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Interview with Jeff Rasley

by Jeff Rasley and Kris Wampler

May 8, 2012

Jeff Rasley's experience with traditional publishing left him disillusioned and inspired him and his wife to start their own indie publishing company. Read more about Jeff's journey and how he learns the ropes of self-publishing.

Give me the “elevator pitch” for your book in five to ten sentences.

Monsters of the Midway: The Worst Team in College Football? is my most recent book.

In 1969, amidst the culture of sex, drugs, rock and roll, the draft lottery, the anti-war movement and radical feminism, the University of Chicago resurrected its football team after it had been dead for 30 years. A small town Hoosier kid who just wanted to get the best education possible joins the team to build his resume. His teammates are jocks, pot smokers and nerdy intellectuals. Along with his teammates he is swept into the tumult of the late 1960s. He falls in love with a radical feminist who demonstrates against the return of football to Chicago. He rooms with a secular Jewish kid taking ballet whose father has begun manufacturing something called a computer chip.

An assistant coach rides Jack for not fully committing to the team. His favorite professor chides him to concentrate on his studies. What sustains Jack through the bewildering cultural milieu, and the pressure of balancing sports and studies, is the tolerant understanding of his head coach, reconciliation with his girlfriend, and the friendship of his teammates.

Why did you become an indie writer?

I thought I was very lucky to publish my first book the traditional way and the publisher even spent some money on a publicist. But the publisher refused to use the title I had chosen and used one I did not like; issued the book on an “accelerated schedule” six months after it was finished; published with a few typos despite three levels of editing; demanded I engage in time-consuming and unproductive promotional events; let the publicist get away with doing nothing except mailing the book to reviewers and libraries; and lost interest in promoting the book when sales did not quickly reach best seller level.

I have since published five direct. The titles are my own choice and the books are published as soon as they are finished. Now, I still find myself engaging in time-consuming and unproductive

promotional activities and I might have missed some typos. And I sure wish someone would pay me an advance. But, the gain in control and responsibility is worth the sacrifice.

My wife, Alicia Rasley, has published twice as many books as I have. We have become so jazzed about the process of direct publishing we started our own indie publishing company to help others through the process of direct publishing. It's called Knowledge Capture Publishing & Editing.

Tell me about the marketing techniques you've used to sell your books. Which ones have been the most successful?

I am still experimenting and learning. I give programs, talks and slide shows to civic groups, churches and nonprofits about Himalayan mountaineering and a philanthropic foundation I lead, the Basa Village Foundation. The personal connection of hearing me talk and seeing my photos creates a meaningful point of contact with potential readers. My wife, on the other hand, has found success through an aggressive social media campaign.

Are there any marketing techniques you intentionally avoided or discontinued, and if so, why?

I have not used Twitter, because I am active on multiple LinkedIn groups and Facebook. I have an active life outside writing and I had to draw the line.

What's the most important thing you've learned about self-publishing that you didn't know when you started out?

The first book my wife and I direct published, *False Prophet?*, took the better part of two days to upload a year ago. 18 books later and the most recent one took a couple hours. We've learned much about formatting, cover design, category selection, choice of keywords and pricing. There is a lot of good info available through writer-community blogs (like yours, Kris) and Amazon, B&N and Smashwords have all improved their responsiveness to authors' questions and through community boards. An author can take the time to learn the best practices in these matters or seek assistance from other writers who have already developed expertise in direct publishing.

Agents and publishers have been gatekeepers for the last century. In many cases they have done a poor job, and the market, with the help of technology, has finally decided to show the gatekeepers the door. We don't need them anymore. Writers unite! You have nothing to lose but an increasingly piddly advance and a bankrupt distribution system.

How can readers learn more about your books?

Please visit my Amazon author's page [here](#).

Anyone interested in learning about Himalayan trekking and the Basa Village Project, please visit my website and enjoy the photos and videos: jeffreyrasley.com.