



The Long Road I'd Never Change

by Debbie Burns

The first time I read *The Tortoise and the Hare*, I wanted that lovable tortoise to win, no matter how impossible the odds. Along my path to publication, one that was neither quick nor flashy, this tale resonated with me, as I hope my journey will resonate with writers interested in traditional publication.



Debbie Burns

While I grew up loving to read, I first thought about writing for fun upon graduating college with a degree in biology. After all the science and math, I craved a bit of right-brained creativity and decided to attempt getting the seeds of a historical fiction idea bouncing around my head onto paper. I had yet to write a single thing that wasn't a required assignment, creative or otherwise...aside from a four-page, illustrated memoir at the wise age of nine. I'd never taken a writing course and the thought of completing a full-length manuscript was daunting, but I dove in, researching the story's historical aspects

7 pm, May 11 via Zoom

before attempting to write it. The dialogue in my first draft was laughable and scene setting robotic, but there was something about the process I enjoyed, and I continued plugging away.

Three and a half years later, I had a 120,000-word manuscript that I was in no way prepared to receive critical feedback on. As it turned out, the path to publication proved daunting enough that I soon put the book aside to begin working on a second manuscript, the idea of which was buzzing around my head. I look back on that moment now as one of the most important decisions I could've made long term. It sounds counterintuitive, I know, but it was at this time (when I was still years away from getting my first publishing contract) that I fell utterly and completely in love with the writing process. Whether or not the world recognized me as one yet, I became a writer.

Continued on page 2.

Join us on May 11 for "Walk, Trot, Run: An Author's Journey from Novice Writer to a Multi-Book Publishing Contract," featuring Debbie Burns, best-selling author of the critically acclaimed *Rescue Me* series.

Debbie lives in Saint Louis with her family, two thoroughly spoiled rescue dogs, and a ridiculously grumpy Maine Coon cat who (most) everyone loves anyway. Her hobbies include hiking in the Missouri woods, attempting to grow the perfect tomato, birdwatching, and daydreaming, which of course always leads to new story ideas. Find her at authordebbieburns.com.

ZOOM INSTRUCTIONS:

Sign-up is free. You can join from your smartphone, computer or tablet. If it's your first time, follow the prompts and allow it to access your camera and microphone. Click on this link for the meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/86782144399>. Meeting ID is 867 8214 4399. Password is 668448.

How IBPA Can Help You Publish Like a Professional

Featuring Christopher Locke

Join the St. Louis Publishers Association on June 8 and discover "How IBPA Can Help You Publish Like a Professional," featuring Christopher Locke, author and IBPA Director of Membership & Membership Services.

Independent Book Publishers Association

is the largest trade association for independent publishers in the U.S. Christopher will explain how IBPA can guide you along your publishing journey. Through a multitude of resources (webinars, networking events, low-cost marketing programs, bi-monthly magazine, IBPA Publishing University—the premier educational event for independent book publishers—and much more), IBPA can help you publish books up to industry standards and give you access to the marketplaces



where you want to sell your books to consumers, libraries, bookstores, and more.

As the IBPA Director of Membership & Member Services, Christopher Locke assists the 4,100+

members as they travel along their publishing journeys. Major projects include managing the member benefits to curate the most advantageous services for indie publishers, as well as overseeing the *IBPA NetGalley* program, which generates buzz and garners reviews for indie publishers' titles. As an author, Christopher has published two novels so far in his *YA* trilogy, *The Enlightenment Adventures*.

Visit him at christopher-locke.com.

"Long patience and application saturated with your heart's blood—you will either write or you will not—and the only way to find out whether you will or not is to try."

—Jim Tully, *Writer's Digest*

UPCOMING EVENTS

via ZOOM

May 11, 7– 8:30pm
Walk, Trot, Run: An Author's Journey from Novice Writer to a Multi-Book Publishing Contract with [Debbie Burns](#)

<https://zoom.us/j/86782144399>

June 8, 7– 8:30pm
How IBPA Can Help You Publish Like a Professional with [Christopher Locke](#)

<https://zoom.us/j/86782144399>

The Long Road continued from page 1.

One book after another, my publication attempts were soon plundered by the need to write the next story. (And so on, and so on.) By the time my first book reached bookstores, I'd typed close to a million words.

I suspect you might be thinking this path to publication is nothing to write home about. However, these years while raising kids and writing into the night after they'd fallen asleep were as important in my writing career as was the time after I became serious enough about publication to join the writing community (via contests, writing groups, and conferences) and commit whole-heartedly to securing an agent. While I still had (and have) much to learn about the craft, it was during these years that I honed my voice.

As it's said, it's often the journey that teaches us about our destination. Each story I've drafted—published and unpublished—has

helped me hone the craft and given me something steadfast to connect to when the publishing landscape proves daunting. Since my first book released in 2017 with Sourcebooks Casablanca, I've completed eight additional manuscripts, six of which are now published. Writing and revising on deadlines can be stressful and exhausting, but I have something to fall back on. That sweet spot in the writing cave where words are flowing and I'm shutting out the world...I didn't learn that at a conference or workshop, and no critique group could've taught me it, either.

When anyone asks for my best advice on how to write a novel, my answer is simple enough to be unsatisfying for those who've not yet given it a shot. I learned by writing them.

*"Not a wasted word.
This has been a main point to my literary thinking all my life."*

—Hunter S. Thompson



LAST MONTH'S RECAP

Defining Your Purpose: An Interactive Author Experience

facilitated by Jo Lena Johnson

Special thanks to **Jo Lena Johnson, SLPA Board Member, Writing Coach and Publisher**, for helping authors work through the process of shaping their stories to gain a clear understanding of why people should read them. Visit Jo Lena at absolutegoodenterprises.com.

As an author, you need to ask yourself the following questions: *Why should people read my book? What will readers receive from me? What is the benefit for them? How can they relate to my story?*

Tell the truth. Readers appreciate authenticity. Make your story count. Whether it's fiction or nonfiction, your story should be **real** (authentic), **honest** (true), and **valuable** (beneficial) for your audience!

Memoir/Self-Help: walk readers through your experiences, from struggle to growth, including sorrows, triumphs, and lessons learned.

Poetry: poetry is personal, help them see from your perspective and transport them away from their current surroundings.

Children's/Family Relationships: share the ongoing lessons learned from the perspective of a parent/grandparent who doesn't have all the answers.

Considering multiple story ideas? Write each idea on a separate page and list supporting points for each one. Usually the idea with the most information that commands your attention is the one you should start working on first.

Authors must often juggle multiple tasks and responsibilities on the journey to publication and beyond. Brian Feinblum, creator of BookMarketingBuzzBlog, addresses the common complaints and problems many authors face. His blog post The Truth That Authors Need To Hear, shares hard truths and practical advice for authors at every stage.

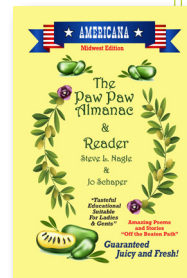


Jo Lena Johnson

KUDOS CORNER

SLPA Member
Jo Schaper

Jo Schaper is the founder of Geo Communications Services and a co-founding partner of Paw Paw Poets Publishing, with the late Steve L. Nagle. As an author, she writes poetry and prose about the outdoors, natural history, and regional culture in the Midwest and West, such as *The Rockhound Ranger Chronicles*. Her most recent release is *The Paw Paw Almanac & Reader* (co-authored with Steve L. Nagle).



Meet her in person on Saturday, May 7 at the Ozark Mountain Festival in downtown Eminence, MO, and on May 19 for a live Poetry and Music event at the Pacific Branch Library on Lamar Parkway in Pacific.

Visit Jo at pawpawpoetspublishing.com and on [Facebook @pawpawpoets](https://www.facebook.com/pawpawpoets).



Meetings on
the second
Wednesday of
every month

In-person gatherings are suspended due to COVID-19 restrictions.
All meetings will be held online until further notice.

Admission and Membership

- Monthly meetings on Zoom are FREE
- [Membership is \\$60 per year](http://Membership is $60 per year).

Visit: stlouispublishers.org/join
stlouispublishers.org/benefits

SLPA NEWS & VIEWS

Editor: Kerri Holloway
Designer: Carolyn Vaughan
Webmaster: Kevin Ericson

