

The
Wow

e-newsletter

by Ken and Dahlynn McKowen

Principles

Volume 6 No. 10 October 2010

Back in the Trenches

This month's feature article is about Nelson O. Ottenhausen. We had the pleasure of working with Nelson when he submitted "A Fish Story" for *Chicken Soup for the Fisherman's Soul* in 2003 (the book was released in 2004). As writers will sometimes do, we kept in touch with Nelson, sharing our writing adventures and doings. Matter of fact, when Nelson traveled to California from



Dahlynn, Nelson and Ken

his home in Gulf Breeze, Florida, a few months back to visit his daughter in the San Francisco Bay Area, the two of them made the trip east to our home in the Sacramento area. We had a wonderful visit over cheesecake and a great bottle of wine!

Here's a touch about Nelson: a retired Army officer who served under the likes of the great General H. Norman Schwarzkopf (also a friend of ours), Nelson is a man of words. An accomplished writer published nationally in many periodicals and anthologies, his latest poem—"Out of Sane"—appeared in a Siruss Poe anthology collection. He has many book credits to his name, including *Civil War II* (2004), *The Blue Heron* (2005), *Flowers, Love & Other Things* (2005), *The Killing Zone*:

Happy
Halloween!



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P . S .

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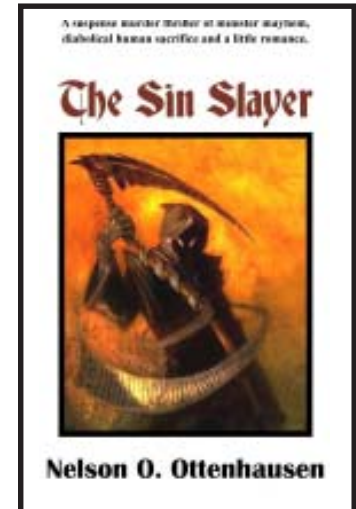
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Evil's Playground (2007), *Jugs & Bottles* (2009) and *The Sin Slayer* (2010). Nelson is working on his new novel, *Black Mist of the Trinity*, the final book of his trilogy.

One of Nelson's proudest accomplishments is founding "Pen WISE Poets" (Writers in Service to Education), a literary arts outreach program serving the schools of Northwest Florida. Nelson managed the program from 1994 to 1998, and, in 1995, he



was cited by Florida Governor Lawton Chiles for this work. That same year, he received a fellowship for his writings and was appointed by Florida's Secretary of State to the Directory of Visiting Artists to lecture in Florida schools, only one of five poets from throughout the state to receive such an honor.

For this interview, we asked Nelson about his publishing company—Patriot Media, Inc. (www.patriotmediainc.com). Many writers we know are having better luck with smaller publishing houses and felt Nelson's insight would be helpful to you, especially since one of Patriot Media's authors is up for a 2011 Pulitzer Prize:

Ken: With such an impressive writing background, why did you become a publisher?

Nelson: The original owners started Patriot Media, Inc. in 2003 and had little publishing and business experience. Because I have a college business degree in operations management and a masters of business administration degree, they asked me to join the company. Since they wanted to publish military type publications, I thought my military background would help so I signed on as president and managing editor in 2005. I was already a published author at that point.



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K: What are the three key things you look for when considering a book proposal?

N: I'd have to say there are really four key things I look at when I get a submission; 1) Did the submitter follow the submission guidelines; 2) Did he/she use the right submission format; 3) Did he/she use proper grammar, and; 4) Are there any misspelled words?

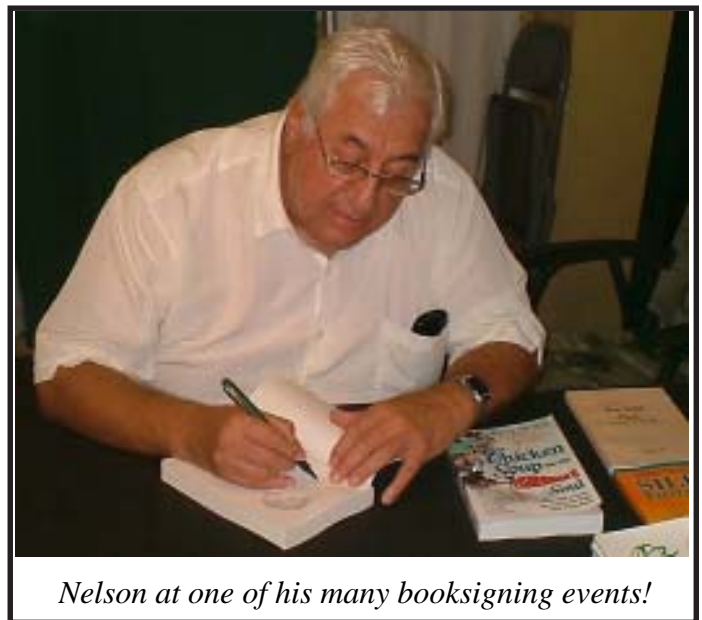
The most important of these is #1. If he/she failed to follow the guidelines and format, I will reject the submission. Experience has been that if a writer can't follow instructions in these two areas, chances are they won't take critiques and edit changes very well and will be difficult to work with.

K: What do you feel is the future of small publishing houses?

N: I'm not sure. If small houses go electronic in a particular niche like Patriot Media did, they may do well, because there is no way they can compete with major publishing houses in the general retail book market and still maintain a profitable business. The answer may also depend on how the government treats small businesses in the future and if the tax structure stifles profits. After I came with Patriot Media, book sales have increased every year and we've always made a profit, but with government interference that may change, especially by enacting Internet regulations.

K: On that same vein, what is your take on the "brick and mortar" book stores vs. electronic publishing (i.e., Amazon)?

N: I read that last year there was an increase of 130 percent-plus in electronic book sales and that



Nelson at one of his many booksigning events!

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60 percent of all book sales for the year were over the Internet. I'd say most small publishing firms are going to electronic sales. Our company has about a 95-percent ratio of Internet sales compared to regular mail orders and we do not solicit retail brick-and-mortar book stores. There are a few military museum book stores that carry some of our books and even those order and reorder through our Internet sales system.



K: How has your vast military background prepared you to become a publisher?

N: It has helped when reviewing a submitted military genre manuscript that contains military jargon, protocols and some technical equipment use, especially in reference to the time frame of when I served. It may not be all encompassing, but the experience is enough to alert me to misquotes, wrong terminology and some misused protocols. Plus, I have military sources I can turn to so I can get most any background information needed.

K: What genres does your publishing house prefer?

N: Patriot Media, Inc. specializes in the publication of military unit histories, war veteran autobiographies, short story anthologies and novels with a patriotic military theme. We also publish other genres if the piece is well written and patriotic, but we don't advertise it. Also, our guidelines list what we don't and won't publish; the address is **www.patriotmediainc.com**.

K: What advice do you have for first-time authors looking for an agent and/or publisher?

N: Be very, very careful when choosing an agent or publisher. Research and due diligence is a must. Unfortunately, there are both dishonest agents and publishers preying on new or unpublished writers. Both take advantage of writers who don't know how the publishing system

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works. They charge outrageous up-front fees, promote book doctor services and offer unscrupulous vanity/subsidy contracts. Many dishonest agents do not submit a client's manuscript to publishers, but merely provide lip service because the client has already paid the fees. An agent should not charge any kind of fee, either before or after reading a manuscript. Also, an agent should not solicit writers and a great agent isn't looking for business. A good source to check the reputation of agents is The National Writer's Association (1450 South Havana St. #424, Aurora, CO, 80012).

Again, Patriot Media's website is www.patriotmediainc.com. Go for it! Get published! 

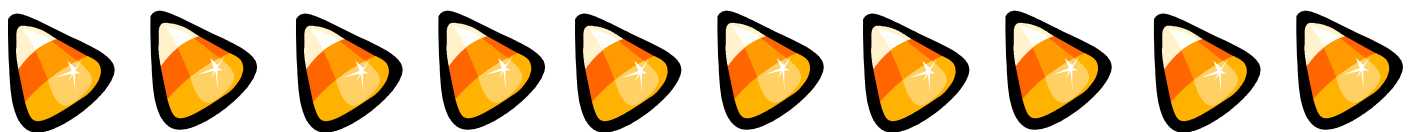
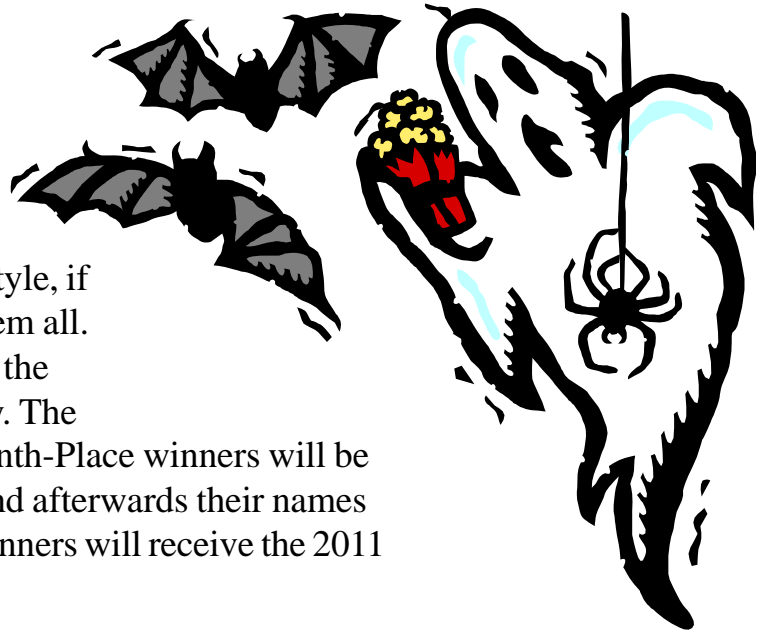
Since Nelson loves poetry, here's the latest from Writer's Digest!

Writer's Digest Poetry Awards Competition

Deadline: December 15, 2010

"Rhyming, free verse, haiku—regardless of style, if your poems are 32 lines or fewer, we want them all. First Place winners receive \$500 and a trip to the Writer's Digest Conference in New York City. The names and poem titles of the First through Tenth-Place winners will be printed in the August 2011 Writer's Digest, and afterwards their names will appear on www.writersdigest.com. All winners will receive the 2011 Poet's Market."

More info: www.writersdigest.com/poetryawards



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

Chicken Soup for the Soul

www.ChickenSoup.com

Teens: Deadline: December 31, 2010

Young at Heart: Deadline: December 31, 2010

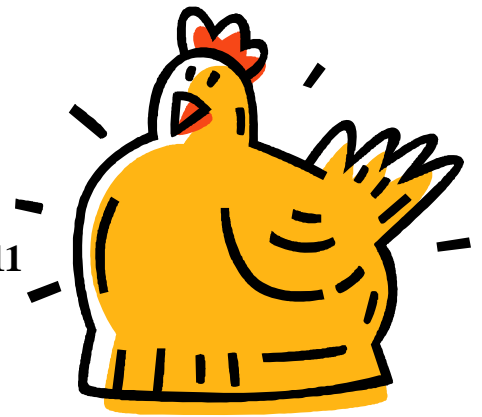
Mothers and Daughters: Deadline: December 31, 2010

Canada: Deadline: January 30, 2011

Devotional Stories for Times of Trouble: Deadline: Feb. 28, 2011

Brides and Weddings: Deadline: April 30, 2011

Marriage and Married Life: Deadline: May 30, 2011



Dream of Things

www.DreamofThings.com

Stories that Exemplify Leadership

Awe-inspiring Travel Stories

Coffee Shop Stories

Great Customer Service Stories

Stories of Forgiveness

Internet Dating Stories

Stories that Exemplify Teamwork

Stories about Great Teachers

Humorous Travel Stories

Advice You'd Like to Pass On to Others

Cubicle Stories: Life in the Modern Workplace

It's Only a Game: Lessons Learned from Playing/Coaching Sports

Making Waves: Stories about Role Models and People Who Inspire and Motivate Us

All *Dream of Things* anthology call-outs are open until there are enough stories to fill a book. So don't wait, as you might miss out on your chance!

Go for it! Get published!