



Writing to Persuade

By

Michael McCollum

[Author's note: This article was written in September, 1999, a time when I was passionately opposed to one William Jefferson Clinton and all his works. A lot has happened since, notably September 11, and having moved on, I think the examples cited in the article support the thesis better than ever: Persuasion, to be effective, must be subtle – MM.]

As I have noted before in this series, there are certain personality traits that writers seem to have in common. One of these is our nearly universal introversion. As far as I can tell, there are no extroverted writers. Those who appear extroverted have merely learned the skills necessary to camouflage themselves in the larger non-writing world. Once you get to know them, once you scratch the gregarious veneer of the supposed-extrovert writer, you find an introvert quietly living his or her life inside a flashy shell. This uniformity of personality has a number of side effects, not all of them good. On the positive side, that which we do is such a lonely profession that only introverts can stand to do it long enough to actually finish a book. An extrovert who sits down at a computer to pound out a novel will quickly discover something more exciting to draw their attention from the task at hand.

A negative side effect of the introverted writer personality is the fact that our parties tend to be dull. Mostly we sit around looking at one another, trying to think of something to say. This is odd because we are all professional wordsmiths. However, thinking up witty sayings when you have hours, days, weeks, or months to perfect them is easier than thinking them up spontaneously. When we finally get a conversation going, it is usually to talk shop. Other writers may find this assessment overly harsh, for which I beg forgiveness. I am not an expert on the subject of parties. That is because I am a writer, and I do not attend that many. However, I have often thought that things would go a lot more smoothly if we could just import a few extroverts for the evening, say from whatever sales convention happens to be in town. Put a free drink in a salesman's hand and he will talk to anyone!

The other characteristic that is nearly universal among writers is the fact that, as a class, we are more self-centered and conceited than just about any other group I know. We can't help it. If we were not egotistical introverts, we would not be able to do our jobs. The introversion means that we are willing to pound away on the keyboard for hour after hour (as I am doing now), content in our lonely isolation. The egotistical part of the equation means that when we finish whatever it is that we are writing, we actually expect

other people to pay their hard-earned money to read it. I mean, how much more conceited can a person be?

I recently attended a training session at work where they explained the concept of Net Present Value. That is a technique in finance that allows managers to evaluate the costs and benefits of a project and determine if it makes financial sense. NPV works on the principle that if you sink one dollar into a project today, it will only be worth 91 cents next year, 82 cents the year after, 72 cents the third year, and so forth. Likewise, a dollar earned in the third year is not worth as much as a dollar invested this year. In other words, we can evaluate the worth of projects at the end of their lives if we merely adjust the value of all incomes and expenditures to their present day values, subtract expenses from income, and see if we are left with a positive number.

The example they used in class was the Lockheed L-1011 project in the early 1970s. The L-1011 is the plane with three engines mounted on its tail that is bigger than a Boeing 727 and prettier than a DC-10. No matter how one slices or dices the figures, however, Lockheed's management must have been smoking something to approve that project. Even their rosier scenario had them losing their shirts.

When the class was over, I walked out to the parking garage with our Operations Manager and made the comment that I thought the training was very useful, but that I would not like to do an NPV analysis on my INTERNET Bookstore and Publishing Empire. "I might scare myself," I said. He immediately countered with, "There you go rationalizing again." I thought about it a moment and then shook my head. "You don't understand," I replied. "Authors don't write for money. They write for ego. After all, who but an egotist would put a year into writing a novel, considering publishers' pay scales?"

Although I merely blurted it out, I realized at that moment that I had said something profound. Ego is the primary motivator for writers. If you don't believe it, consider how many people pay vanity presses \$10,000 or more to print their books, knowing full well that they will never come close to getting their investment back.

Which brings us to another negative side effect of a typical writer's personality. In addition to being self-centered, introverted egomaniacs, we also irritate our fellow human beings by constantly telling them how they should respond to various situations. As an outgrowth of our tendency to think that we know more about everything than other people, we impose our opinions on the populace at large — both those who are interested and those who are not.

So, whatever else happens in a writer's career, I can guarantee that every writer will eventually reach the stage where they begin using their craft to persuade others to their point of view on subjects that are important to them. There are a number of names for this sort of writing. Mothers call it advice. Advertisers call it persuasion. Academics call it didactic. Most common folk call it *propaganda*.

That, then, will be our subject for this month. How do you effectively persuade others to come around to your point of view, while keeping them entertained and unconscious of what it is you are doing? More importantly, how do you get them to pay for the privilege of having their brains run through your personal Laundromat?

Let us consider the problem of writing to persuade:

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Persuading

The art of persuasion is one of the subtlest skills in a writer's toolkit, and one that is probably misused more than any other. That is because we writers are passionate people. We care deeply about what we believe and have a compulsion to get our point of view across to other people. Because we are passionate people, we often fail to put the proper constraints on our attempts to persuade, and are therefore, not as effective as we could be. To illustrate this point, I will use myself as an example.

In the April, 1999 article in the Art of Writing Series, "*Writing a Non-Sequential Story*," I reported on a trip I took to Washington, D.C. in late March. I had been on special assignment in the east for six months and wanted to see the capital before coming home to Arizona. I was accompanied by my son and future daughter-in-law. After a full day of sightseeing, we were headed back to our hotel when I nearly tripped over Janet Reno, the Attorney General of the United States, in a crosswalk at the intersection of Ninth and Pennsylvania. Nor am I speaking figuratively. We very nearly collided!

As I noted in the April article, I am no friend of Bill Clinton's. In fact, I hate him. The President's defenders often attempt to silence their critics, or otherwise discredit them, with the sobriquet *Clinton hater*. I wear the title proudly. In fact, the only thing that prevents me from having a sweatshirt made with the words CLINTON HATER emblazoned on the front in bright red letters is that my wife won't let me. She seems to think it childish. Why she thinks this, I have no idea.

Being a writer and one not shy about expressing his opinions, I have made my views known at work to just about everyone who is interested, and a great many people who obviously are not. Because most people do not feel about the subject as passionately as I do, my enthusiasm has had the effect of turning many of them off. Recognizing this, I have tried to restrain myself lately. This has been made difficult by some of my compatriots who, recognizing what it is that sets me off, have taken to baiting me on the subject of our esteemed "leader." They will pass my office or sit down at the same table at lunch and ask, "What's Clinton up to?" Effectively, they are like people passing the monkey cage at the zoo who poke the monkey with a stick just to listen to him gibber (apparently unaware that the monkey may bite). So, to prevent them from taking satisfaction from listening to me rail about politics, I have recently taken to answering with a standard reply: "I don't know, what has that lying sack-of-shit done today?"

My point in recounting this little tidbit is not to convince you that Bill Clinton is a lying, cheating bastard. Many of you think he is a great president; or if not great, at least he is better than those Right Wing Fanatics in the Republican Party (people like me). You are entitled to your opinion. It is, after all, a free country. No, my purpose in discussing my attitude toward Bill Clinton is to point out that even though I feel passionately about the man, my arguments would be better received if I were more restrained in delivering them. In fact, at this particular moment, my best strategy would be to say nothing and let nature take its course. The polls seem to indicate that people are fed up with the Clintons and would just like them to go away (53% in a recent sampling). This phenomenon is known as "Clinton fatigue."

[Author's Note, October, 2006: Interestingly, in the intervening eight years since this article was written, we have seen the other side of the coin. Those people at work who looked at me as though I had two heads are now largely in the same mood about our

current president. The phenomenon even has an acronym: BDS – Bush Derangement Syndrome.]

My case illustrates a common problem with writers. We frequently “oversell” our positions, effectively negating the persuasion we are trying to build by going too far. Remember, it is the job of a writer to bring others around to your point of view without making them aware of what it is that you are doing. When you overplay your hand, you basically show them the puppet strings that you have so carefully tied to their arms and legs. People react poorly to being manipulated, especially when they become aware of the fact of the manipulation. Because of this, in the attempt to persuade someone to come over to your point of view, minimalism is more effective than broad, passionate gestures and speeches.

As in all forms of writing, the trick is to never say anything that the readers cannot accept while in the trance-like state they enter when they willingly suspend their disbelief. Just as you do not want to fill your novels with mistakes that jar the reader, you don’t want to take a position so at odds with their native beliefs as to cause them to rebel against the thesis that you are advancing. At least, you don’t want to spring the whole new idea on them all at once. Think of persuasion as though you were attempting to boil a frog. Dump him into the boiling water all at once and he will jump out of the pot. Put him in cold water and then slowly bring the water to boil and he will sit quietly until he is cooked through and through. In this respect, readers are more like frogs than they care to admit. Hit them too quickly or too blatantly with your main thesis and they will rebel. Feed them your ideas slowly and with subtlety, and they will end up true believers.

To further illustrate the point that an overblown argument is ineffective, let us take an example from the opposite side of the political spectrum. There was a movie on cable television last week called *The Rainmaker*. It starred Matt Damon, Danny De Vito, Claire Danes, and John Voigt, and was directed by Francis Ford Coppola. It is based on a John Grisham novel. The story is about Rudy Baylor, idealistic young law school graduate who aspires to be a “rainmaker,” a bright star with a golden touch who will lavish cash-rich clients and billable hours on the firm that is fortunate enough to hire him. Unfortunately, no large law firm will give him the time of day, much less employment. He eventually goes to work chasing ambulances for a sleazy character named Bruiser Stone. While working for Stone, he becomes involved in a case where a poor woman is suing an insurance company after they refused payment for a needed medical treatment for her son, who later died. It turns out that the insurance company markets in poor neighborhoods, and then denies ALL claims, regardless of merit, hoping their clients will be too poor to pursue legal remedies. Eventually, the insurance company CEO, played by Roy Scheider, gets his comeuppance at the hands of the idealistic young lawyer.

The movie is pretty good. Although I only caught the last half of it, I was hooked within ten minutes. The insurance company was TRULY EVIL, the plaintiff was poor but noble (she was going to give the money to medical research if she won), and the young lawyer was out to DO GOOD. In fact, I enjoyed the movie right up until the climactic courtroom scene when the screenwriter, not content at having my subconscious rooting for him, decided to make sure I didn’t miss the point of the piece. He had the young, idealistic lawyer deliver a speech about the evils of those who support tort reform and who would do away with punitive damages in civil law suits.

My God, the Trial Lawyer's Association is everywhere, even in Hollywood! In that single instant, they lost me. I was snapped out of the trance into which they had lulled me and I began to look at the movie in a completely different light. An enjoyable little morality play in which I cheered the heroes and hissed the villains was suddenly transformed into a cleverly crafted piece of pro-trial-lawyer propaganda. The evil insurance company CEO began to look less diabolical and more contrived, and the lawyer less noble and more manipulative. Suddenly, I remembered that all of the characters, good and bad, were inventions of the screenwriter, who was playing games with my mind. I remembered and I resented it!

So, by being just a little too explicit about his political aims in making the movie, Francis Ford Coppola tipped his hand and lost whatever effect he would normally have achieved with me. What had started out as gentle persuasion had quickly devolved into ham fisted, self-serving propaganda by the one group that is probably more hated than Bill Clinton — the trial lawyers.

Which brings us to a subject that many people find distasteful, but which cannot be avoided when discussing how one writes to persuade. I refer to the art of propaganda.

Propaganda

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines propaganda as “a more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of symbols (words, gestures, banners, monuments, music, clothing, insignia, hairstyles, designs on coins and postage stamps, and so forth).” Propaganda is distinguished from persuasion and education by the fact that propaganda uses deliberate selectivity and manipulation to get its point across. The propagandist concentrates on those facts and aspects of a situation which reinforce his thesis, and ignores or misrepresents those facts which harm his thesis. The term is Italian/Latin, coming from *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith), a group of Roman Catholic Cardinals founded in 1622 to carry on missionary work. Nor is propaganda limited to the religious sphere. All advertising is propaganda, as are most of the things one hears on the political stump. Nor is propaganda exclusively bad. It can be used in support of a good cause as well as a bad one. Of course, whether a cause is “good” or not is largely a matter of the listener's attitude. Like a knife, the tool has no inherent morality, but can be used for both moral and immoral purposes.

“Propaganda” has been considered a dirty word since the 1930s. That is because the word was popularized in World War II by Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda for the Third Reich. Although he did not invent it, Goebbels perfected a classic technique of propaganda, one that seems to be making a comeback of late. That is the technique of the Big Lie.

The Big Lie relies on the fact that if people hear something repeated often enough, they will begin to believe it. In fact, the more outrageous the lie, the more willing people are to accept it as the truth. All that is required is frequent repetition.

The technique is as effective as it is insidious. Upon first hearing the lie, people will be scandalized that anyone could be so brazen. Then, with the familiarity of repetition, they become desensitized. They still don't believe the lie, but it no longer shocks them. Then, after many more repetitions, the words become mere noise. Finally,

the listener, no longer confident in his or her own opinion, suddenly begins to believe the lie. After all, can all of the people who repeated the lie be lying?

You may recognize the technique. It is the Big Lie that has fostered the recent use of “talking points” and the need to “stay on message.” As politicians of all stripes have learned in the last few years, no matter what question the interviewer asks, you answer in a way that reinforces your own message. The principle is simple: if enough people say the same words over and over again for a long enough time, then the audience will begin to accept the truth of the words, especially if they aren’t otherwise paying a great deal of attention to the issue. Thus, last year, we heard numerous politicians and pundits defending the utterly preposterous notion that a man can have his penis in a woman’s mouth without having sex with her. (I have no desire to offend, but the example fits in with our theme this month.)

Unfortunately, these little lawyer games are not of much use to a professional writer. While they are effective with a public that is too distracted by a booming economy to give politics much thought, they would never stand up to even cursory examination by anyone trained to think critically. [*It turns out that the economy wasn’t as booming as we thought in 1999. Such is life! – MM.*] And that is who readers are — people trained to think critically about the meaning of words. No, we writers must approach the problem from a different angle. We must use indirection to sink our propaganda shafts into the soft underbelly of the readers’ subconscious (there is a horrible mental image!). We must treat the readers as though they were vials of nitroglycerin, ready to explode at the slightest jar or jostle. Above all, we must respect their intelligence, for it is that very intelligence that is the tool we will use to win them over to our cause.

So how does one go about persuading people of things they do not now believe? The techniques are relatively simple, but if used properly, extremely powerful. Let us consider one of the most famous propaganda movies ever made, *The China Syndrome*.

An Example of the Effective Use of Propaganda

As someone who minored in nuclear engineering, and who believes that civilization would eventually collapse without nuclear energy (when fossil fuels inevitably run out), I am not philosophically in tune with the thesis that Michael Douglas (who produced) and Jane Fonda (who starred) were peddling in *The China Syndrome*. Come to think of it, I am not philosophically in tune with anything Jane Fonda stands for. I have yet to forgive her for posing on that North Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun. Still, I can recognize effective propaganda when I see it and that is what *The China Syndrome* is. So, let’s look at how Douglas, Fonda, and their accomplices went about delivering their “atoms are bad” message. Before we delve into the movie, however, perhaps a review of what is meant by “the China Syndrome” is in order.

Since the end of the cold war, the steam seems to have gone out of the Anti-Nuclear Crusade. In its heyday in the late 1970s, however, it was an issue that stirred passions. As is the case whenever science is subordinated to a political cause, the most amazing slanders were put forth as scientific fact. One of these was the China Syndrome.

In a nuclear reactor, an isotope of uranium (Uranium-235) is split into smaller atoms to produce energy. These remnants of the reaction are often highly radioactive,

themselves breaking down relatively quickly, producing additional energy as they do so. In a nuclear reactor, the reaction is both controlled and cooled by water flowing under pressure. The China Syndrome was a theory that should a reactor suffer a catastrophic meltdown, the uranium core would drop to the bottom of the reactor vessel and burn its way out into the ground, burying itself deep underground where it would pollute the water supply and generally cause major problems. To make the theory understandable to laymen, the anti-nukes, in an intentional bit of hyperbole, said that it would “burn its way clear to China.” Thus, the name “China Syndrome.”

Like all perverted science in support of a political cause, the theory was based on an uncontested physical fact, namely that the fuel elements of a nuclear reactor can get hot enough to melt if not properly cooled. After that, the theory’s correspondence-to-reality quotient is about on par with that of *The X-Files*. How do I know? Because, coincidentally, eleven days after *The China Syndrome* first appeared in theaters, there was a catastrophic meltdown of a nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island. Talk about your box office bonanzas! Columbia Picture’s stock shot up 5 points in 24 hours. If I was a conspiracy theorist ... no, better not to go down that path!

In fact, about one-third of the core at Three Mile Island 2 was uncovered for several hours, resulting in major damage. What advocates of The China Syndrome theory never explain is that any disturbance in a pressurized water reactor will kill the nuclear reaction, leaving only the decaying fragments of fission to give off heat. While they give off a great deal of heat, they are not an infinite source of energy, so they cannot dig their way out. There are too many heat-dissipating elements in the pressure vessel and containment building (water, steel reinforcing rods in the concrete, etc.) for a melted core to get out of containment. At Three Mile Island, the fuel elements cracked and partially melted, but largely stayed where they were. That is because the inactive core lacked the thermal energy to boil away the pool of water in which the core was sitting with its top one-third exposed.

(I can hear everyone screaming, “What about Chernobyl?” Chernobyl is a graphite-moderated reactor, with completely different operating characteristics than the pressurized water reactors used in the West. As the Russians proved the hard way, that might not be the best approach to generating electric power.)

Upon re-reading the above, I note that I have fallen into techno-speak, an occupational hazard for engineers. My apologies, but some knowledge of the subject is helpful if we are to examine Michael Douglas and Jane Fonda’s propaganda epic properly. So, back to the subject at hand.

Since Michael Douglas wanted to make an anti-nuclear movie, he could have been expected to make a horror film about a nuclear reactor that explodes into a giant mushroom cloud and kills the entire human race. In fact, if Jane Fonda had been in charge, I suspect that is precisely what we would have gotten. Michael Douglas was smarter than that, as he has proved in his subsequent career. Had *The China Syndrome* been an overblown propaganda movie, people might have gone to see it, but it would have left no more lasting an impression than *Earthquake*, *The Towering Inferno*, or *The Poseidon Adventure*, all disaster movies of the era. It would have been seen as the ravings of an obviously-biased group of Hollywood lefties.

The China Syndrome does not rave at all, which is what makes it so effective. Jane Fonda plays Kimberly Wells, a bubble-headed television newswoman, who has been

relegated to soft news stories about zoo animals. She is desperate to find the story that will break her into hard news and jump-start her career. She is accompanied to the Ventana Nuclear Power Plant by her leftist cameraman, Richard Adams (played by Michael Douglas). While there, they witness a potentially devastating accident. Naturally, the evil corporate bosses want to cover up the facts, but Kimberly and her cameraman enlist a conscience-stricken plant supervisor, Jack Godell (Jack Lemmon), to help them get word of the danger to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Scenes of building tension involving faked X-rays and purloined news tapes are interspersed with a Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) hearing. In his effort to get the evidence of fraud to the NRC, Lemmon seizes the power plant control room and is shot dead by plant security.

The movie tells its story without moody music or dramatic lighting. It basically lays out a problem (that nuclear reactors can have serious accidents) and then lets the tension build naturally. Although the whole movie is designed to scare people about nuclear power, it does not sermonize. Rather, it allows the audience to come to their own conclusions about the risk.

Because it does not sermonize, or deliver its message to the public explicitly, it is a very effective movie at getting the message out that Douglas and Fonda wanted delivered. It is propaganda in that it selectively presents only those “facts” that the producer wanted delivered and suppresses the “facts” that are contrary to the message. For instance, from the vantage point of 25 years later, we have now had two large nuclear power plant accidents — Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. As industrial accidents go, they are huge. Both have cost several billion dollars to clean up. Still, they have come nowhere near the hysterical claims of the anti-nuclear activists of the early 1970s. Nor would they because that view is hysterical fantasy.

Chernobyl, in particular, would appear to be about the largest nuclear power plant reactor accident possible. In fact, if you wanted to spread maximum radiation over the largest area possible, you would set a graphite-moderated reactor of the Chernobyl design on fire — which is precisely what happened. Yet, by Russian standards of radiation release (compared to the amount of radioactive material dumped into a lake by the Soviet nuclear weapons program), Chernobyl wasn't that big a deal. Of course, Russian standards go a bit too far in that direction!

Conclusion

Being a passionate writer with a God-given skill to pen the written word and a desire to win people over, you set out to write a persuasion piece. You don't intend it to be propaganda, of course. You are more interested in bringing your readers to the light of TRUTH than in merely manipulating their attitudes.

So how do you persuade them? Do you scream in their faces until they are convinced? You do not! People are like mules, but with a difference. Sometimes, a mule can be convinced to do something it does not want to do, say through the judicious application of a plank to its rear end. People are much more stubborn than mules. You can never convince them of anything once they close their minds to it.

No, if you want to change minds, you approach the problem indirectly and with some subtlety. You hide your thesis in a well-plotted piece of fiction, giving proper

attention to your enemies' point of view. Remember, cardboard villains are no more interesting than stereotypical heroes. You then slip your message into the work with as much care and subtlety as you can manage. You contrive to show readers situations that will allow them to come to their own conclusion. You do not preach at them.

It is hard not to preach, I know. If you are a writer, you cannot help but feel passionately about some things. (That is why I feel so passionately about that lying, scumbag of a ... never mind.) That passion is a necessary part of your makeup. It is what drives you to write in the first place. It is also a danger because it causes you to lose your sense of proportion. When you are at your most passionate, that is when you should be on your greatest guard.

Remember, persuading people of new things is like trying to boil a frog. If you turn the heat too high; the frog will jump out of your pot. If you have patience, if you build your case carefully, taking care never to explicitly state it, then you will feast on boiled frog for dinner. Of course, that assumes that you have a taste for boiled frog. Personally, I'll stick to peanut butter.

The End

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3. Antares Dawn - US\$6.00

When the super giant star Antares exploded in 2512, the human colony on Alta found their pathway to the stars gone, isolating them from the rest of human space for more than a century. Then one day, a powerful warship materialized in the system without warning. Alarmed by the sudden appearance of such a behemoth, the commanders of the Altan Space Navy dispatched one of their most powerful ships to investigate. What ASNS Discovery finds when they finally catch the intruder is a battered hulk manned by a dead crew.

That is disturbing news for the Altans. For the dead battleship could easily have defeated the whole of the Altan navy. If it could find Alta, then so could whomever it was that beat it. Something must be done...

4. Antares Passage - US\$7.50

After more than a century of isolation, the paths between stars are again open and the people of Alta in contact with their sister colony on Sandar. The opening of the foldlines has not been the unmixed blessing the Altans had supposed, however.

For the reestablishment of interstellar travel has brought with it news of the Ryall, an alien race whose goal is the extermination of humanity. If they are to avoid defeat at the hands of the aliens, Alta must seek out the military might of Earth. However, to reach Earth requires them to dive into the heart of a supernova.

5. Antares Victory – First Time in Print – US\$7.50

After a century of warfare, humanity finally discovered the Achilles heel of the Ryall, their xenophobic reptilian foe. Spica – Alpha Virginis – is the key star system in enemy space. It is the hub through which all Ryall starships must pass, and if humanity can only capture and hold it, they will strangle the Ryall war machine and end their threat to humankind forever.

It all seemed so simple in the computer simulations: Advance by stealth, attack without warning, strike swiftly with overwhelming power. Unfortunately, conquering the Ryall proves the easy part. With the key to victory in hand, Richard and Bethany Drake discover that they must also conquer human nature if they are to bring down the alien foe ...

6. Thunderstrike! - US\$7.50

The new comet found near Jupiter was an incredible treasure trove of water ice and rock. Immediately, the water-starved Luna Republic and the Sierra Corporation, a leader in asteroid mining, were squabbling over rights to the new resource. However, all thoughts of profit and fame were abandoned when a scientific expedition discovered that the comet's trajectory placed it on a collision course with Earth!

As scientists struggled to find a way to alter the comet's course, world leaders tried desperately to restrain mass panic, and two lovers quarreled over the direction the comet was to take, all Earth waited to see if humanity had any future at all...

7. The Clouds of Saturn - US\$7.50

When the sun flared out of control and boiled Earth's oceans, humanity took refuge in a place that few would have predicted. In the greatest migration in history, the entire human race took up residence among the towering clouds and deep clear-air canyons of Saturn's upper atmosphere. Having survived the traitor star, they returned to the all-too-human tradition of internecine strife. The new city-states of Saturn began to resemble those of ancient Greece, with one group of cities taking on the role of militaristic Sparta...

8. The Sails of Tau Ceti – US\$7.50

Starhopper was humanity's first interstellar probe. It was designed to search for intelligent life beyond the solar system. Before it could be launched, however, intelligent life found Earth. The discovery of an alien light sail inbound at the edge of the solar system generated considerable excitement in scientific circles. With the interstellar probe nearing completion, it gave scientists the opportunity to launch an expedition to meet the aliens while they were still in space. The second surprise came when *Starhopper's* crew boarded the alien craft. They found beings that, despite their alien physiques, were surprisingly compatible with humans. That two species so similar could have evolved a mere twelve light years from one another seemed too coincidental to be true.

One human being soon discovered that coincidence had nothing to do with it...

9. Gibraltar Earth – First Time in Print — \$7.50

It is the 24th Century and humanity is just gaining a toehold out among the stars. Stellar Survey Starship *Magellan* is exploring the New Eden system when they encounter two alien spacecraft. When the encounter is over, the score is one human scout ship and one alien aggressor destroyed. In exploring the wreck of the second alien ship, spacers discover a survivor with a fantastic story.

The alien comes from a million-star Galactic Empire ruled over by a mysterious race known as the Broa. These overlords are the masters of this region of the galaxy and they allow no competitors. This news presents Earth's rulers with a problem. As yet, the Broa are ignorant of humanity's existence. Does the human race retreat to its one small world, quaking in fear that the Broa will eventually discover Earth? Or do they take a more aggressive approach?

Whatever they do, they must do it quickly! Time is running out for the human race...

10. Gibraltar Sun – First Time in Print — \$7.50

The expedition to the Crab Nebula has returned to Earth and the news is not good. Out among the stars, a million systems have fallen under Broan domination, the fate awaiting Earth should the Broa ever learn of its existence. The problem would seem to allow but three responses: submit meekly to slavery, fight and risk extermination, or hide and pray the Broa remain ignorant of humankind for at least a few more generations. Are the hairless apes of Sol III finally faced with a problem for which there is no acceptable solution?

While politicians argue, Mark Rykand and Lisa Arden risk everything to spy on the all-powerful enemy that is beginning to wonder at the appearance of mysterious bipeds in their midst...

11. Gibraltar Stars – First Time in Print — US\$7.50

The great debate is over. The human race has rejected the idea of pulling back from the stars and hiding on Earth in the hope the Broa will overlook us for a few more generations. Instead, the World Parliament, by a vote of 60-40, has decided to throw the dice and go for a win. Parliament Hall resounds with brave words as members declare victory inevitable.

With the balance of forces a million to one against *Homo sapiens Terra*, those who must turn patriotic speeches into hard-won reality have their work cut out for them. They must expand humanity's foothold in Broan space while contending with a supply line that is 7000 light-years long.

If the sheer magnitude of the task isn't enough, Mark and Lisa Rykand discover they are in a race against two very different antagonists. The Broa are beginning to wonder at the strange two-legged interlopers in their domain; while back on Earth, those who lost the great debate are eager to try again.

Whoever wins the race will determine the future of the human species... or, indeed, whether it has one.

12. Gridlock and Other Stories - US\$6.00

Where would you visit if you invented a time machine, but could not steer it? What if you went out for a six-pack of beer and never came back? If you think nuclear power is dangerous, you should try black holes as an energy source — or even scarier, solar energy! Visit the many worlds of Michael McCollum. I guarantee that you will be surprised!

Non-Fiction Books

13. The Art of Writing, Volume I - US\$10.00

Have you missed any of the articles in the Art of Writing Series? No problem. The first sixteen articles (October, 1996-December, 1997) have been collected into a book-length work of more than 72,000 words. Now you can learn about character, conflict, plot, pacing, dialogue, and the business of writing, all in one document.

14. The Art of Writing, Volume II - US\$10.00

This collection covers the Art of Writing articles published during 1998. The book is 62,000 words in length and builds on the foundation of knowledge provided by Volume I of this popular series.

15. The Art of Science Fiction, Volume I - US\$10.00

Have you missed any of the articles in the Art of Science Fiction Series? No problem. The first sixteen articles (October, 1996-December, 1997) have been collected into a book-length work of more than 70,000 words. Learn about science fiction techniques and technologies, including starships, time machines, and rocket propulsion. Tour the Solar System and learn astronomy from the science fiction writer's viewpoint. We don't care where the stars appear in the terrestrial sky. We want to know their true positions in space. If you are planning to write an interstellar romance, brushing up on your astronomy may be just what you need.

16. The Art of Science Fiction, Volume II - US\$10.00

This collection covers the *Art of Science Fiction* articles published during 1998. The book is 67,000 words in length and builds on the foundation of knowledge provided by Volume I of this popular series.

17. The Astrogator's Handbook – Expanded Edition and Deluxe Editions

The Astrogator's Handbook has been very popular on Sci Fi – Arizona. The handbook has star maps that show science fiction writers where the stars are located in space rather than where they are located in Earth's sky. Because of the popularity, we are expanding the handbook to show nine times as much space and more than ten times as many stars. The expanded handbook includes the positions of 3500 stars as viewed from Polaris on 63 maps. This handbook is a useful resource for every science fiction writer and will appeal to anyone with an interest in astronomy.