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\$uccess

The book cover shown in the background features the title 'Our Love Affairs with Success' in a cursive font, with 'with' in a smaller font. Below the title, it says 'Recipe for 100s Years' and 'By Maralyn D. Hill & Brenda C. Hill'. The cover has a blue and white patterned design.

Your Path to a Successful Book

Maralyn D. Hill

Brenda C. Hill

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Table of Contents

Part I—Writing	1
1—Before You Begin	3
2—Fiction or Non-Fiction...Or That Fuzzy Line Between.....	11
3—Journaling.....	20
4—Writing in Tandem.....	35
5—Research.....	38
6—Editing, Grammar & Formatting.....	42
Part II—Marketing.....	52
7—Goals: Identifying Needs & Competition	58
8—Understanding Your Target Market & Sale of Books	69
9—The Promotional Campaign and Publicity.....	83
Part III—Publishing.....	92
10—Agents	94
11—Traditional Publishing.....	99
12—Print-On-Demand (POD).....	104
13—Ebooks.....	112
14—Vanity Presses.....	115
Part IV—The Hill Team Hints.....	118
15—Creativity.....	121
16—The Ending is the Beginning.....	129
Additional Material	131
Contact Information.....	132
Maralyn Dennis Hill	133
Brenda Colley Hill.....	135
Additional Workbook Pages for Notes.....	136

1—Before You Begin

“Life does not consist mainly—or even largely—of facts and happenings. It consists mainly of the storm of thoughts that is forever blowing through one’s head.” –Mark Twain

Writers’ workshops and conferences

We had been attending writers’ workshops and classes before we decided to write our first book in tandem. We both find this ongoing learning process to be invaluable. We owe the success of our recent books to the fact that we continue to study and to improve by doing two things:

- One is to seek advice from those who know... for example, best selling New York Times author, Barnaby Conrad, who began and ran the Santa Barbara Writer’s Conference for many years.
- The other tip we call our *Nike* philosophy is to stop thinking and talking about writing a book and *Just do it*. It will never be finished or be perfect, but it will be published and read. Then you can learn, grow and go on to the next project with increased success.

Presently, we speak at workshops on writing and POD publishing in several states. Maralyn also conducts monthly writing, marketing, coaching, editing and POD seminars in the Phoenix area.

Tips we have learned from writers’ workshops in order to prepare for the workshop, editor or publisher:

- Are you writing in the first or third person? The present or past tense? Whichever you choose, stick it to it like *Krazy Glue*.
- Tempting as it is, refrain from editing your own work... at least until the first draft is complete.
- The Cheerio Tip—after the first draft, there is one editing job you can do yourself. Author Cork Millner, from the Santa Barbara Writer’s Conference, taught us a simple, effective method to streamline your copy:

“Take a pen to almost every *and*, *but*, *yet*, *so*, *however*, and *too* that does not add meaning to your story. Circle those little words. Now look at your page. It will resemble

a bunch of Cheerios. Remove these Cheerios and your shorter story will sing.” We call them *lifesavers*.

- Show one or two chapters and the synopsis to an EDITOR. Resist the urge to let your family or friends read it until it is published. This is difficult. You may have one or two read it, but once editing starts, keep it to yourself and your editor. Reading parts in a writers’ group is fine for feedback.
- Even if writing a book is not your only job, it is a vital priority, not an afterthought. Be willing to commit, before you begin the project.

The following are tips while you’re attending a writers’ conference or workshop, especially if it is your first time:

- Often it costs less to stay nearby instead of the workshop site. Even so, pay the money and be with the group. We have found that the networking and camaraderie happening behind the scenes can be as valuable as the workshop itself... schmoozing is a positive word.
- Arrive to class early, well dressed, with your papers packed neatly in a file with a good pen. It is a myth that writers are just creative hippie types who look disheveled or *artistic*. Do be yourself. However, the truth is that most SUCCESSFUL writers are well-dressed, well organized, business people.
- One of the most valuable tools we have learned is to read aloud to a friend, or... at least, yourself, before you finish your last draft. Do this before you read aloud to a writing group.

Lou Willet Stanek, Ph.D., author of *So You Want to Write a Novel*, taught us this valuable editing truth a decade ago... “THE EAR CAN HEAR WHAT THE EYE CANNOT SEE.” This will help your flow when you read in a workshop.

- When called upon to read, do not describe what you are reading. Simply stand up and begin. We cannot repeat the cardinal rule of writing enough... *show, don’t tell*.
- Make and practice an elevator speech about your book. That translates to giving a synopsis in 30 seconds or less.
- Take a one page synopsis for the book/s you are going to pitch. Put a brief bio (with publishing credits) on the back of the same page. Agents and publishers do not want a copy of your manuscript at the conference. For good luck, keep a copy in your room.
 - If you’ve signed up for a pitch session, look up the person online and discover interests. [Http://www.litmatch.com](http://www.litmatch.com) has a listing of agents you can sort by genre.

- Know about the agency.
- Be sure to have some marketing ideas ready in case you are asked.
- Don't be intimidated by the agents and publishers. They are attending a conference because they are interested in finding new material. But, *stalking* is not suggested.

There are many well-known writers' conferences and workshops. However, there are lesser known ones that cost less, and can offer exceptional experiences. Listed are a variety of well-established conferences or workshops—something for everyone. If you want a detailed list with thorough descriptions including dates and cost of more than 800 conferences, visit Shaw Guides at <http://writing.shawguides.com>. Many of those listed below are from Shaw Guides. We've not indicated dates as these are held annually. Two other great sources are the magazines, *The Writer* and *Writers Digest*. Your own state will generally have several conferences.

Notes:

Writers Conferences:

- Shaw Guides at <http://writing.shawguides.com>.
- American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA) Annual Writers Conference, est. 1971, 2-day, <http://www.asja.org/calendar/womain.php>, 212 997-0947.
- Antioch Writers' Workshop, 7-day, est. 1985, <http://www.antiochwritersworkshop.com>, phone 937 475-7357.
- Aspen Summer Words Writing Retreat & Literary Festival, 5-day celebration, est. 1976, <http://www.aspenwriters.org>, phone 970 925-3122.
- The Columbus Writers Conference, 2-day, est. 1993, <http://www.creativevista.com>, phone 614 451-0174.
- Colgate Writers' Conference, 7-day, est. 1996, <http://www.cvw.net>, phone 315 228-7770 or 315 228-7771.
- Creative Writing in Oaxaca, Mexico, 6-14 day, est. 1997, phone 877 974-8377 <http://www.creativewritingclasses.us>.
- Grub Street's The Muse & The Marketplace Conference, 2-day, est. 2001, phone 617 695-0075, <http://www.museandthemarketplace.com>.
- Jackson Hole Writers Conference, 4-day, est. 1991, phone 307 413-3332 <http://jacksonholewritersconference.com>.
- Las Vegas Writer's Conference, 3-day, est. 2003, <http://lasvegaswritersconference.com>. I attended this in 2008 and found it exceptional. It provided a full schedule, agents, authors, publishers, pitch sessions, plenty of options, and great networking.
- Mendocino Coast Writers Conference, 3+day, est. 1989, <http://www.mcwc.org>, phone 707 962-2600.
- Nightwriters, 5-day, est. 1980, <http://www.nightwriters.com/nightwriters/>, phone 804 365-7874.
- Original Impulse Travel Workshops, 7-day, est. 2000, <http://www.originalimpulse.com>, phone 303-442-0664.
- Paris Writers Workshop, 11-day, est. 1987, phone 331 45-66-75-50, <http://www.pariswritersworkshop.org>.

- Pikes Peak Writers Conference, 3-day, est. 1993, <http://www.pikespeakwriters.com>, phone 719 531-5723.
- Robert Vaughan's Write on the Beach Writers' Retreat, 5-day, est. 1998, phone 251 752-1350, <http://www.robertvaughan.com>.
- Santa Barbara Writer's Conference, 3-6 day, est. 1973, phone 805 964-0367, <http://www.sbwritersconference.com>. The Hill team has attended several of these conferences and was featured on a marketing panel.
- Sewanee Writers' Conference, 12-14 day, est. 1990, <http://www.sewaneewriters.org>, , phone 931 598-1141/1541.
- South Carolina Writers Workshop Conference, 3-day, est. 1990, phone 864 901-2378, <http://www.myscww.org>.
- Wildacres Writers Workshop, 7-day, est. 1986, <http://www.wildacres.com>, phone 800 635-2049.
- Writers Retreat Workshop, 5-10 day, est.1987, <http://www.writersretreatworkshop.com>.
- Whidbey Island Writers Conference, 3-day, est. 1998, phone 360 331-6714, <http://www.writeonwhidbey.org>.

Additional conferences you discover:

Writers' Associations and Organizations

We stress the importance of belonging to writers' associations and organizations. Each one has its strong points, but they are formed to assist writers in pursuing their goals in a professional manner. Whether conferences, blogs, online magazines, regional meetings or networking, they give you the opportunity to interface with others in your own genre.

Some may be more difficult to join, but not all. It is worth the time and effort to check them out to see which ones fill your personal needs.

Below is a list of a few organizations for your reference. There are many more that you can *Google*. We encourage you to join one or two, but not so many as to keep you from your writing:

- American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA), <http://www.asja.org/>. This is an organization of mainly newspaper and magazine writers who are seasoned professional journalists. They have strict qualifications for membership.
- Canadian Authors Association (CAA), <http://canauthors.org> offers support and development to Canadian writers.
- International Food, Wine & Travel Writers Association (IFWTWA), <http://www.ifwtwa.org/> is a resource base for professionals engaged in the food, wine and travel industries. Its writers report on all aspects of food, wine and travel. They are the oldest and only non-profit writers' association that focuses on food, wine and travel. IFWTWA offers media trips for its members to discover destinations in depth as well as other benefits. We are both members of this organization and Maralyn is on the Board of Directors. Are we biased? Yes. It meets our needs.
- Mystery Writers of America (MWA), <http://www.mysterywriters.org/> is an organization for mystery and crime writers, professionals, aspirants, and those who love to read crime fiction.
- National Press Club (NPC), <http://npc.press.org>, its mission statement is *The club shall provide people who gather and disseminate news a center for the advancement of their professional standards and skills, the promotion of free expression, mutual support and social fellowship.*
- National Writers Union (NWU), <http://www.nwu.org> is a writers' union for freelance and contract writers.
- Society of American Travel Writers (SATW), <http://www.satw.org/> promotes responsible journalism, provides support and development at annual conferences.
- Writers Guild of America, West (WGAW), <http://www.wga.org/> is a labor union for writers who write television shows, movies, news programs, documentaries, animation, CD-ROMs, and content for new media technologies.

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8—Understanding Your Target Market & Sale of Books

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you will probably end up somewhere else.” –Laurence J. Peter

You have two audiences for your book:

- The media – this consists of the press (newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, etc.). They can publicize your book and help make it known.
 - Public radio is a great spot for interviews. Try to tie them in with book signings. Attempt to get interviews focusing on your specialized market.
 - Book Reviews.
 - Press Kit:
 - Get permission to send a press kit. Be sure to get the name of the individual that you should send it to.
 - This should contain a copy of your book, transcript of radio interviews, DVD of television interviews, questions an interviewer can ask you, clips of other press releases, interviews, and a 5”x7” color or black and white photo. If you do not have a video of you doing an interview, make one. Have someone you know interview you.
 - If you have speaking engagements lined up, be sure to list.
 - Envelope should be marked: *URGENT – DATED MATERIAL*.
 - Consider sending Overnight Delivery or Priority Mail. Getting an interview or a good review is worth much more than the cost of delivery. **Send a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the material.**
- Your buying audience is your second market. These are your potential customers. Identify how to reach these buyers in addition to book stores. And, even though this is listed second, it is first with a publisher. YOU are the platform for your book and a publisher wants to know that you are SALEBLE.

- A cookbook may be sold in bridal stores, grocery stores, gift shops, etc. A book on fly fishing has appeal to sporting goods stores and adventure travel. Each specialized market has outlets for its particular clientele. Niche markets have websites, gift stores, book clubs, book signings and speaking events, mail order catalogs, museums, etc.
- Where can you speak to the people in these markets? Books sold via speaking engagements bring you a higher profit. This is true, even when you give the organization hosting you 10% (or whatever you determine) of your sales. Try to get invitations while your book is still in the publishing stage. Firm up dates, once final proof is approved and you have a delivery date. Give yourself a little leeway with the promised date.
- More than 7% of books are sold online. This figure continues to increase. The best margin sales are those made at publishers' online bookstores. Next would be from your own website.
- Determine what you can do online to market your book (more on this in online promotions):
 - Search engine optimization allows you to be in the top page of a search.
 - *Search Engine Optimization: An Hour a Day*, by Jennifer Grappone, is excellent and helps ease the overwhelming complexity of this project.
 - *Search Engine Optimization for Dummies*, by Peter Kent, 2nd edition.

We asked our webmaster, Timothy Lack of Lack Ransom & Associates, twlack@CharlotteCountyWebsites.com to explain *Key Word/Phrase Optimization*. Tim designed our site, <http://www.noralyn.com> since it would have been an overwhelming task for us. We prefer to write. However, we want you to have this important information:

- ***Key Word/Phrase Optimization** refers to how a search engine views your site. The search engine reads all your text, links, image tags, comments, title, file name, directory, etc. anything it can use to determine what your web page is all about. It combines that information with information it gathers from its own users and from other sites that link to your site to give your site a ranking compared to other sites with similar content. This ranking determines how far down the list your site will appear when a search is performed using the key word or phrase the search engine has determined pertains to your site.*
- *As a site owner or internet marketer, we try to control how the search engine will see and index our web page. My first instruction to my customers is to put themselves in their potential customer's place, with Google opened on their computer screen, and tell me the top 5-10 words or phrases they would enter into Google's search box when they*

want what you (the site owner) are selling. It's all about the potential customer; the search engine is just the tool.

- *I then use those 5-10 words or phrases as many times as possible in the text, title, comments, and of course the meta tags. That is **Key Word Optimization** as simply as I can describe it. But it's really not that simple. There are many intricacies in the algorithm used by search engines to determine your site's placement. For instance, a linked key phrase list has far more importance than one in the text, but ultimately it should be both in the linked list and the text. There are so many details it's not possible to use them all on every page and you must always keep your goal in sight, your customer. A web page must sell your product or idea to your customer.*
- *It helps a lot to optimize each page, but there is a bigger picture. Your web site, the group of optimized pages, should be useful to the people who find it. Google will give you points if they see their customers are clicking your link and then not returning to the search list. It means they found what they want and that is what Google really wants. So in the end, a site which is designed in a way that is easy to use, aesthetically pleasing and informative is the real goal. **Key Word/Phrase Optimization** is fine tuning to a well designed website.*

Market through online bookstores:

- Reviews—be sure to have people post their reviews to the various online bookstores.
- Some of the more well-known online bookstores include:
 - <http://www.Amazon.com>
 - <http://www.barnesandnoble.com>
 - <http://www.BooksAMillion.com>
 - <http://www.btol.com>
 - <http://www.ingrambook.com>
 - www.visitBorders.com
- You want to be sure you are listed with as many as possible. Find out where your publisher will list your book, and then search the others to list yourself.
- We strongly encourage you to check out <http://www.NothingBinding.com>. This is a site created by *The Book Marketing Expert Newsletter*. It says: “*Nothing Binding* can... be a voice for independent publishing. The name alone signifies a non-alliance with any publisher or printer. A social networking website that allows authors free placement of

their books with links to outside sources is a perfect way for authors to separate themselves from the traditional world of big publishing...”

We recently discovered this site and will be posting our books on it. They review your books free. *Nothing Binding* has the ability to conduct a telephone interview to give you an audio clip. This clip can be attached to your website as well as *Nothing Binding's* and other websites. Jerry D. Simmons, who is responsible for the site, is a former publishing executive with over 25 years between Random House and the former Time Warner Book group (now known as Hachette Book Group U.S.A.). Jerry also founded <http://writersReaders.com>.

- Boost your rankings with an online store. Many authors will order books for their own supply through the bookstore. They may also have their friends and family order on the same day. This can give them a best-selling book ranking for a day. To be an *Amazon Best Seller*, your book only has to have that ranking for a day to allow you to use the term in marketing.

Start a blog, short for web log. Our webmaster, Timothy Lack, set up <http://www.noralyn.com/blogger/blog1> and <http://www.noralyn.com/blogger/success>. If you want to do it yourself, Google has a great video. We wanted a hosted blog, <http://www.Blogger.com>, rather than a public site. <Http://www.myspace.com>, <http://www.TypePad.com>, and <http://www.WordPress.com> are also hosted blogs. You can use public sites like <http://www.MySpace.com>, <http://www.FaceBook.com> and <http://www.YouTube.com>. Blogging is new for us, but we are committed. It's proven to work. Learn about blogging and do it, not all day. Try to allow 15 to 30 minutes a day for blogging. It will help you sell your book. You do not start off with readers, they tend to build slowly.

- Be sure your headings are specific.
- Each entry is called a post and posts are listed with the latest one first. We found it a little scary to hit *publish post* even though we had previewed it first. What made the process easier was knowing we could still reread and edit. You can also save your post as a draft and publish later. Sometimes you may still make an error. Consider it a learning experience and move on.
- You can also post photos on your blog. Videos are popular but we are not that far along.
- The more you post, the quicker you will have traffic on your site. If you only post once a month, you will not build much traffic.
- Your posts do not have to be long.
- Keep blogging even if you do not have immediate responses. Of course, you can get your friends to respond. Getting your first comment is a *high*. We do not allow unknown comments. Those making comments have to register with Google. Since our blog is a Google blog, they go to <http://www.Blogger.com>.

- Be sure to add your blog address to the signature portion of your e-mails and on your business cards. On our *Where & What in the World* blog nicknamed Glog for Global log, you will find <http://www.noralyn.com/blogger/blog1>. Note: First comes our website, then *blogger* is our Google platform, and *blog1* is our *Where & What in the World* blog. For writing and publishing hints, our blog nicknamed, Slog (perseverance in writing), is <http://www.noralyn.com/blogger/success/> which you'll find listed under NoraLyn Blogs on our website, <http://www.noralyn.com>.
 - Try commenting on other blogs of similar interest. As long as you spend an allotted time blogging, it is time well spent.
 - We have had a couple of people as guest bloggers and they have generated interest.
- The best way to increase traffic to your blog is to get other bloggers to visit and link to your blog. This is not as easy as it may seem. So, we'd suggest starting with one or two at a time.
 - They need to be customized and bloggers need to know you've read their posts more than once. Reference their recent posts. Keep it simple.
 - If you do not get a response from the blogger, you can follow up once, but that is it. Let it go and move on to the next one. Popular blogs get many e-mail requests. They do not have time or interest to get involved with everyone. But, be sure to put a link to your blog and mention a post that may be of interest. Bloggers like incoming links. We suggest linking to their blog from yours before you approach them.
 - This hint comes from Penny Sansevieri. When you reference an article from another publication in your blog, be sure to insert the web address for that article. That will give you an incoming and outgoing link, which will increase your presence (platform) on the web.
- Your e-mail signature is an opportunity to sell your book. Be sure to list your book title and website. It is important to include your blog address. When our book was published, we wrote, *Just Released*. We received several inquiries. This response contributed towards obtaining the Time Warner gig as well as continued sales.
- Be sure to obtain a good supply of business cards. We have found it beneficial to have a photo of our books on our card. Now, with a third book, the first two book covers will be printed on the back. It is frequent for earlier titles to have a pickup in sales when a new book is released.

- As mentioned earlier, bookmarks that include the cover of your book, along with where to order it, are still a favorite. In addition to bringing them to book signings, they are appreciated by libraries.
- Consider donating a copy of your book to a local library. The book can be accompanied by a press release.
- Be aware of your distribution options before your book is complete. Make sure your publisher is set up with good distribution sources. Ingram and Baker & Taylor are well known. Ingram is the largest trade distributor and Baker & Taylor is the largest library distributor. For international distribution, they need to be set up with someone like Bertram's in Europe.
 - Book stores order from the distributors, and the distributors sell and accept returns. Some bookstores are not willing to order directly from publishers, even if they do take returns. Bookstores prefer to order through their distributors—one distributor—one invoice. Many large publishers ship directly to bookstores. This is especially true with anticipated best sellers.
 - Most bookstore chains purchase from Ingram and Baker & Taylor. However, Barnes & Noble and Borders are approachable.
 - Contact the Small Press Department, Barnes & Noble, Inc., 122 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10011 or <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/help/cds2.asp?PID=8149&z=y&cds2Pid=8148>.
 - Contact New Vendor Acquisitions, Borders Group, Inc., 100 Phoenix Drive, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108 or <http://www.bordersstores.com/care/care.jsp?page=10>.
 - We strongly suggest visiting the above two links to see their guidelines before submitting anything. The guidelines are clear.

Major special sales distributors (as provided by Sam Henrie, President, Wheatmark, Inc. <http://www.wheatmark.com>) follow:

- Anderson Merchandisers—Wal-Mart, Advanced Marketing Services (AMS)—mass merchandisers and wholesale clubs.
- The Charles Levy Circulating Company—grocery store and drugstore chains, Nutri-Book—health and fitness outlets.
- New Leaf—new age outlets, and Bookazine—mass merchandisers and airport bookstores.

Does the publisher you are considering have connections with any of the above?

- Some publishers will ensure distribution to a particular chain of bookstores and set up book-signings. This is an added bonus.
- Be sure to set up your book on <http://www.PublishersPortal.com>. It will assist you in having your book distributed far and wide. Your publisher will set you up on some of these outlets, but why not ensure you are set up with all of them? It is worth the small investment.

Marketing Sources

- <http://www.amarketingexpert.com> – Author Marketing Experts, Inc. Penny C. Sansevieri is President of this organization. I had the pleasure of hearing two of her presentations at a writer's conference. She has her pulse on internet marketing and the industry.
- <http://www.NothingBinding.com>. I have recently discovered this site, and knowing it was started by Jerry Simmons, it should prove worthwhile. Like all new sites, I need to take the time to learn more about it. So far, it seems fantastic. You can have your book reviewed and arrange an interview at no cost.
- <http://www.PublishersPortal.com>.

Where can you line up speaking engagements?

Who can you ask to help you set up a blog?

Are there classes being offered about blogging?

What blogs can you find that relate to your topic so you may contact them to start building a relationship?

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<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/3675.html?s=pdf>