



The Pitch

Mary Davidsaver

I prepared for my pitch to MWC Press at the 2015 David R. Collins Writers' Conference by reading through the program description several times to make sure I knew **exactly** what the panel wanted from me.

The three-member panel requested 4 things from authors—"a one page summary of their pitch—brief synopsis of the manuscript, brief author bio/other publications, brief outline of marketing ideas/strategy, etc."

I based my pitch letter on my standard agent-query letter. I tried to make it more reader friendly by adding more details than I normally would have and using double line spacing. I kept the synopsis close to what I would have written for a back cover. I listed word count, genre, and who I thought the potential readers might be. Lastly, I included my basic biographical details and focused on my writing experience and awards with the Midwest Writing Center. I added a mention of my blog to show that I could write on a steady schedule.

The synopsis I submitted contained the major characters and details of the plot; this included the ending, all in one page.

I didn't do a separate "author bio/other publications" because I didn't have anything more than what was all ready included.

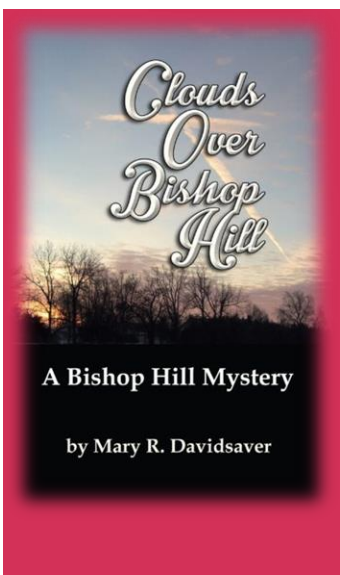
MARKETING PLAN. Coming up with a one page marketing plan was the best thing the committee could have asked from me. I essentially came up with a long list of the things I wanted to do. Some were new ideas as suggested by a marketing workshop I'd recently taken, while some were old standbys, dating back to when I had a craft business in Bishop Hill. Having it printed out on a page made it all seem quite doable.

Not requested but included because I had it—a cover design based on a photo of mine.

Also not requested, but added for the sake of neatness, I assembled folders with a complete set of information for each panelist. To my knowledge no one else did that.

The final step was to talk with confidence about my book and answer questions for 10 minutes. I had pitched at the 2014 DRC Writers' Conference and it gave me some good practice. Also, one of the reasons for keeping a blog was to become more familiar with my book, to understand it better. I think Ethan Canin touched on the subject in his recent remarks at the Bettendorf library: *writing is thinking something through*. My blog became a useful tool, and I'm always looking for ways to improve my writing.

MWC member and DRCWC Pitch Selection, Mary Davidsaver is a retired jewelry designer who has written for local newspapers since 2007. Mary has two Iron Pen first place awards, and in 2013, she was the first local writer to win the Great River Writer's Retreat Contest. This is her first novel with MWC Press.



Clouds Over Bishop Hill

offers "...a meticulous yet delicately restrained imagery of the historical and character complex-ities of the Swedish prairie colony."

~Robin Throne,
author [*Her Kind*](#)

The Moon in Money

Rebekah J. Buchanan

I walked along the dirt soaked road
Pitch black, even now. No light to find my way.
I imagined what it was like to be young. What it was like
to be black and scared and alone.

I wondered what Emmett thought when he was alone that night.
On this road that even now,
60 years later, still ensconced in blackness,
there are only the secrets of the moon.

I stood in the road, dust surrounding my toes.
Dust heavy with history. Telling stories of blackness;
stories of hatred, of anger, of pain.
Revealing the truth that was easily hidden before.

And I couldn't walk anymore. Thinking of
those histories and stories the dust chose to tell.
Whispering, slowly releasing the memories buried.
Memories buried by those who choose to forget.

On the road in Money, Mississippi my whiteness
did not make me free. Clashing against the
Black
Hoping I would forget what it meant.

Thinking of Emmett. To be fourteen and alone, only the moon with
him.
As they tied him up, reminding him that talking
to the wrong person, is punishable by
Death.

A death with only the dirt and the dark and the moon
falling across his face, sharing the secret.
A death that changed the world,
seeing what it meant to be a child in the blackness.

But those events did not change this place.
They did not change this plot in Money, Mississippi
where there is still blackness and nothing
And only the moon to remember.

"The Moon in Money" was the winner of the 2015 Iron Pen competition. Rebekah Buchanan is the judge for the 2017 Iron Pen contest.

2016 Iron Pen Winners

Fiction

1st Place: Jeffrey Bert
2nd Place: P. Charles Horan
3rd Place: Xixuan Collins
Honorable Mention:
Daniel Moore

Poetry

1st Place: Megan Vollstedt
2nd Place: Michelle Ladwig
3rd Place: Mark Lucas
Honorable Mentions:
Michelle Opsahl
Jennifer Knox

Nonfiction

1st place: Laura Winton
2nd place: Margaret
Sherwin
3rd place: Roger Pavey, Sr.
Honorable Mention:
Steve Robinson

*Rebekah J. Buchanan
recently returned to the
Midwest from
Philadelphia to teach
English Education at
Western Illinois
University. When she's
not writing, teaching, or
waiting for the new X-
Files, she's in search of
good pizza.
Her recent work can be
found in From the
Depths, Blotterature,
and Noctura.*

rebekahjbuchanan.com

The Year of Leading Change

Jodie Toobey, MWC Board President

The year 2016 has been one of change for me in so many aspects, some of which I expected, and some of which I didn't. My daughter graduated high school and started college, my son started high school, and my husband recently finished an online Master's degree he's been working on for over half a decade. I started a new selective subsidizing publishing business, 918studio press, with a new business partner, something I'd never done before. Unexpected, or at least less-expected, changes include the death of my mother-in-law, my business partner moving to Michigan due to a family health issue, and helping my brother, recent single dad, with weekend childcare for my two nieces while he works. Throw into the mix the Cubs winning the World Series after 108 years and the historical election (either way it could've went), and 2016 has been an eventful year.

Another change I knew was coming as the calendar turned to January 1, 2016, was to MWC's home office, where I serve as the president of the board of directors. The impending move had been on the monthly meeting agenda for nearly two years already as rumors swirled and other building owners sold their space to the same developer. There were lots of uneasiness and questions about where we would end up, how we could possibly afford it, and how we'd even physically make the move.

Finally, things started moving into place in the spring when we came to an agreement with the developer to sell our Bucktown space; thankfully, they didn't want to close until November, so that gave us plenty of time to get things in order. We looked at numerous places, and just about signed up and moved into one of them, but none of them felt completely right. It was not a good location, or the parking was bad, or the space was small, or it wasn't accessible, or any of a myriad of complications. We had talked about the Rock Island Public Library for quite a while, so after exhausting all other options, we came to an agreement to lease approximately half of the ground floor. October was filled with lots of packing and purging, and figuring out what to do with all the unneeded or unwanted things. I contacted three movers, but only heard back from one, Two Men and A Truck, who charged a reasonable hourly rate and only for actual work time. I was surprised when I called a week or ten days from the move to tell them the board agreed to employ their services, and they were free on our second moving day choice. When the movers arrived, they were friendly and helpful. Plus, upon learning we were a non-profit, one of them, Vince, called his boss to tell him so we could get the move for free. We are so grateful to so many people who've helped us in this journey, but especially to Two Men and A Truck for moving us without it costing us a cent, and to Rick Pa, our IT savior who moved and set up all our technology (which I'm sure involved a lot more that I don't even understand due to my less-than-tech-savviness).

As I've found time and again in my forty-plus years on this earth, things always seem to work out. We're settling into the space and preparing for a new year. Change is inevitable and it's scary, but it keeps things interesting. I'd have never guessed.



MWC has been important to me in so many ways and has provided me with so many opportunities; the move is just one in a long list. I hope to serve it well as I remain as president, on the board, as a volunteer, or as a patron as long as I am able.

Here's a toast to 2017 and settling into the changes made in 2016.

*Jodie Toobey
MWC Board President*



Dear Time

Mike Bayles

Dear Time,

You hold me in gray mist as you linger on a November day. Standing alone I feel your coldness in my bones, but you say it won't always be this way. In my solitude you speak about a person gone, and the love that never goes away. There was never a right time, but I am warmed by memories of her. You say you are of the sun and moon, night and day, witnessed by me and measured by others. You whisper about seasons that pass. I say that you are standing still, but the earth still turns. I am touched by a gentle rain, and you say the rain drop has been here since the beginning of the earth. Summer days begin with gold light of dawn, and at dusk the days burn in colors of orange and fade, leaving darkness. You rest in darkness and in my dreams. In dreams you reflect all my time. Today I feel you in bones grown brittle with age. In stillness you lie before and after me, in my universe and heart. In my dreams you take me to the furthest star.

The Wonderer

Palindrome for the Stars

Mike Bayles

faint touches of light
visions of passing bodies
velvet canvas of night
song of passage
easing day
dreams of universes
surround me
universes of dreams
day easing
passage of song
night of canvas velvet
bodies passing of visions
light of touches faint

MWC member, Mike Bayles is the author of the upcoming *Breakfast at The Good Hope Home*, a literary collage that tells the story of a son visiting his Alzheimer's disease father in the nursing home, and the loss of the family life he's known. The book is set for release in February 2017 from 918studio Press. He is also the author of three books of poetry: *The Harbor I Seek*, *The Rabbit House*, and *Threshold*, which earned the 2013 Book of the Year Award from Rockford Writers' Guild.



Saturday, October 8

Independent Publisher Book Fair:

Library Lobby, 10am to Noon

&

Panel Discussion on Publishing:

Gold & Silver Meeting Rooms, 2:30pm to 4pm

Write the future – Or can we?

Joanne Wiklund

When it comes to the Future, we have choices to make that will make a difference when we get there, but can we really change it? Do the changes we make in our trajectory toward the future make us happy or sad? Do we succeed in our goals or do we fail to make them? What is it that makes one writer so successful and others not so much?

I've read and studied how to market books forever, and on the Internet, since 2003. I've read mostly How To's on my eReader and books from the library. I've read Writer's Digest faithfully and my email files are full of things I should have read four years ago. I keep thinking I'll get to them. I have two facebook pages, one for my personal things and one as a writing professional. I get reactions to writing on both pages.

But do I really know what will happen to ebooks or hardcover books in the future? No one knows for sure. So I will continue to make writing my priority, more so than in the years since my ebook came online and my trade size paper book came out last Fall. I have decided what I have to do is write. I keep thinking about the quote someone gave me. It was attributed to Michelangelo on his deathbed. He supposedly said to his youthful apprentice, "Draw, Antonio, Draw."

He could have said, "Antonio, study anatomy more often. Antonio, buy new pencils, Antonio, get yourself an assistant." He didn't. He just told him to write. I have discovered as a writer, through the years, you have to keep writing. You can talk with authors, read all kinds of books, make huge diagrams, branch all your novels, and wear a T-shirt with the cover of your book on it. But the best thing you can do is not enter contests, it's write.

Because the more you write, the more proficient you will become. Your voice will mature and your vocabulary expand.

You will learn how to start and when to be done and write: "The End."



I have discovered as a writer, through the years, you have to keep writing. You can talk with authors, read all kinds of books, make huge diagrams, branch all your novels, and wear a T-shirt with the cover of your book on it. But the best thing you can do is not enter contests, it's write.

Joanne Wiklund

SARA DENZ AKANT / CALLIE GARNETT / MARGARET ROSS

3 POETS



Sara Denz Akant is the author of *Refuge*, selected by *Granta* as one of the Best New American Poets, 2014, and *Granta* Best of the Best, 2015. She has been recognized with fellowships from Yale, MacArthur, and the National Endowment for the Arts. She has taught poetry and writing at the University of Iowa and the City University of New York.



Callie Garnett is a writer and cultural critic living in Brooklyn, where she has been and raised. Her writing has appeared in *Public Books*, *Granta*, *First Things*, and the *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*. She has taught poetry and writing at the University of Iowa and the City University of New York.



Margaret Ross is the author of *11/11/11*, selected by *Granta* as one of the Best New American Poets, 2014. She has been recognized with fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Endowment for the Arts. She has taught poetry and writing at the University of Iowa and the City University of New York.

April 24 / 10:00 pm / First / Downtown Williams / Room 101 (2008-09) / Sara Denz Akant

The Star Makers

Ann Boaden

A Christmas baby. How exactly right. Their firstborn, their particular ownership of the cosmic miracle. Star and angels. And inflatable footballs and books. He buys them too soon because he is eager and impulsive, and he loves both poetry and sports.

And because a son made with Elizabeth will be perfect.

And their Advent will shine.

There is no sun in the obstetrician's office this day. Low light and soft blue and mauve textures. Upholstry with designs that swirl in vague forms. He will remember the forms, obsessively, long after; will ponder them. Perhaps they are supposed to represent the seeds of children. Or wings.

He and Elizabeth sit in padded chairs with wooden armrests, their fingers entwined.

The doctor's face is dark and smooth. Her voice is soft, the voice of another culture that pursues serenity. He hears his own voice, ragged, cracking out of control—

"You're telling us you can't do anything? Anything at all? That he'll just—just die five minutes after he's born?"

There is depth in the dark eyes that look at him intently. He cannot read them. The doctor says, "I am sorry. The malformation of the fetus—"

"Yes, but can't you *do* something? You're a doctor, you're supposed to have the expertise—"

"Doctors can do only what their skill allows," she says. "And sometimes that skill is not equal to the need for healing."

"Yes but—" He runs a hand through his hair. It bristles. He knows he's being unreasonable. "What the—"

Elizabeth says, "Tom."

He tries to calm himself in the face of these two calm women. He does not know where Elizabeth is, whether despairing or incredibly courageous. Her hands do not tell him. Her fingers are strong in his but they are always strong; she is a professional gardener. He takes breath and says to the doctor, softer, "So. You're telling us the baby will be born alive but then—"

The doctor bows her head. She says again, "I am sorry."

In her soft, careful accent the words do not seem superficial; they are shaped and weighted. And they are, to his ears, bleak with old pain that cannot be comforted. Still he says, "How about—I mean, isn't there some specialist—"

She is a specialist. They both know it. She says, "I can recommend other physicians to whom you might apply for a second opinion. But the possibility of another diagnosis—"

Elizabeth stirs. "No," she says. And then, "Will he live long enough for us to—to know him alive?"

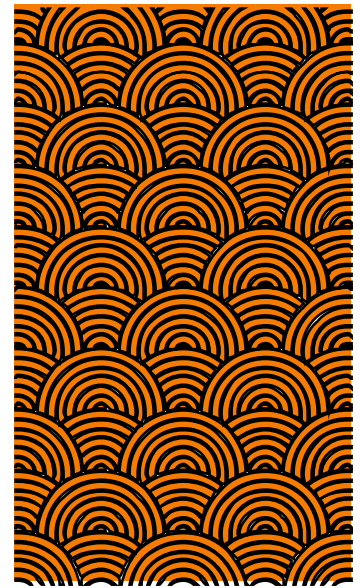
"You will be able to hold him."

"For a short time."

"Yes."

That night in bed Tom and Elizabeth hold each other. She strokes his head with her strong fingers as he cries against her. She does not cry.

Continued next page



*And he remembers: he's
read of some place that sells
stars in the far-off galaxies,
and people buy them and
name them for loved ones.
Sometimes for dead loved
ones. So that they can peer
through a telescope into
another world and find it
shining with the thing
dearest to them.*

*Ann Boaden, author of
[Light and Leaven: Women Who
Shaped Augustana's First
Century](#)*



The Star Makers continued

He goes about his days in anger, anger that takes him suddenly, in the midst of some ordinariness—talking to a student, reading the novel for his next class—takes him and shakes him blind. My son will never be twenty, will never look at me with these steady young eyes that both respect and challenge. He will never read George Eliot. And for the moment of his darkness, all that he loves is shattered.

And meanwhile their son grows, Elizabeth is great with him and the long lean legs and arms of her look as if they belong to someone else. At the nursery where she works she handles earth and plants, holds seedlings delicate as lace in her strong fingers. She is serene and distant.

One night he says, because he can't help it, "Aren't you ever angry?"

She takes her time. Then says, "No. Not now." Puts a hand on her swollen stomach. "Not—while I have him with me."

But Tom does not have the child with him. And so the anger is only his, something he cannot share or impose. He keeps it with him; it grows in him as the baby grows in her. He makes anguished and blasphemous prayers in the sleepless night. The night is silent.

And inevitably they grow apart, they who have made this child from a love focused and clear as fire. He looks at her sometimes across the kitchen table as if she were across a galaxy. He no longer weeps.

And so the days are accomplished, the leaves fall and then the snow, and on a calm winter night the child is born.

He is a beautiful baby. He looks perfect. Not even very blotchy. He has a little wet silk of hair, and for one brutally joyful moment Tom thinks it must be a mistake, this is a healthy child. This is the miracle they couldn't even dare hope for. He looks quickly at Elizabeth. Her face is still and deep. He sees, somehow, that she is in the presence of miracle. But it is not that miracle.

They name the child John.

And then, gently as she holds the seedlings, she offers him to Tom, and he reaches, hesitant before a gift he vaguely feels he hasn't earned, and together they hold their child. Their arms join around him to make a cradle. He looks up at them. His eyes are bright. Elizabeth says, "We love you, John. We love you. God loves you. You are going into love, little John." Her words are clear and steady. Tom whispers them after her, stumbling, as on shifting ground. He does not know what he believes as he holds this perfect warm baby under Elizabeth's strong arms; he knows only that he believes these words as he speaks them.

We love you, John. They say this until his bright eyes look at nothing, until he is perfectly still.

They hold him, together. And somehow Tom is delivered of his anger; anger trivializes this momentous event. Or rather, the event trivializes the anger. Tom can't say that suddenly God speaks, only that the silence is different, not a blank but an opening, as into a deep well where you can see stars at the bottom. And he remembers: he's read of some place that sells stars in the far-off galaxies, and people buy them and name them for loved ones. Sometimes for dead loved ones. So that they can peer through a telescope into another world and find it shining with the thing dearest to them. And in that remembering he knows where Elizabeth has been, all these months. Now it's as if he and Elizabeth are connected to John, in some shining other place.

Down the hall some flat inaccurate voices are singing a carol. *The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight.*

He looks at Elizabeth. And catches his breath at how she is shining.

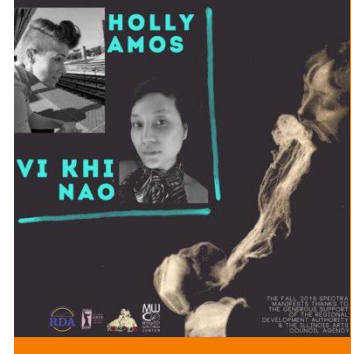


2016 Great River
Writer's Retreat winner

*Mary Howard, author
Discovering the Body and
The Girl with Wings*

SPECTRA

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH
7 PM OPEN MIC | 8 PM READING
ROZZ-TOX | 2108 3RD AVE
FREE | SUGGESTED \$5 DONATION



Delusional Images

Lanny 'Steve' Biehler

Windblown apples fall from a tree
when ready to harvest for sauce, cake, pie,
applejack brandy.
Fallen fruit, not pretty when worm holes
adorn the crimson splotched bruised skin
lying still on green grass of summer,
beckons one to taste in spite of appearance.

Arrive early to pick, for deer at dusk,
find low hanging fruit delectable.
Select globes of goodness, take a peck
from beneath and above to make a pie.

I remember, years ago, Grandma filled
glass jars with every possible fruit
as insurance against hunger after harvest,
to fill the void before the next.
Water-bath produce, sliced, pureed, pickled,
became food for the table, dessert, umami to
enliven gamey meat of every kind.

Peeled, removed, mottled skin does wonders
for the attractiveness of whitened flesh.
Aroma assails the nose, juice surrounds
fingers on knife handle, as it extracts the core
turning whole flesh into slices of cinnamon,
nutmeg based mouth candy.

On the first anniversary, Sept. 11, 2002

Kathleen Lawless Cox

This poem first appeared in the Dispatch · Argus

Vincent, in a splendid swirl
Spins the stars
Across the sky
Scoops up the grandboy,
Walt, exuberant, generous soul
Free-wheeling words:
"Over all the sky -- the sky!
Far, far out of reach,
Studded, breaking out
The eternal stars."
There are new stars out tonight
Who didn't ask to be stars
Who just wanted to be "somebody's darling"
Who hadn't burnt out yet
Who weren't ready to be stars
Yahweh, God, Allah, ultimate reality,
Lost in your mystery
I hear only silence
The dark canopy of night
Without which I could not see
The stars

In memoriam

Our warmest thoughts
and love go out to all of
families and friends of
the MWC writers we
lost in 2016:

Lanny 'Steve' Biehler

Kathleen Lawless Cox

Lyle Ernst

They will be dearly
missed and we will
cherish their written
word left behind
for all of us.

