

The
Wow

e-newsletter

by Ken and Dahlynn McKowen

Principles

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Our State of Mind

Since it's January—the month of “State of the State” addresses—we thought it would be interesting to show our state-of-the-state mind as full-time writers. The lesson learned is that being an author/writer requires lots of determination, patience, the ability to switch gears at the whim of the publisher or media, and many nights eating beans and rice for dinner.

Because much of our income is based on royalties, we plan and budget years in advance. For example, working with publishers means that once we deliver a manuscript, we anticipate six to eight months before the book is released. And depending on a publisher's payment structure, it could be another six months before we see our first royalty check (sans an advance).

Following is a snapshot of our year. Keep in mind we normally have two or three major book contracts, ghostwriting and consulting projects at any given time, plus create two newsletters a month (this one and our new “Wine-Oh!” newsletter), pen freelance articles for various print media, and have Ranger Ken school program appearances (www.RangerKen.com). Don't forget we also book at least three media spots or speaking engagements a month for existing books to keep our backlist of titles active and selling! With the exception of *Chicken Soup for the Fisherman's Soul*, which was released in May in anticipation of Father's Day, all of our books come out in the fall in time for holiday giving. Thus, we're basing the following on a travel book to be released nationwide in October:

- **January** is our down time when we recharge our batteries and get ready for the year ahead. You'll understand more upon reading the entries below. Besides getting our financial books in order and making a big payment to the Board of Equalization (California's control agency for sales tax), we're on the road finishing research for the travel book contract we secured the previous summer.

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Our State of Mind

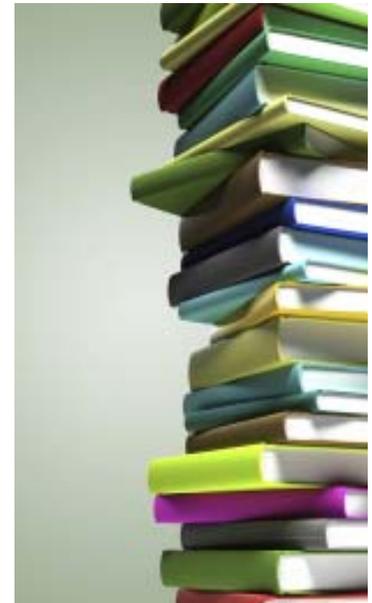
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- **February** is also a travel month and when we begin the writing process. This month is also when the publisher will ask for catalog copy (to get distributors excited about books). What makes this part difficult is that a book's theme can change, especially a travel book, so penning catalog copy takes craftsmanship. For example, "more than 80 destinations" opposed to an exact number of listings. Also, the book's cover must be done, and, unfortunately, we've had many covers go through various changes afterward, including changes to the title. Frustrating, as it's the cover in the catalog that normally gets picked up by on-line retailers.
- **March** is crunch time, as the April deadline is looming (and you thought April 15th only had *one* deadline). We also start securing permission releases; even though *we* took the photographs of the destinations, we still need to secure the rights to use *our* photographs from the destination. Crazy? Yes, but that's the reality in this day and age of deep-pocket litigation.



- **April** finds us writing and editing and writing and editing and writing and editing as our deadline to get the manuscript to the publisher falls mid-month. Our travel manuscripts typically run around 100,000 words, so we go through a lot of paper, keystrokes, research and, in Dahlynn's case, coffee! Don't forget all the other things we do each month, including taxes for April.

- **May** is a transitional month. We didn't mention all the personal commitments we have each year, from family events to volunteering 10 hours a week at our local elementary school. We also have a preteen boy and grandkids underfoot! Our major personal event occurs the first Saturday of each and every May; we throw a block party for the entire neighborhood, friends, family and business associates (i.e., friends also in the media). We've had up to 300 people in the past. So during the end of April and early May, we're in party mode. The rest of the month, we're working with our publisher's editor, which entails answering lots of questions, some rewrites, finalizing the cover and approving suggested changes before the book transitions into galleys (the book in layout form). From there, we have one last look at the book as it will appear in print.



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- **June** things quiet down a bit. We put the finishing touches on the galleys and create the index, which takes about a week. We also go after testimonials and endorsements, and secure the last of our permission releases. Sometimes we start developing a website for the book (i.e., www.WineOhGuide.com), posting it when the book is released. We will go on summer vacation with the preteen, typically to the place we want to write about next in preparation for creating our proposal(s) for next year's book(s).
- **July** is when we're negotiating book proposals and accompanying marketing plans for the next year. This is a huge amount of work, most of which we were researching and writing the three months prior. We also start wrapping up our consulting work and other projects. We will also game plan our travel schedule for our new book deal.



- **August** finds us spending upwards of 40 hours at the California State Fair, appearing in their California Author Booth where we do meet-and-greets and sell our books. At the fair, we promote our upcoming title, hand out preorder forms and collect e-mail addresses to notify readers when the book is released. We initiate our marketing plan and send out advance reader copies of the book for media reviews. August is also back-to-school time for the preteen, so we get in as many last minute trips as we can. Many times, we'll return to the area researching and photographing next year's book. Our preteen is quite the photographer and we pay him for photos that make the book.

- **September** reminds us that from this point forward, we belong to this year's book. No more social life for us, including holidays. The book launch gears up, which

typically includes a big release event such as a party or media announcement. We will spend September finalizing other projects and soliciting/lining up new consulting work to begin in January. We also travel when we can, working on next year's book.

- **October** has arrived! With this year's book release occurring mid-month, we use the two weeks prior to focus on setting up and giving media appearances and print interviews. We also launch the website (if applicable). The last two weeks are dedicated to talking to as many people as possible: with the Chicken books, where 25,000 press releases will have been

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distributed nationwide, we find ourselves giving a dozen radio interviews a day, easy. We will squeeze in more travel research for next year's new book as time permits.

- **November** we find that things get more crazy and public appearances multiply. For the *Wine-Oh! Guide* release, we had 33 appearances in less than eight weeks, including a kick-off event with 400+ in attendance. Thanksgiving is usually spent on the road; our traditional family meal is a double cheeseburger and shake at In-N-Out.
- **December** is our make-or-break month. This past fall, we had two national book releases, so things got a bit hairy. The days leading up to December 25th found us promoting, promoting, promoting! And the promoting doesn't stop on Christmas, as gift cards keep the holiday spending alive for many more weeks to come.
- **January** rolls around too fast for us, or is it that as we age, time goes by faster? As of this writing, the Board of Equalization has received its tax payment, Ken is traveling in the California desert working on a project, Dahlynn is home cleaning her office (the papers at the bottom of the pile are dated 2004), and we're gearing up to travel the California coast for a new travel book. Needless to say, there's never a dull moment in the McKowen household!



NEWSFLASH! This just in from WritersMarket.com. Check it out!

2010 WRITERSMARKET.COM AT 2000 PRICES: It's hard to believe that 10 years could pass so fast, but it was just 10 years ago that I began working at F+W Media as an intern. One of my first big projects was to help launch WritersMarket.com. A lot has changed since that modest beginning;

WritersMarket.com:

- Lists thousands more publishing opportunities.
- Includes the listings from the other niche writing books—Novel & Short Story Writer's Market, Children's Writer's & Illustrator's Market, Poet's Market, Screenwriter's & Playwright's Market (which didn't even exist 10 years ago), and Guide to Literary Agents.
- Offers extra resources, such as Market Watch and the niche Questions & Answers feature.
- Also has a higher subscription rate than when it originally launched.

For the month of January 2010, we're rolling back the annual and two-year subscription prices to what they were in 2000. For the next 23 days only, you can take advantage of \$29.99 annual subscriptions and \$44.99 two-year subscriptions (that's only \$5 more than the current annual price!). But, as they say, you have to act soon—this roll-back offer only lasts until January 31, 2010. www.WritersMarket.com

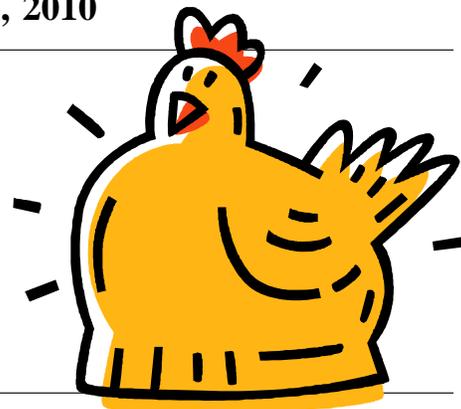
Robert Lee Brewer, Editor
Writer's Market — WritersMarket.com

HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF! HOT STUFF!

Chicken Soup for the Soul www.ChickenSoup.com

HURRY! *Christmas and Holidays: Deadline: January 15, 2010*
Dieting and Fitness: Deadline: January 31, 2010

New Moms: Deadline: February 28, 2010
Devotional for Mothers: Deadline: Feb. 28, 2010
Family Matters: Deadline: Feb. 28, 2010
Grandmothers: Deadline: March 31, 2010
Grieving and Recovery: Deadline: March 31, 2010



BIG CHANGE!

The two “Grieving and Recovery for Cats/Dogs” books have been retitled and the slants have changed. More info: www.ChickenSoup.com, click on “Submit Your Story” then “Possible Book Titles”

My Dog’s Life: Deadline: March 31, 2010
My Cat’s Life: Deadline: March 31, 2010

NEW DEADLINES

Preteens: Deadline: June 30, 2010 *Teens: Deadline: June 30 2010*



Cup of Comfort www.CupofComfort.com

For Couples: Deadline: April 20, 2010

New titles coming soon!

Go for it! Get published!