

Lessons Learned: A Writer's Journey from Baseball Fields to Battlefields

by Alan Spector

Matshona Dhliwayo, Canadian philosopher, entrepreneur, and author, writes, "Learn, and you will live; live, and you will learn."

I began writing my first book, *Baseball: Never Too Old to Play the Game*, in 2005, and it was published in 2007. My fifth book and first novel, *Body Not Recovered: A Vietnam War/Protest Movement Novel*, was published in 2015. Over that decade and into my work on books six and seven, I have been cataloguing the writing, publishing, and marketing lessons I have learned, striving to reapply them with each subsequent project. Book six is currently being considered by a publisher, and book seven is in the early stages of research and writing.

As it turns out, perhaps the most important lessons I learned came well before I even had a glimmer of thinking of myself as an author. Consider this question: What does being an author have to do with disposable diapers, paper towels, facial tissues, and toilet paper?

Before retiring in 2002, I was fortunate to have worked for the Procter & Gamble Company for 33 years. Many consider P&G to be among the foremost marketing firms in the world — it is not uncommon for important case studies used in university marketing curricula to rely on P&G business experiences.

Although I did not work in the advertising area of the business, good marketing principles permeated everything we did across the organization's disciplines. I happened to work in the company's paper business, in which we invented, continually improved, manufactured, and marketed brands like Pampers, Luvs, Bounty, Puffs, Tampax, Charmin, and Always — and we did all of this around the world. There are three key tenants of P&G's business approach that I now find apply to the business of writing as well.

Profoundly know your consumer — for authors, "consumer" translates to "target reader." To whom are you writing your book (or article or blog)? Why would they want to read your work? How might you reach them, both as it relates to the message of your book and to your marketing plan?

The quality of your product is the key to marketing — for authors, "product" translates to "book." No matter how good your marketing plan is, it can't overcome a bad product/book. So design it well and execute with excellence.



Alan Spector

Market directly to your target consumer/reader. You can get the biggest bang for your buck and, more importantly, for your time spent if you find where your readers are and communicate directly with them in a way that moves them emotionally.

These are not the only lessons on my list. Dhliwayo is right. Since I've been writing, publishing, and marketing, I've been learning from both my experiences and those of others. Some examples of lessons learned:

- There is a key question any author should ask themselves and answer before considering doing any writing at all.
- There are some key questions to ask and answer before taking on a new book project.
- Get out of your cave.

I plan to keep writing, publishing, and marketing, but I also plan to keep learning lessons like these. Importantly, all of us, writers and others in the industry, can accelerate our individual and collective learning by sharing with and listening to each other.

So, to paraphrase Dhliwayo, "Write, and you will learn; learn, and you will write."

Alan Spector is the author of five books. He lives and writes in St. Louis. Learn more at aaspector.com.

Author Resources Right at Your Fingertips

with Kevin Ericson, Peggy Nehman, Andrew Doty, and Linda Austin

Psst... wanna know where you can find great writing and publishing info for free? Join the SLPA on Wednesday, March 8 to discover websites bursting with advice and information that will help you learn how to write, publish, and sell books like a professional. We'll give you handouts and show you free online goodies with the

answers to your questions — even questions you don't know to ask. We'll also tell you about local writing groups and where to find writing classes in St. Louis, highlight our favorite useful books, and share our advice on starting your own company (whether as a writer or a publisher).

(Resources continued on page 2)

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAR 8: AUTHOR RESOURCES RIGHT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS WITH SLPA PANEL

APR 12: JILL FARMER: AUTHOR JOURNEY

**SATURDAY, APR 22: MERAMEC WORKSHOP
"HOW TO PUBLISH YOUR OWN BOOK:
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW"**

MAY 10: TIM YOHE: SOCIAL MEDIA JOURNALING

SATURDAY, JULY 22: JUDITH BRILES WORKSHOP

(Resources continued from page 1)

This SLPA meeting will include a walk-through of online and local resources and will feature a panel discussion with local publishing professionals:

Peggy Nehmen is committed to successful design solutions and excellence. Her company, *Nehmen-Kodner*, provides book design, branding, and marketing for self-published authors, startups, and established companies. Peggy helps authors through the design process to produce customized book covers and interiors. Clients benefit from her keen sense of typography, printing, and production.

Andrew Doty began publishing poetry at the age of 16, then earned a degree in creative writing before pursuing a career as an editor. He provides comprehensive editorial services and consulting to authors and publishers, with a portfolio that includes

bestselling books and celebrity authors, in addition to providing copyediting, proof-reading, and publication production management of all kinds through his company, *Editwright*.

Linda Austin became an advocate for life writing and memoir after writing and publishing her mother's memoir, *Cherry Blossoms in Twilight*, of growing up in Japan around WWII. She has since written and published *Poems That Come to Mind*, about caregiving, and a Korean War veteran's memoir, *Battlefield Doc*. She encourages life writing via her website moonbridgebooks.com and advises on indie-publishing and social media marketing.

Kevin Ericson, the SLPA's website manager, will moderate the meeting and reveal the many resources to be found on the SLPA website.

Bulletin Board

- **Timothy Imhoff** recently released the e-book version of *Mended Wings*, a novel featuring a young woman's journey to independence following a traumatic brain injury, and featuring cover design from Peggy Nehman. Read more at timothyimhoff.com.
- **Georgene Herz's** book *Jess Likes to Jump* can now be found on the shelves at the Novel Neighbor bookstore in Webster Groves.
- Congratulations to **David John Jaegers**, who was recently announced as the winner of the IBPA's St. Louis Publishers Association Affiliate Scholarship to the 2017 Publishing University in Portland in April. David plans to share what he learns at Publishing University by giving seminars, writing articles, blogging, and mentoring one on one. Visit David's website at astrotheologian.com.
- **Fangfang Xu** recently delivered lectures and signed books at the University Club of Denver and the Denver Chinese School following the publication of her book *Galloping Horses: Artist Xu Beihong and His Family in Mao's China*. For more information, visit beihongchinaarts.com.

July 22 Judith Briles Workshop



The St. Louis Publishers Association is proud to announce a forthcoming workshop with the founder of Author U: "The Book Shepard" **Judith Briles!** This workshop will be held on July 22, and tickets will be available at discounted prices to SLPA members and affiliates. Save the date and stay tuned for more information!

APRIL 22 MERAMEC WORKSHOP

Registration is open for the SLPA's semiannual four-hour self-publishing workshop, "How to Publish Your Own Book: What You Need to Know," at St. Louis Community College – Meramec at bit.ly/1Uatrgi. The course number is WRIT:704, and the registration number is 201705 50049.

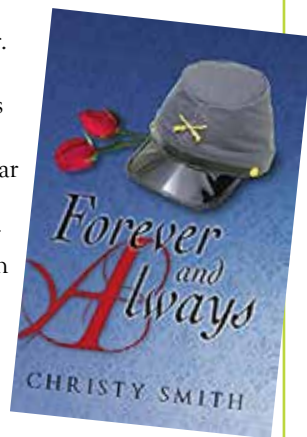
GATEWAY CON VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

June 16–18, the SLPA will have a table at Gateway Con, the new and exciting writing conference and convention hosted by the St. Louis Writers Guild. To volunteer or learn more, contact Warren Martin at president@stlouispublishers.org.

THE BOOK CORNER

Forever and Always by Christy Smith

Forever and Always tells of the ups and downs of the freshly discovered love of a young couple, Patricia Heifelmeyer and John McDougal, at the end of the Civil War. The location of the book is New Orleans Parish, the year of our Lord 1864. Author Christy Smith has delivered a love story that will keep you asking for more!



Christy's book is available at:
<https://www.amazon.com/Forever-Always-Christy-Smith-ebook/dp/B014XHUTZQ>

MEMBERSHIP
\$60 in 2017

SLPA Meets on the Second Wednesday of the Month

RICHMOND HEIGHTS
COMMUNITY CENTER (THE HEIGHTS)
The Argus Room
8001 Dale Ave.
Richmond Heights, MO, 63117
(Child care available at The Heights)

Doors open for networking at 6:30pm
Program begins at 7pm
The meeting concludes around 8:30pm
Networking until 9pm
Regular meetings are free to members.
Guests: \$10 at the door.



SLPA NEWS & VIEWS
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