

FINDING FAME AND FORTUNE AS A WRITER (NOT!!!)

by Rose Madeline Mula (c) 2013

When people learn that I write, they immediately assume I've got it made. I mean look at J. K. Rowling, they think. Didn't she make a gazillion bucks (or in her case pounds) writing about that nerdy little wizard, Harry Potter? True. And my career does bear a striking resemblance to JK's, up to a point—the point where she went from being a struggling unknown, to cashing her first staggering royalty check.

Not that I presume to compare my flippant fluff to JK's fanciful fantasies, but neither do I expect her degree of fame and fortune. I'd be happy with a tiny percentage of her success. But how to achieve it? Heaven knows I've tried.

When my first collection of humorous essays (IF THESE ARE LAUGH LINES, I'M HAVING WAY TOO MUCH FUN) was accepted by Pelican Publishing, I thought I was on my way. And I was. But to oblivion, not stardom. The book is brilliant, as is my second book, also published by Pelican (THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE AND OTHER AGGRAVATIONS). Sure, that's just my (and my family's) opinion, but that's only because apparently no one else has read them. And that's because no one else has seen them. And that's because publishers invest promotional dollars only in writers who are already well-known—like celebrities who scribble children's books and titillating memoirs ...politicians who pen scandalous autobiographies...notorious authors of fifty shades of erotica... Theirs are the books that are piled high on the front tables of bookstores and stacked by the check-out registers to seduce buyers into impulse purchases, while my books are buried on obscure shelves or just online, to be unearthed only by afore-mentioned relatives, who must search them out and buy them in order to maintain family unity.

Friends offer helpful advice: "You should go on Oprah!" ...or The View...or The Today Show... They actually believe all I have to do is pick up the phone or send a quick email notifying the media that I'm available, and I'll be deluged with invitations. They have absolutely no idea that for an unknown, it's easier to walk on water than to get on any nationally-syndicated show. I should know. I've tried everything.

A few years ago, during his then-popular TV show, Regis Philbin and wife Joy extravagantly touted a book written by their daughter; so I emailed them asking if they would adopt me. I admitted that I was probably older than both of them, but assured them that I'm an orphan and available and would be happy to allow them to publicize my books. I said I couldn't wait to call them "Mom" and "Dad." They apparently were not touched. I never received a reply. (Note to any other celebrities who may read this: I'm still available for adoption and shameless exploitation. Call, email, tweet or Facebook me.)

Some time later, when I had been writing frequently for The Saturday Evening Post, the magazine featured me on a Contributors Page along with a write-up of Dr. Oz, who had written a column for the same issue. I immediately contacted him, sending a copy of that Contributors Page and suggesting that he do a segment on his show about senior citizens—starring me, of course—who are off their rockers (chairs, that is) and who are preserving their mental health by still actively pursuing their dreams. I guess he wasn't impressed with sharing a Saturday Evening Post Contributors Page with me. I'm still waiting for an answer.

A friend, convinced that Oprah would love me, wrote to tell her about what she considers to be my incredible writing talent. (I told you—she's a friend so may be a bit biased.) She also stressed that I would be an asset to Oprah's show because of my sparkling personality and my hysterical stand-up routine tested at dozens of senior centers at which I spoke and knocked them dead (Admittedly, it wasn't that hard; some of them were really old and sick). Oprah has since moved on to a different show on her OWN network. My friend's letter must have gotten lost in that move because she never heard back.

I've also contacted Ellen de Generis, who often features talented children, suggesting that she should give seniors equal time. No, I didn't threaten her with legal action—I merely hinted that it was a possibility. To date I've heard nothing from Ellen or her attorneys.

Most recently I pleaded with Steve Harvey to provide me a platform on his show to give Betty White a run for her money. He didn't take the bait. I guess he doesn't want to tangle with Betty. Can't say I blame him. Steve's a big guy, but I hear Betty has a powerful left hook.

In addition to the afore-mentioned senior center appearances (where my audiences are all on social security and have no money to buy books), I have tried other less-ambitious publicity ploys, including bookstore signings, which have been very demoralizing. Except for faithful friends, few (if any) people show up, other than the guy who strolled by at one of my signings and asked, "Who are you?" I smiled brightly and held up my book. "I'm the author!" I beamed. "Yeah," he answered, "but are you anybody?" I had to admit it. I'm nobody.

Maybe my new book, GRANDMOTHER GOOSE: RHYMES FOR A SECOND CHILDHOOD, will make me a Somebody. All I need is some good publicity!

Any suggestions?

And please don't say, "You should go on Oprah!"