

# Poet With Nothing To Show For It

I will never write another poem as long as I'm alive.

I know that sounds harsh but I've got good reason to make such a statement – you see, I've learned my lesson.

In 2006, I performed a minor miracle (though, at the time, I was too naive to realize it)...I got a book of poetry published. I titled it *GC Rosenquist's Super Elastic Traveling Sound Circus* because part of the purpose of the book was to have fun with the sounds of words. I even designed a fun cover (see my website for proof) with plenty of purple on it because it was a tribute to the publisher, Purple Sky Publishing.

I experimented with poetry beginning in high school, and as the years passed I got married, raised a son, I got divorced, which resulted in a waterfall of word catharsis which probably saved my life at the time. Later on, when my life settled down, I had a moment to take inventory of all those poems I'd backlogged; I found I had over one hundred of them written. Some were good, some were bad, some needed more work, some were perfect. At the same time I realized if I edited the collection down to the best fifty poems, I might have a book worth publishing. People all over the world would benefit from my experience and wisdom. I would win awards and receive grants, my future would be assured.

I went to work, edited, re-edited, arranged, re-arranged until I had something publishable. Then I sent a query letter to Purple Sky Publishing, the owner jumped on the bandwagon immediately, truly liking what I'd come up with. To make the poems even more accessible to non-poetry readers, I added a brief, one or two line preamble before each poem, giving the reader an insight to the true meaning of the particular work – they could make their own interpretation from there.

My publisher went all out, sending the book to China to be published; it came back as a nice four-color glossy softcover, the paper inside heavy and of high quality. When I received my author copies, I was proud of what I held in my hand. Here was a document of my most personal feelings, full of failure and victory, pain and survival. There was metaphorical blood on almost every page and the thing I'm most proud of is that every poem in the book is honest. I took no shortcuts, I left it all on the page, warts and all.

Immediately, my publisher sent a bunch of copies out to reviewers and I was met with primarily positive reviews except for a Christian reviewer who made it the point of her article to show that I had misquoted the chapter and verse of a certain book from the Bible in one of my poems. It was a simple typing error. My bad. Oh, well, you can't please everyone, right?

So, I began my own marketing onslaught, hitting up my Facebook friends, advertising it on my website, making flyers, holding book signings.

That was when the weekly calls from my publisher started coming in. We weren't selling enough of the book to pay for its initial investment. I needed to step up my marketing plan. I approached coffee houses to see if they'd be willing to stock some copies of the books for sale – NO. I contacted local newspapers and magazines, see if they'd be interested in doing an interview feature – NO. I contacted an English professor at the College of Lake County to see if he could read it and help me stock it in the college's book store – I never heard from him.

I joined a handful of poetry groups, trying to get my name out there. I even entered a dozen or so poetry contests on my own dime because winning any kind of award is something a publisher can brag about on his end – I never even made runner-up. It seems that the same two or three poets win all the awards every year, no way I was going to crack through that barrier. But this part is what really disappointed me – there was practically no support from other poets in the genre. Sure, I could ask them about this type of poetry or using a particular word, but to promote another poet's book, well, I could just forget about that. The air was silent. I even subscribed to a monthly poetry newsletter concerning the Chicago area and in bold black letters, on the front page of the newsletter was a warning that poets should stop sending notices about their new collections being published, there just wasn't any room for such mish-mash. But there was plenty of room to talk about the creative eating habits of a certain poet's dog or a new poetry wing going up in whatever library. Maybe I'm out of line here, but shouldn't the primary purpose of a poetry newsletter be to expose the new work of new poets?

The calls from my publisher kept coming, I did what I could but I had hit a brick wall surrounded by razor wire and bordered by a mote of flaming, boiling oil. The fact of the matter is that *Sound Circus* was doomed from the beginning. I'd never attended any notable schools with an in-depth poetry program, so I hadn't made the right university connections. Essentially, I was dirt under their feet. I was an unknown who'd produced a good book of poetry. I had no right writing poems.

The last call my publisher made to me was to tell me he was closing down Purple Sky Publishing. It appeared that the cost of my book sent him out of business. It's a shame because the book is really, really good and was worth more attention than it received. To this day I feel

guilty about what I did to Purple Sky Publishing. I know I did my best but that's little comfort to me now, and to Purple Sky Publishing.

Thank you for your time,  
GC Rosenquist

P.S. For those of you who doubt the veracity of my poetry writing skills, check out the poem, "Planet," below. It's about my wife.

## Planet

You are an amazing world to get lost in  
A grand granite globe without end  
A place no compass can cross

Boulder barren and mountain crevice-laden  
Your glacial glades melt south then north  
Cutting copper cliffs and icicle ivy  
Into soft shales of landslide soil  
And valley ridges that tread to ocean flood  
But it's your lush jade jungles that lure me long  
You are anything but plain

Although your landscape is landmark  
The mortar that holds your molten interior  
Is the true treasure gem chest to cherish  
Under access of your mantle membrane  
Veins of precious stone lie in wealth  
Opal Topaz  
Emerald Amber  
Ruby Red Silver  
Gold Tooth Diamond  
And plentiful Platinum to plunder

To explore you makes me rich  
Because whenever I roam  
I always find something more beautiful  
And priceless  
To take back with me