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ATG Interviews Joe Lee

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so many small dealers, book scouts, and e-Bay sellers scouring the library sales, estate sales, etc. that it's become quite difficult to find enough decent stock to make it worth your time on a bookbuying trip. I find that I'm paying more for good books, and finding fewer of them.

ATG: *Where do you get your used/out-of-print books and are there any special challenges in finding OP books in Canada?*

DR: These days, since I've stopped buying outside of my specialty, I usually buy from other dealers. I don't think that the Canadian market is much different than the American market really. Prices actually tend to be a bit lower in Canada than the U.S., depending on what region you're in, and what the exchange rate is. I expect that the biggest challenge in Canada would be the distances you have to travel. I'm in one of the most heavily populated areas, so it's not such a concern here unless you want to buy or sell at book fairs (I don't). From most of our cities, it's closer to drive to a U.S. city than to another Canadian city.

ATG: *What do you consider to be the best Canadian sources for OP books online?*

DR: There are very few borders in the OP trade these days. **ABE** is a Canadian company, but has booksellers from around the world. I would think that the percentage of Canadian sellers on **ABE** is not much different than the percentage on **Choosebooks** (a U.S. database). The only truly Canadian online source that I can think of is the **BooksCanada** mailing list, which I run. You can subscribe to it for free at <http://www.ramsaybooks.com/booksCanada/>.

ATG: *Are there any used/out-of-print book stores in Toronto that librarians should consider visiting while attending the American Library Association Conference?*

DR: Toronto has some wonderful stores. Depending on your interests, try these:

Steven Temple Books, 489 Queen Street West — Wonderful stock of Canadian literature, among other things. Steven is tremendously knowledgeable (also a bit of a character depending on the mood you catch him in).

D. & E. Lake, 237 King Street East - For some truly rare items. Lake has handled some of the very best (and most expensive) items ever seen in this country.

Hugh Anson-Cartwright, 229 College Street - One of the very best known Canadian booksellers. Hugh is a gentleman, and has a great stock of Canadiana.

Jamie Fraser Books, 427A Queen Street West - Has some wonderful pulps and paperbacks. Particularly Science Fiction and Mystery.

Abelard Books, 519 Queen Street West - Philosophy, Theology.

Acadia Books, 232 Queen Street West - Art

David Mason Books, 342 Queen Street West

McBurnie & Cutler, 698 Queen Street West

Joseph Patrick Books, by appointment (416) 766-3357 - Canadiana

There are lots of others as well. Toronto has an overabundance of great bookstores. Most of them will carry a used bookstore guide to the city which includes a map.

ATG: *What are some important factors librarians should consider when buying used/out-of-print books online? Are there any special considerations when buying books from Canadian used/out-of-print booksellers?*

DR: This really is the same market it's always been. It's just larger, faster moving, and as a consequence, sometimes less organized. You still get what you pay for. It's much easier to compare by price than by quality, so it's easier to find yourself with an inexpensive but shabby purchase. There are sellers out there who do not know the difference between a first edition, a second printing, and a facsimile reprint - as there have always been. There are even sellers who will sell books that are missing pages (because they don't collate), or have major damage that isn't noted - though this is less common than edition errors. So while you certainly should look for the best price, be sure to read descriptions carefully. Pay attention to the sellers. Read the terms of sale. Most reputable booksellers with experience will ship with an invoice to libraries. All should offer a generous return policy. Look for affiliations (**ABAC**, **ABAA**, **ABA**, **ILAB**, **IOBA**). All of them require that book-

sellers operate their businesses ethically. Most require that booksellers demonstrate or acquire a particular level of knowledge. However, don't be turned off if a bookseller is not affiliated. It's just one clue to the level of service they offer.

ATG: *What suggestions, advice, etc. would you give to someone wanting to get into the out-of-print book business today?*

DR: Educate yourself. Find a mentor who is willing to teach you (and find a way to make it worthwhile for them). The traditional method of getting into this trade is to apprentice with an experienced and knowledgeable bookseller. Read books on the subject. Join mailing lists. A good starting place might be to join the **Bibliophile** mailing list <http://www.bibliophilegroup.com/>.

Many of the sellers coming into the business today don't have any background in the trade. I didn't have any myself when I started. I didn't even understand how much there was to know until I took that year off and started reading. The OP trade has a long history, and it's more than just a retail business. The very best booksellers in the trade are scholars first, and retailers second. There is a tendency to write this off to "elitism." But that's not fair to those people who have spent lifetimes accumulating knowledge. It's an easy business to do badly, and a very difficult business to do well.

ATG Interviews Joe Lee

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by **Allison P. Mays** (Acquisitions Librarian, Millsaps College, 1701 N. State Street, Jackson, MS 39210; Phone: 601-974-1083) **<maysap@millsaps.edu>**

A Word from the Underdog, or How I Created my Own Small Press

Column Editor's Note: *As chair of the Mississippi Library Association's Author Awards Committee, I heard from Joe Lee when his book was nominated for the award in fiction. We got to talking about how it was published and the world of small presses, and I thought this would make a good article for ATG. Here is a chance to hear from an author who made the decision to go it alone in the publishing world. — APM*

ATG: *How did you get the idea for your novel?*

JL: I began writing the original draft of *On The Record* in early 1997. The story was loosely based on my wife's duties as Consumer Protection Director under **Mike Moore** (Mississippi Attorney General). It's a work of fiction, since I have a corrupt Attorney General and a series of corrupt and influential people who greatly shape the plot.

ATG: *How did you get started trying to have your book published? Describe the process.*

JL: I have a background in radio, television and journalism, and I worked full-time in television through the end of 1999, so it was 2000 before I devoted full attention to the novel. I worked with an editor in Dallas that year, and I began looking for an agent and/or publisher in early 2001. I contacted literary agents with a proposal, which included a synopsis, cover letter and brief personal biography. Most of the agents were in New York City, although a few were sprinkled in different parts of the country. I wrote to between 75-100 in the first few months of 2001, and during this time I was also contacting small publishing houses in this part of the country. While all the agents ultimately said no, most (75% or more) turned me down because of full client lists. A considerable number were very encouraging, however, telling me that I was likely to find an agent. Of the smaller publishers, I was told by all that my subject matter either didn't fit their niche (i.e., cookbooks, children's books, etc.) or that a larger, mainstream publisher would likely do more justice to my novel than they could.

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ATG: *How/why did you decide to start Dogwood Press?*

JL: I became acquainted with **Quail Ridge Press** of Brandon in May, 2001, through an article I wrote about them for a now-defunct business newspaper in Jackson. I asked editor-in-chief **Gwen McKie** to read my manuscript in early September, 2001. I felt her input as someone knowledgeable of the industry would be invaluable, even if she had no intention of publishing my work (**Quail Ridge** has never published novels). She called me a month later. She explained that she and her husband had been in New York City on business when the attacks on the **World Trade Center** took place, and that she'd read the manuscript as an "escape" from the 24-hour news channels they were watching from their hotel room. **Gwen** said there was a strong possibility that they were going to publish *On The Record*, although it wasn't definite—they would be having discussions about the feasibility of publishing and marketing a novel for the first time. The **McKie's** ultimately decided not to publish my novel, stating that they didn't have the connections and expertise to market a novel and simply couldn't justify an exception after saying no to so many other people over the years. They did offer their design and layout services in the event that I opted to publish myself. I continued to look for an agent and/or publisher over the next few weeks, but by then I was giving serious thought to the financial outlay necessary to self-publishing. I did this because I felt the book was strong enough for publication (my editor thought so, too), and I had no way of knowing if I would run into an agent or publisher who was ready to take a chance on the manuscript...it could have been the following week, or I might still be looking. And self-publishing, if nothing else, gave me complete creative control, both editorially and financially. Another option was print-on-demand (POD), whereby I would reach an agreement with a company to produce the manuscript (at my cost), and as many copies as needed would be printed. However, I didn't get a good feel for the POD company I took a serious look at, and I read a *Writer's Digest* editorial which strongly recommended against the use of PODs for shady contracts. Sure didn't need that.

ATG: *Did you do your own layout, graphics, etc?*

JL: In May, 2002, I finally sat down with **Barney McKie** of **Quail Ridge** and made arrangements for them to produce the book. I'm very fortunate to have met a brilliant graphic designer named **Bill Wilson** through the aforementioned newspaper, and **Bill** was amenable to creating a design for a would-be book cover. **Quail Ridge** handled the interior layout and farmed the printing to a printer in Michigan, and I proofed the manuscript with their layout person several times before shipping everything off. The final copy of the manuscript, along with cover art, was sent to the printer in early June, 2002. I was told to expect books by the first week of August.

ATG: *How difficult was it to start Dogwood Press?*

JL: During the months of June and July of 2002, I set about the task of creating **Dogwood Press**, which is the name of my publishing company. There was a lot of paperwork, although much of the stuff from the **Library of Congress** could be downloaded and sent back in. It was not nearly as tedious as I'd suspected. I filed with the **Mississippi State Tax Commission** to be able to charge sales tax, and I filed with the Secretary of State's office to claim the right to the company name (I have the only **Dogwood Press** in Mississippi), and formally start the business.

ATG: *Tell us about dealing with book vendors and bookstores, big and little. Did you have problems since Dogwood is a small vanity press?*

JL: The first step toward success was when **John Evans** agreed to let me have a signing at **Lemuria** (book store in Jackson). This legendary store has given so many Mississippi authors their launch, and it's an honor to have my book on their shelves. **John**, whom I met in 1998 (I'd also written an article about **Lemuria** vs. chain book stores in the aforementioned newspaper), had gotten me in touch with Mississippi authors **Martin Hegwood** and **Louisa Dixon** in the past, and he immediately agreed to help and was super-supportive.

The next order of business was a *Clarion Ledger* (Jackson newspaper) review. The newspaper initially said they did not review any self-published (or vanity press) books. But they agreed to after being told that I indeed had store signings lined up, and that **Quail Ridge** had helped shape the look of the book (the *Clarion Ledger*, like any other newspaper of reasonable size, is deluged with people like me who want their work reviewed, and I was told that the great majority of what's submitted is absolute garbage).

While this was taking place, I'd renewed an old friendship with a woman named **Wanda Bruner**, a buyer with **American Wholesale Book Company (AWBC)** in Birmingham. My wife and I had lunch with her in June 2002, and she said to get the book to her when it was ready, and that she would get it into the hands of **Kaye Wright**, the regional acquisitions director. **AWBC** made their first buy in September, purchasing 40 books. These were targeted for **Books A Million** and **Bookland** stores in Mississippi. But when I volunteered to do signings at all of the stores (a total of ten), **Kaye** ordered 228 more books! As we wound through the fourth quarter, we really picked up momentum and were selling 25-30 or more books at each store. **Kaye** continued to order books, and to date she has ordered 628 books, which is essentially one-fifth of our entire first printing!

With those signings in place, I began contacting other independent stores around the state. I've signed at **Square Books** in Oxford, **Reeds Guntree Books** in Tupelo, **Bookends** in Bay St. Louis and the **Book Mart** in Starkville. I've also sold four to six books to other small stores around the state as well as the **Jackson International Airport Gift Shop**, the **Mississippi**

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College book store, St. Andrew's book store and a variety of other places. I signed at 24 stores around the state during the fourth quarter, and I even drove to Dallas for a signing at the home of my father and step-mother. Every book store I've spoken with has been interested in the book. Some of the signings have been more successful than others.

Square Books was a failure. A man who helped me with my marketing early on did some very good things to help me, but he didn't contact **Square** until early October about a proposed late-October signing, and he had reasoned that with the Ole Miss football team out of town we would have uninterrupted traffic. He couldn't have been more wrong—it was a ghost town. I agreed to a signing at **Reeds** in Tupelo on a Monday, nine days before Christmas, and despite newspaper advertising (which the store paid for), almost no one came. On the other hand, we did great at **Lemuria** and the **Book Mart** (we sent personalized invitations for those, since I have family and friends going way back in Jackson and Starkville), and the **Books A Million** stores in Columbus, Biloxi, Jackson, Meridian and Hattiesburg were very fruitful. I also had signings at the local **Barnes & Noble**, **B. Dalton**, and **Borders** stores.

I really haven't found any prejudice at all toward the book because it's self-published, other than the initial nay-saying from the *Clarion Ledger*. The individual stores are pleased with the look, and nearly all the stores I've visited have been pleased with sales from my signings.

ATG: *What was it like dealing with big online vendors like Amazon or B&N? Have you been successful with them? Did you have to spend a lot on advertising?*

JL: We don't have much online exposure yet. Our own Website, www.dogwoodpress.com is one option, as is www.amazon.com. Simply filling out forms on line got us into consideration for the Amazon program, and we were approved. We've only sold three to four books through Amazon, actually. That doesn't bother me

at all. Our listing on the Amazon site gives us instant credibility, and we make a lot more money selling them through our own site. We're on www.booksamillion.com as well and have sold a handful of books that way. It's simply a matter of finding time to get into everything and everywhere else, since I'm basically a one-man-band in my marketing efforts.

For promotional purposes, we ordered 10,000 foldout brochures which replicate the book cover and a lot of Website information. There's an order form as well as the synopsis (from the book jacket) and the **Martin Hegwood** quote. These look great and have garnered a great many compliments from customers, store owners and librarians. I hand them out at signings and public appearances, and many stores have requested them to display alongside my books at customer service counters.

I've also gotten a lot of mileage out of my association with **WAPT-TV** (I've been a part-time weather anchor there since 1997). They've run several stories on me, and I was a guest on their morning show in September. I've been on all of the stations around the state when I was in those cities (Greenville, Meridian, Hattiesburg, Biloxi, Columbus and Tupelo), and the radio station I used to work for was kind enough to run a free promo schedule for several weeks in November and December. Many people heard it, and I have no doubt it contributed to Jackson-area Christmas sales. I've paid for no advertising other than a pair of small newspaper ads (which I found didn't help much) in Bay St. Louis and Oxford.

ATG: *One thing acquisitions librarians are getting these days are more direct emailings/mailings from authors; I personally am a little leery of authors hawking their own books. Have you done this kind of marketing and if so, do you think it's been successful?*

JL: I am indeed approaching (via phone) librarians around the state to garner interest in my book. I haven't run into anyone who isn't interested in at least seeing a brochure, and nearly all of those librarians are amenable

to buying through me. Most librarians around the state are very interested in adding to their Mississippi author collection, so that helps. I've contacted Birmingham and New Orleans systems in the last few days, and it will be interesting to see if there's any interest there. And I just recently decided to join **Baker & Taylor**, which will make it easier for librarians to purchase the book. [Editor's Note: *On the Record* is in **Books in Print** and can be ordered through any vendor.]

By March 31, 2003, I'm 100% sure we'll have sold about 1,500 books, which is half of the first printing. I'm busy lining up signings for stores in March, April and May, and some will be in Alabama and Louisiana. There's a lot of marketing I'm trying to do, such as entering contests, lining up speaking engagements, submitting proposals to book clubs, which requires more time than I have. So I'm doing as much as I can, over a long period of time. But I'm confident that we'll run out of books by the end of the year, or be close to it.

ATG: *Will your book have a paperback edition?*

JL: **Kaye Wright** gave copies of my book to editors at **Harper Collins**, **St. Martin's** and **Penguin/Putnam**. She suggested to all that they consider releasing my book in trade paperback form. I've been asked often if my book will come out in paperback, and I'm going to give that some thought this spring. As far as a second printing of *On The Record*, that's possible. I'm hopeful that another publisher will be on board at some point and would handle that.

ATG: *Are you working on another book?*

JL: Later this spring I'll hopefully be able to resume work on *Dead Air*, which will be my follow-up novel. I began work on it in 1998 and stopped when I reached the point where I needed to conduct some extensive interviews. I look forward to getting back into it. There's also a fully-complete, professionally edited novel on my hard drive called *The Magnolia Triangle*. This is a personal journey, and although the folks who've read it rave, I'm not sure it's the right follow-up. Maybe a good third novel. 🌳

ATG Interviews Dr. Vladimir N. Zaitsev

Director of the National Library of Russia and President of the Russian Library Association

Interview by **Frederick C. Lynden** <frederick_lynden@brown.edu>

Translated by **Irina L. Lynden**

We have asked Dr. Vladimir N. Zaitsev, currently Director of the National Library of Russia (NLR) and President of the Russian Library Association, to tell us about his career and the NLR. The NLR, now more than 200 years old, was founded in 1795 by Catherine the Great with two purposes: to maintain complete collections of Russian books and to make them available for general public usage. By now its collections comprise the world's most complete repository of books and periodicals in the Russian, Ukrai-

nian, and Belorussian languages. The library houses an extensive stock of foreign books, and an exceptionally rich collection of incunabula and rare books. The manuscript collection of NLR ranks among the major collections of this kind worldwide. Today the library contains over 33 million items, including books, journals, maps, microforms, prints, engravings, posters, playbills, electronic files, and other materials. — FL

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