

# AUTHORS GUILD

Fall 2008

**BULLETIN**



**Library of Alexandria Meets Book Publishing's Long Tail:  
The \$125 Million *Authors Guild v. Google* Settlement  
Publishing's Golden Age? Al Silverman Looks Back  
The Harvard MBA Route to Authorship**

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Robert Giroux [see Deaths, p. 25] edited many of the great writers of the 20th Century but he also reserved a fraction of his attention for the so-so, which I know because he edited me.

It was the early '90s and I was trying to find a publisher for a coming-of-age novel about a U.S. Navy sailor serving aboard an ammunition ship in the Far East. I had submitted it to Giroux on the pretext that he and I had attended the same Jesuit prep school—some 40 years apart.

Months passed. No word came. So I contrived to visit his offices in Union Square unannounced, while I was in Manhattan on a business trip.

When I arrived I was told he was out to lunch. So I waited on the sidewalk until I saw an elderly man who looked like Giroux's picture. I sidled up next to him and literally delivered the elevator pitch in the creak-

ing enclosure that took us to the third floor of his offices at 19 Union Square West.

Some weeks later I received a polite rejection that began by apologizing that my manuscript had been lost in the slush pile. Giroux went on to offer a constructive critique that my supporting characters were flat and the manuscript lacked the dramatic impact of similar works ("think of the 'Caine Mutiny,'" he wrote).

He offered this parting encouragement—"You write well and you have a writer's eye." We should all mourn the passing of this editor of extraordinary grace and humanity.

—Tom Abate  
Castro Valley, CA

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The Guild encourages members to write to the Bulletin. Letters should be sent to "Letters to the Editor," The Authors Guild, 31 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10016. They can also be faxed to (212) 564-5363, or sent via e-mail to [staff@authorsguild.org](mailto:staff@authorsguild.org) (type "Letters to the Editor" in the subject line). Letters may be edited for length, grammar and clarity.

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## ALONG PUBLISHERS ROW

BY CAMPBELL GEESLIN

In a first novel titled *The Shack*, God is a jolly African-American woman. She calls herself "Papa." Jesus appears as a Jewish workman, and an Asian woman named Sakryu is the Holy Spirit.

**William P. Young**, a former office manager and hotel night clerk in Gresham, Ore., said that he wrote the book as a gift for his six children. The shack was a metaphor for "the house you build out of your own pain." The book was rejected by more than a dozen publishers before it was issued in paperback by two former ministers.

Last May, the book had become a bestseller, especially in Christian outlets, and mainline publisher Hachette entered into a partnership with the ex-ministers. Ads for *The Shack* were placed on subways in Atlanta, New York and Chicago and TV spots on the airport network. PW reported that it has sold more than two million copies.

SMART MOVE: **T. S. Eliot** gave up boxing in college and explained: "I was too slow a mover. It was much easier to be a poet."

VISUALS: Poet **Philip Larkin** detested literary read-

ings. He believed that his poems, like children, should be seen on a page and not heard. He did not want them to be read aloud.

In an essay in *The New York Times Book Review*, **Rand Richards Cooper**, author of *The Last to Go*, a story collection, wrote: "One of the first things I do when I pick up a novel is leaf through it to see what kind of pages I'm going to be staying in. Are these **Raymond Carver** pages, spare and white? Or **Saul Bellow** pages, packed with somber, thoughtful paragraphs? Certain novels are indissolubly linked in my mind with a particular look: the brazen formal experiments of *Ulysses*. The exquisite sadness of **Evan Connell's** "Bridges" novels, their miniature chapters like short stifled sobs. The urgent italics **Faulkner** gives to Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury*."

And then, Cooper delivers the point of his article: "Taped novels, which are invisible, close the door on this way of knowing."

SIGN OF THE TIMES: In July the Los Angeles Times discontinued its stand-alone section for book reviews.

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