to networks or at the very least to the writers agent if they haven't done so already.

The plot is great; we really do get an interesting story arc that takes the protagonist, Walt, through from being a recent retiree to becoming the head of a new division of the police patrol. The writer here has pulled off the essence of what television programs are about which is the characters story, and so the plot arc has been intertwined with the character arc.

The Characters are very believable, the writer obviously has a talent for creating three dimensional realistic characters which contrasts well with the 'absurd', for want of a better word, situations that

they find themselves in.

Part of this is because of the way in which the writer has written some great dialogue, very realistic. But it is also due mainly to the frail yet determined personalities that the writer has given his senior characters.

The style is brilliant; the insertion of the quotes and cultural references throughout is brilliant.

In conclusion this is a script that is in the final draft stages, the writer should pat himself on the back for a job well done. I would say that this script is perhaps just one more draft away from being considered final and 100% ready to go out and get made. Great job.

I was pleased with such a glowing review on my first attempt.

I sent the screenplay to Stacy hoping it would make our project a bit more attractive to producers.

Some of Stacy's contacts in the entertainment business had warned us that in Hollywood 'anything goes' and that we should take precautions so that one day we wouldn't see the trailer for a TV show or movie based on our material that someone had 'borrowed'.

I registered my screenplay with the Writer's Guild of America and applied for a copyright.

We are still waiting for that magic moment when a David Kelley or a Gary Marshall will call

wanting to put Walt and his gang of oldies on the tube or the silver screen.

Maybe someday it will happen.

Chapter 40

My wife and I watch a lot of crime drama on TV and I scour the *Kansas City Star* every morning reading about the latest murders, burglaries, car-jackings, etc.

The one thing that stands out is that most of the perpetrators of these heinous acts are not very bright --- I guess that goes without saying since what they're doing is not very smart in the first place.

That being said, I discovered that there were 45 unsolved homicides in Kansas City, Missouri in 2012.

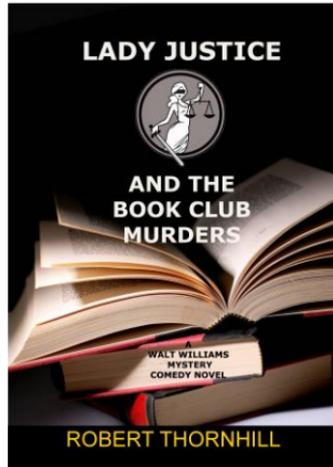
Undoubtedly, many of these are unsolved simply because people who know the identity of the murderer won't come forward, but what about the remainder?

Is there such a thing as a perfect crime?

There must be since there are thousands of unsolved cases in the United States. In the late 1960's, the Zodiac Killer claimed to have killed 37 people and was never caught.

What goes through the mind of a person determined to commit the perfect crime?

This was what was bouncing around in my mind when I began writing *Lady Justice and the Book Club Murders*, the 10th volume in the Lady Justice series.



In volume #7, *Lady Justice and the Vigilante*, I had taken a similar tack, examining the thought processes of Ed Jacobs as he sought vigilante justice for criminals that had slipped through the cracks of the legal system.

In *Book Club Murders*, Walt and the gang go head-to-head with Oscar Roach who is determined to commit the perfect crime.

I also figured that it was about time that Ox and his sweetie, Judy DiMarco, moved their relationship to the next level, so before the story ends, Ox proposes to Judy and they tie the knot, but what's a good stag party and wedding without a visit from a serial killer?

The early reviews on the book were quite positive, so I submitted it to two book contests.

On February, 5th, 2013, I received an email

from IndieReader.com stating, *Please note that your book received a 5 star review, making it officially "IndieReader Approved", a designation we created to make it easier for readers and booksellers to identify quality indie titles. Post the sticker proudly, knowing that your title was judged by top industry professionals—not as merely a great indie book—but as great book, period.*



A few weeks later, I received another email from the National Association of Book Entrepreneurs notifying me that *Book Club Murders* had earned the Pinnacle Achievement Award for 'Best New Mystery Novel', Spring 2013.



I figured with these two accolades, it was time to launch a special promotion.

All ten of the Lady Justice novels were available on Amazon and Barnes and Noble. The paperbacks were listed at \$12.99 and the ebook versions were \$7.99.

I had been selling a few copies of each and receiving a small check from both companies each month.

I had also noticed two other things; first, more and more people that I talked to at book signing events were now only reading on their Kindles and second, I had noticed more and more authors offering their ebooks for as little as \$0.99.

The thinking behind this strategy was that if an author had more than one book, especially a series, if he could lure a buyer with a giveaway price, they just might get hooked and purchase the rest of the series.

I figured that it was worth a try, so I lowered the price of my Kindle version of *Book Club Murders* to \$0.99.

Then it was time to get the word out.

I created an 'event' on the Goodreads website and invited all my Goodreads friends to participate:

Lady Justice and the Book Club Murders just earned the Pinnacle Book Award for

"Best New Mystery Novel" for Spring of 2013, from the National Association of Book Entrepreneurs.

In recognition of this award, the Kindle version of Book Club Murders is being offered for \$0.99 through June 16th.

I followed that with the live link to the Amazon page where *Book Club Murders* was featured.

Then I went to Vertical Response and sent an email to my 'book buyers' mailing list.

I had also discovered that there were numerous websites that spotlighted 'free' or 'bargain' Kindle books for their subscribers. Some were free and some charged a small fee to place my book on their site.

I had also found another website called 'Fivvers'. People on that site offer to do things for a flat \$5.00 fee. One of the things offered by several Fivvers was to post my notice on their Facebook page. I bit the bullet and hired a couple of them.

Why not? In for a penny, in for a pound!

On my author page on Kindle, there is a page where my Kindle sales are reported in real time. Once my little marketing program was launched, I watched with interest to see what the results might be. By the end of the day, 84 people had purchased *Book Club Murders* for \$0.99.

The good news was that this sudden burst in sales bumped *Book Club Murders* to #50 in the top 100 in Amazon's 'humor' category and my personal author rating jumped to #428 out of over 5,000 in the 'mystery' category.

The bad news was that fame is fleeting. As far as Amazon ratings are concerned, it's all about 'what have you done for me lately'. Although orders continued to come in over the next weeks, both the book rating and my author rating took a nosedive from the stratosphere to more realistic levels.

Hopefully, the ninety-nine center's will love Walt and his gang and purchase more books in the series.

Time will tell.

CHAPTER 41

My wife and I don't travel a lot. It seems that the older we get, the rewards just aren't worth all the hassle and stress.

That being said, my wife had been hinting for several months that a cruise might be nice. We had been on two cruises years ago and enjoyed both of them very much.

Cruises are extremely popular with the senior set. Once you're on board, everything is right there: good food, good entertainment and a place to sleep.

In *Book Club Murders*, Ox and Judy were married. In a moment of inspiration, it occurred to me that if our newly-weds spent their honeymoon on a cruise with Walt and Maggie tagging along, I could kill two birds with one stone. I would have the perfect setting for volume #11 in the series and I would get some serious brownie points with my wife.

I distinctly remember the moment when I uttered the words, "Peg, how would you like to go on a cruise?"

Without a minute's hesitation, she curtly replied, "You're going to write another book, aren't you?"

Like Maggie, it's hard to get anything past my sweetie.

Since I had an ulterior motive, the brownie points never materialized, but I had all I needed to

dig into *Lady Justice and the Cruise Ship Murders*.



The first thing I did was to get a copy of *The Floor of Heaven. A True Tale of the Last Frontier and the Yukon Gold Rush* by Howard Blum from the Mid-Continent Library.

At this point, all I really knew about Alaska was that it was a HUGE state way up north and Sarah Palin used to be the governor. If I was going to write a book about a trip to Alaska, I figured that I should bone up a bit on Alaskan history.

Our society is steeped in the lore of the wild and wooly west. Every kid in America has had a cowboy hero.

When I was a kid, it was Roy Rogers, Gene Autry and Hopalong Cassidy. With the advent of television, Marshall Matt Dillon and The Rifleman

wore the white hats. Clint Eastwood filled the screen with *Pale Rider*, *High Plains Drifter* and *The Outlaw Josey Wales*.

Such was not the case with the Alaskan Frontier, at least for me.

Until I read Blum's book, I had never heard of George Carmack and Skookum Jim, the two prospectors that are credited with the first gold discovery in the Yukon and the guys responsible for starting the Klondike Gold Rush.

Charlie Siringo was a Pinkerton detective whose exploits rivaled any of our old west lawmen and Jefferson Randolph (Soapy) Smith was undoubtedly one of the greatest con men ever.

When I was finished with the book, I knew that I wanted the plot of *Cruise Ship Murders* to tie into the rich history of Alaska's gold rush days.

We booked our seven-day cruise with Holland-America Cruise Line that was to take us up the Inside Passage to the quaint seaport towns of Ketchikan, Juneau and Skagway.

I took notes from the moment we boarded the plane to Vancouver until we arrived back in Kansas City. I couldn't wait to put pen to paper so that Walt, Maggie, Ox and Judy could delve into the mystery linked to a century-old legend involving a cache of gold stolen from a prospector and buried by two thieves.

The finished product was all that I hoped it

would be.

As soon as I had books in hand, I sent a copy to Holland-America asking them to forward it to the captain of the Statendam who had made our voyage a vacation to remember. I was pleased when I received an email from the Cruise Line asking for another signed copy for their office.

I also entered *Cruise Ship Murders* in the Reader's Choice Awards.

I received a great review from them.

Lady Justice and the Cruise Ship Murders by Robert Thornhill is Episode #11 of the Lady Justice series, an on-going collection of mystery/comedy stories spawned in the creative mind of the author.

The title of the story gives a great big clue about what to expect in this adventure.

The story is laugh-out-loud funny in places, while still being a somewhat serious murder mystery. In addition, much actual history of the Alaskan gold rush was woven into this tale, lending a great deal of historical accuracy to the entire story.

Robert Thornhill has found and filled a niche in the world of fiction that quite obviously had not been discovered prior to the day his wife told him he should write a book. His talent for creating real people, serious crimes and humorous situations in a cogent story is a national treasure.

I also sent a copy to Jefferson Randolph Smith III, the great-grandson of 'Soapy Smith', who was featured in the book. On his website, he posted;

What if Soapy Smith hid the poke of gold his men stole from Klondike miner, John Douglas Stewart? What if it was never recovered after Soapy was killed and no one but one poet gang member knew where it was hidden? What if a modern day researcher figured out where the gold was hidden and wanted to see that Stewart's descendants were the ones to uncover it?

There you have the fast-paced, nail-biting, action-packed mystery that will interest Soapy Smith fans and "have you on the edge of your seat one minute and laughing out loud the next." An easy read, with interweaving story lines that do not confuse the reader or interrupt the story. Mystery, comedy, Alaskan history and explanatory photographs.

I own a signed copy that now resides proudly along with my Soapy Smith collection of books.

Jeff Smith, great-grandson of the infamous Soapy Smith, con-man extraordinaire in the Alaskan Yukon.

The icing on the cake was that much of the entire cruise was tax deductible!!!



CHAPTER 42

It was late October by the time *Cruise Ship Murders* was published.

During the months of November and December, Peg and I, as we had done in the past three years, set up our table of books at seven different holiday craft fairs. Thanks to my fans that had purchased books at previous year's events, plus the new readers that we introduced to the *Lady Justice* and *Rainbow Road* series, we sold over 450 books at these shows.



After all of the holiday hoopla was over, I figured that it was time to get back to writing.

When I was working on the screenplay based on the first novel, *Lady Justice Takes a C.R.A.P.*, one of the things that struck me was how much my

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writing style had changed.

When I compared volume #11 which I had just finished, with the first volume in the series, it looked like two different authors had written them.

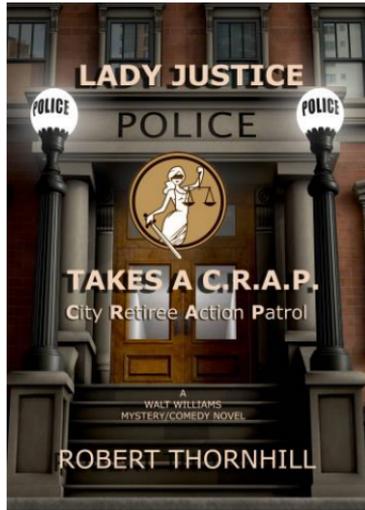
In fact, my writing style had evolved so much I wanted to rewrite volume #1 so that it more closely resembled the later volumes.

The very first edition of *C.R.A.P.* was with Authorhouse.

When Tate Publishing released the second edition, thanks to their professional editors, it was waaaay better than the original, but knowing how they worked, I figured it would take months and hundreds, if not thousands of dollars, to have them re-do the book, so I decided to go with Createspace as I had done on the past seven volumes.

That's one of the advantages of working with Createspace and Kindle Direct Publishing; you can change the cover, interior or price at any time and it doesn't cost a dime!

Peg went to work on the cover and before long the third edition of *Lady Justice Takes a C.R.A.P.* was ready to go.



Another event that had a significant impact on our lives that fall was Peg's 50th class reunion.

I had experienced my 50th the year before, but I had such a small class (84), it was a pretty small affair.

Peg's was a different matter. Her class had well over 400 students, so the planning for this extravaganza started months in advance with periodic planning sessions and fund raising projects.

Many of her classmates still lived in Independence and the group had been meeting monthly at a social luncheon. It was during those meetings that I became acquainted with many of her classmates.

Since they were looking for fund raising opportunities, I volunteered that for every *Lady*
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Justice book purchased, I would donate fifty percent of the proceeds to the reunion fund. I sold the books for ten dollars, so five of each sale was donated. The remaining five dollars was pretty much a break-even proposition for me.

During the campaign, we raised over \$250.00 for the reunion fund. The bonus was that I had found a whole new fan base that continued to buy the books long after the reunion was over.

There was another unexpected consequence.

Once they read *Lady Justice and the Lost Tapes*, where Walt goes undercover as an Elvis impersonator, it wasn't long before it was discovered that I had done Elvis impersonations myself.

Once that news was out, it was a foregone conclusion that 'Elvis' would have to be a featured performer at the reunion.



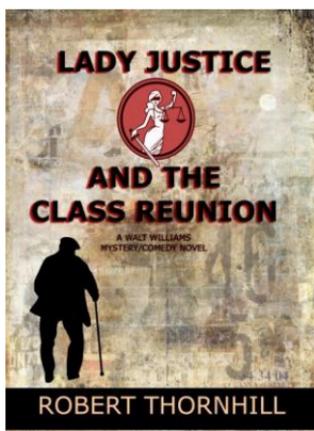
Somehow, Peg and I found ourselves knee deep in the planning and execution of the reunion.

Naturally, anything that involves planning, personalities and committees is fraught with drama. This was no exception, which, in one way, was fortunate, because after it was all over and done with, several of the classmates approached me with the idea of *Lady Justice and the Class Reunion*.

They figured that we were probably fortunate that we had come out of the ordeal without anyone actually committing mayhem, but they could certainly see the possibility of that happening to others in a similar situation.

After giving it some thought, I could certainly see Walt as a reluctant Elvis and up to his ears in mystery at his own 50th reunion.

By the end of February, 2013, *Lady Justice and the Class Reunion* was in my hands.



As always, I sent copies to bloggers for reviews.

I was pleased when Cynthia Harris wrote in her *Black Lilac Kitty Literary Services* blog;

This month is full of class reunions, however, one must wonder if their class reunion would turn out like the one award-winning author Robert Thornhill wrote about in his book, Lady Justice and the Class Reunion.

When a priest hears a confession about the Mexican cartel using young Latino girls as drug mules he wants to help, but how, without breaking his vows of priesthood. The priest and two of his friends from the Whispering Hills Retirement Village put out some hints in hopes that someone in the police department will hear them and figure it out.

That someone in the police department is Thornhill's main character, Walt Williams, who is a police officer working with the Kansas City Police Department. While investigating the Mexican Drug Cartel, Walt is also being reacquainted with old classmates at their 50th class reunion. True to the Lady Justice series, wherever Walt goes, trouble follows.

Thornhill has been dubbed, "The master of hysterical fiction" and he definitely has earned his title. So join Walt in a class reunion filled with

mystery, intrigue, jealousy and a belly-full of laughs. You will not be disappointed!

Also, as I always do, I posted press releases on the many free sites that I had found on the Internet and sent releases to the 540 newspapers in my database on Vertical Response.

I've often wondered whether anyone actually ever reads one of these releases, so I was surprised when I received an email from Edith Wagner, the Editor of *Class Reunion* magazine.

Press Release: Lady Justice And The Class Reunion Released by Mystery Author Robert Thornhill

We'd love to get a copy to review in Reunions magazine and then add to one of our giveaways which will be promoted in Reunions magazine, on our web site (reunionismag.com), our facebook and Pinterest pages and in our monthly e-newsletters. Send to Reunions magazine, PO Box 11727, Milwaukee WI 53211. Thanks.

A few weeks later, I received another email;

The May/June/July issue of Reunions magazine is online and you're in it!

Sometimes you wonder whether the

marketing is worth all the effort.
Maybe it is!

CHAPTER 43

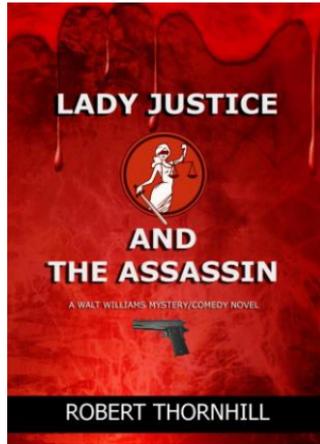
In *Lady Justice and the Vigilante*, I had looked into the thoughts of Ed Jacobs who had dedicated himself to the task of seeking justice where the legal system failed, and in *Lady Justice and the Book Club Murders*, I had examined the twisted logic that had motivated serial killer, Oscar Roach.

Both of these themes had proven successful as each book won two awards and both had become fan favorites.

Given all of the political upheaval in our country and the radical postings on the social media, I began to wonder what could motivate an individual to attempt an assassination of the president.

My vision was not of a wild-eyed radical or a brooding sociopath, but rather of a model citizen, far removed from the watchful eye of Homeland Security, that had been pushed to the brink by the pressures of our modern day society.

Henry Martin, a man that could have been the guy next door to any of us, became the focal point for *Lady Justice and the Assassin*.



Early reviews, this one by Christina Jones, indicated that my vision of an unlikely assassin was within the realm of possibility.

No one can accuse author Robert Thornhill of not being relevant. The newest mystery comedy in the Walt Williams series, Lady Justice and the Assassin, mixes the topical concerns of a still sluggish economy, the middle class being driven into poverty and the perceived trampling of civil liberties, in particular those protected by the 2nd Amendment, by combining the forces of the Ozark Militia and the Neo-Nazi followers of the Aryan Brotherhood Confederation to hatch a plot to assassinate the president and vice-president.

This joint group chooses a man who has lost his job due to outsourcing and is facing the total loss

of all his material gains, who has to send his wife and son to live with her parents while he sorts through the household goods of what to keep and what to sell before the home is lost to foreclosure, who is now hounded by collection agencies, has no health insurance, and is sitting in a cold home where the utilities have been cut-off. This man, normally a patriotic American who never even had a speeding ticket, is presented the opportunity to reclaim all his possessions and set his family onto the path of solvency by doing just one small task for the alliance: shoot the president. Will he do it?

Once the paperback had been published on Createspace, I was ready to create the Kindle version. Kindle has a program called KDP Select. To be part of this program, the author must agree to keep the ebook version of his novel exclusively with Kindle.

I had not done this with the other twelve volumes in the *Lady Justice* series. I had made all of them available on the Nook Reader through Barnes & Noble. While I sold some Nook Books and received a small check each month from B&N, it certainly wasn't anything to write home about.

One of the benefits of having a book on KDP Select was that it could be offered 'free' on the Amazon website for up to five days within a ninety day period. I had read blogs from other authors that done this and they reported some success getting

people hooked on their books especially if they were part of a series.

Also, while I was researching sites to advertise the \$0.99 version of *Book Club Murders*, I found at least thirty sites where a free Kindle download could be posted at no cost or for a small fee.

I figured that I might as well give it a try.

I discovered that most of the websites needed anywhere from a few days to a week to schedule your book, so I set my five day 'free' window on Amazon a week in advance and began sending the information to the websites.

Once the 'free' period started, I posted notices anywhere and everywhere I could find; Goodreads, Facebook, Gather, LinkedIn, Association of Independent Authors, etc.

In addition, I created an ad email in Vertical Response and sent it to all of my previous book buyers.

I figured that if I was going to do this thing, I might as well go all the way.

On my Kindle author page, there is a place where I can see a report of how many copies are being downloaded in 'real time'. I was astounded as I watched the number grow hour-by-hour.

By the time the five day 'free' period had expired, over 2,000 people had downloaded *Lady Justice and the Assassin*, and the book had risen to

#385 out of over 1,300,000 Kindle books on Amazon.

Plus, in the weeks to come, the sales of my other *Lady Justice* novels increased. Evidently the free book had indeed hooked some new readers to the *Lady Justice* series.

However, as I mentioned in the chapter regarding the \$0.99 promotion, fame is definitely fleeting on Amazon. There are just so many books --- over seven million. The week after the 'free' promotion, *Assassin* fell back into the middle of the pack.

Nevertheless, I considered KDP Select to be a success and I will definitely use it with upcoming installments of the *Lady Justice* series.

CHAPTER 44

Sometimes you just don't know where your next big idea will come from.

My wife belongs to several knitting groups. She delights in telling our friends that she had to take up knitting to give her something to do since I spend all my waking hours at the computer either writing or marketing.

One of the ladies in her knitting group knew that I was an author and gave my name to a friend of hers that was putting together a Writer's Conference.

I received an email from him asking if I was interested in being a speaker and presenter at the conference.

A subsequent phone conversation explained that the conference was to be a three-day event at a local community college. He had looked at my website and was sufficiently impressed that he wanted me to participate. I was even offered a fairly substantial fee!

I had made presentations at several civic clubs, the Optimists, the Kiwanis and the Young Matrons, but my pay was a free lunch and the opportunity to peddle a few books. I was really surprised when I was actually offered real money!

I had never really considered myself anything but a novice author. I was just an Indie --- no big book contracts --- no five figure advances --- no

novels on anybody's best-seller list.

But as I reflected on the past four years, I realized that there had been a lot of water under the writing bridge. I had written and published 24 books, experienced four different publishers and sold several thousand books.

I had spent countless hours finding and saving websites that could help market my books.

I had a database of email addresses for over 1,100 independent bookstores that I had found and recorded one by one.

I had email addresses for 540 newspapers across the U.S. that I had collected one at a time.

I had websites for press releases, book contests, book reviews, social media, where to submit articles and where to post free books.

Collecting all of this had taken me literally thousands of hours on the computer.

If some one had offered me all of this information at the beginning of my writing career, it could have changed everything. Maybe my poor wife would not have had to take up knitting! At the very least, it would have made life a lot easier.

What would I have been willing to pay to someone to have all this information handed to me on a USB Flash Drive?

It is no secret that getting a first book published and marketing it to more than your immediate family and friends is a monumental task.

I have decided that if I can make that task easier for some other new author by making the fruits of my hours of labor available, it would be a worthwhile venture.

Why should every new author have to re-invent the wheel?

I assembled the material in an orderly fashion, built a marketing guide and loaded everything onto a USB Flash Drive.

Loaded on the flash drive is:

.CSV file containing the email addresses of over 1,100 independent bookstores.

.CSV file containing the email addresses of 540 newspapers across the country.

.CSV file containing the email addresses of 166 literary agents.

Live links to 30 social media and author support websites.

Live links to 27 service providers (editing, formatting, etc.).

Live links to 19 websites to obtain book reviews.

Live links to 10 websites that host book contests.

Live links to 12 websites where you may submit articles.

Live links to 22 websites where you can post press releases.

Live links to 77 websites where you can post

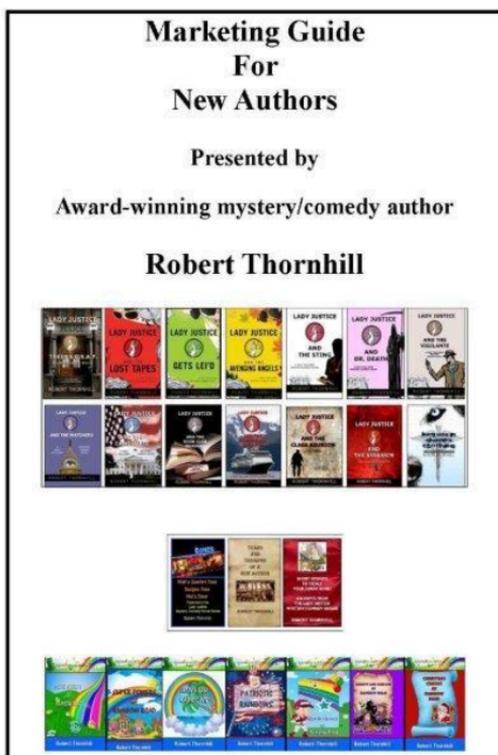
ads for free or \$0.99 book offers.

Live links to 14 Fivver websites

The marketing guide is available on my website at:

<http://booksbybob.com/marketing-guide-401.html>

or go to <http://booksbybob.com> and click on the 'Marketing Guide' tab.



I am currently working on volume #14 in the Lady Justice series and I have ideas for #'s 15 and 16 percolating in the back of my mind.

Looks like Walt and his gang of old-timers have a lot of new adventures ahead.

It's a lot of work but a lot of fun --- and it keeps a seventy-year-old guy off the streets!

CHAPTER 45

Four years ago, at the ripe old age of 66, I sat down at the computer and started banging out my first book.

Since that time, I have been with four different publishers, written fourteen full-length novels, seven children's chapter books and a cookbook, all with one finger on my right hand and the thumb of my left hand.

I have participated in over 100 book signing events and sent thousands of emails promoting my books.

Needless to say, I have learned a lot.

I have learned that writing is a dog-eat-dog business, and like music, dance or fine art, precious few achieve their dreams of fame and fortune.

In fact, I read somewhere that only 5% of all books ever written sell more than fifty copies, so even though my books have yet to appear on the *New York Times* Best Seller list, at least they fall within the top 5% of books published each year.

I have learned that if I continue to write, I must write for the love of it because the monetary rewards are less than satisfying.

I have learned that the reward for my hard work is the response from my readers who love to laugh at Walt and his goofy cohorts and who encourage me to keep writing.

I have learned that writing is not for the lazy or faint of heart.

For the past four years, with few exceptions, I have been at the computer 6-8 hours a day, sometimes seven days a week, either writing the next novel or marketing the last one --- not because I have to, but because I want to.

I have learned that I am a lucky man to have a wife that is talented enough to create beautiful covers for my books, persistent enough to not let me publish them until they have been polished and tolerant and understanding enough to allow me to spend endless hours doing what I love to do.

As I said on the very first page of this little book, there are many people who tell me that they have something they want to write.

My advice is to write it!

If a 66-year-old retired guy that had never written a word and never learned to type can do it, so can you!

What you write may become the next best seller or it may be read by only a handful of people -- - but it could be something that changes someone's life. What a shame if such a message went unwritten.

But if you write, write for the love of writing and not for anticipated financial rewards.

Write because you have something that you want to share with the world.

Write because it's fun!

I hope the story of my journey helps point the way for you, but more important, I hope it inspires you to keep writing ---



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Award-winning author, Robert Thornhill, began writing at the age of sixty-six, and in four short years has penned thirteen novels in the Lady Justice mystery/comedy series, the seven volume Rainbow Road series of chapter books for children, a cookbook and a mini-autobiography.

The fifth, sixth, seventh, ninth and tenth novels in his Lady Justice series, *Lady Justice and the Sting*, *Lady Justice and Dr. Death*, *Lady Justice and the Vigilante*, *Lady Justice and the Candidate* and *Lady Justice and the Book Club Murders* won the Pinnacle Achievement Award from the National Association of Book Entrepreneurs as the best

mystery novels in 2011 and 2012.

Robert holds a master's degree in psychology, but his wit and insight come from his varied occupations including thirty years as a real estate broker.

He lives with his wife, Peg, in Independence, Mo.