

from the editor

A New Year –a chance to begin again

As hackneyed as the phrases are, a new year always signals a fresh start, turning a new leaf in our lives, a chance to begin again. In January's *World of Graphic Design* we feature a poem echoing the refrain. Brenda Johnson uses her graphic design skills to illustrate the poem from a long forgotten book found in a dusty attic. Lyn Blair offers insights on wrestling with Murphy's Law. If writing an ebook is in your plans for the coming year, Wendy Wallace launches the first article in a series to guide you in creating, designing and producing an ebook. Lest we forget the world of possibilities as we pursue commercial writing, Sandy Probst has advice for writers who are junk mail haters. Frauke Nonnenmacher has tips to promote your business, even if your advertising budget is on a shoestring. Chris Wondra shows you how to think outside the Inbox and use Jedi tricks to land clients. In the *Travel Journal* we have a postcard from sunny Cancun. Melissa Conley describes her delightful swim with dolphins.

We've added some excellent information and tools on **Freebird's** web site to help kick-start your new year. Visit the *Recommended Reading* page where you'll find a new Ebook section. While you are there, get your free trial version of *Ebook Starter, a Do-It-Yourself Ebook Design Kit* by Shelley Lowery.

Among the new links on **Freebird's Favorite Links** page is [Trafford On Demand Publishing Service](#). If you're ready to self-publish, visit their web page for a free *Publishing Guide*.

Turn over a new leaf and reaffirm your commitment to success in 2005. As Chris Wondra reminds us in his article, Master Yoda says, "Jedi must have the deepest commitment, the most serious mind."

Maria Thompson

The (Sometimes) Rocky Road to Success

Chapter 10 - Murphy's Last Stand

by Lyn Blair

"If anything can go wrong, it will" went down in history as Murphy's Law. Murphy's Law has been with us since 1949. (www.murphys-laws.com/murphy/murphy-true.html) But since the dawn of man Murphy's concept prevailed under other names. You may have also heard it called Sod's Law.

We used to kid my dad by saying Murphy was riding shotgun with him.

Living in a universe based on opposites like good/evil, light/dark, success/failure, positive/negative you just never know when the "flip side" will rear its head. When you approach the extreme of one side, let's say "success", you're teetering on the edge of its opposite. Failure may reach up to grab you. It's the nature of the universe.

Discovering I can be creative—following my passions—doing copywriting and graphic design from home—rocketed me to new heights of enthusiasm. I haven't been this excited about anything since I was 21 years old. Freelancing here I come!

Key to starting your freelance business is putting up your "billboard" on the Internet - your website. How hard can it be— learning to code a bit of HTML and writing copy for your website?

Oh, just tempt fate with that question, why don't you!

Since HTML was a completely new learning curve, I expected to land on my head once in awhile. I was on my last web page for the site, when I entered some code, and watched the whole page turn blank on the browser. After wading through the mystery of the "disappearing page" and finally fixing the HTML code, I sighed with relief, realizing my web page was almost done. Or so I thought.

Searching for a bit of HTML code to add a final polish I found an article stating some HTML tags were becoming outmoded. CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) has emerged as the new and improved

code for document layout. The article recommended veering away from certain HTML tags, if you are building a new site because some browsers won't be supporting these tags in the near future.* Just when I thought the end was in sight, part of my project came to a dead stop- until I learned more about CSS.

Mired in learning another new process and temporarily stalled at a roadblock, I decided to shift gears—fine tune and add the final touches to my web copy.

Remembering the copywriter's watchword —“Write like you talk”, a simple conversational style—I read and edited, happily daring to think, “This is easy”. Reading my web copy backwards, forwards and inside out, it dawned on me something was off. My eyes focused and I saw whole paragraphs—written in the voice of Mrs. Good, my high school English teacher. She was a dry, stuffy, boring communicator who talked like she wrote—in a pedantic style only lofty scholars living in ivory towers could understand. Mrs. Good would drone on for hours all day long putting class after class to sleep. And the pride of perfection, she lived up to her name, “good”, by making sure no dangling participle, split infinitive or grammatical error ever escaped her watchful eye.

How could I not have seen these paragraphs of stuffy, dry prose? It was as if Mrs. Good had risen from the grave, writing from my hand and killing my copy! So close to the finish, I'm coming down the home stretch and now—a covert assault of stifling monotony.

So much for 'switching gears'. Perhaps taking a more complete break would help. I decided to go for a drive, pick up some lunch and come back with a fresh view.

As I revved up the engine I discovered my car was sputtering. Getting out, I noticed a bulge the size of a tumor on my right front tire and my taillights didn't work.

Ironically getting lunch turned into *fixing my car*. Trying to hang onto a positive attitude, I kept my chin up and plastered a smile on my face. I remembered another tactic to improve my outlook. A shower is always refreshing and bound to improve spirits, right?

After taking a shower I looked for my favorite clothes, a soft, comfortable outfit I loved to wear. Oh that's right, I put it in the dryer. But my dryer was moaning like a sick cow and my clothes were sitting in a wet mound.

Enough! I'd hit my limit and wondered if life as a freelancer just wasn't meant to be. Was I merely a foolish dreamer? Was my aspiration just pie in the sky?

Before I slid down the slippery slope of giving up, I stopped to look. Did I see Murphy? Oh yes. There he was, riding shotgun beside me. It was Murphy all right, making his *last stand*.

I did my homework. I paid my dues. I was on my final push - “sink or swim”. Sitting at an extreme, ready for the flip side, Murphy was a sure sign...success is just around the corner.

When Murphy makes his last stand, remember what Thomas Edison said,

“Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”

Smile, give Murphy a little nod, stay the course and keep on driving. Even when it looks like you're teetering on the edge of disaster, success is just up the road.

*“The Body Tag; Deprecated Attributes” by Roger Riche at: resources.bravenet.com/articles/site_building/CSS/the_body_tag_deprecated_attributes/

Lyn Blair is a Los Angeles based copywriter and graphic designer. She writes articles for **Freebird** ezine and is Assistant Editor. Her articles can also be found at GoArticles.com, IdeaMarketers.com and Connectionteam.com. Using **Freebird's** HTML article series, *A Professional Web Page Made Easy*, the *Web Design and Recommended Reading* sections as a guide, she designed her web page and has launched her freelance business. Visit: www.lblairenterprises.com Contact Lyn at lblairenterprises@earthlink.net

How to Promote Your Business Without Costly Advertising

by Frauke Nonnenmacher

As a start-up or small business, you may face a Catch 22. You need to advertise your services to get clients, but you need clients to afford the cost of advertising. If the high cost of advertising isn't priced into your budget, how do you solve the dilemma?

Fortunately, many publications on and offline are happy to accept articles of interest to their readers. An article in a targeted publication will give your business name exposure it needs to attract potential clients. The more useful the information in the article is, the greater the chance your potential client will keep the article for future reference. Chances are your article with information about your business will be, in front of your client longer than a traditional ad.

Jim Edwards tells us in his April 2004 newsletter, *"I use free articles that I distribute all over the Internet that draw visitors to my websites like bees to honey. With free articles, the targeted traffic you generate is as good or better than any traffic you could pay for...except you don't have to pay for it!"*

In addition to increasing your visibility with prospective clients, articles of interest to them have several other uses. Articles are great for establishing credibility. Make copies of your articles and hand them out at meetings. Use the articles to improve your sales presentations, to enhance your business profile and add to your portfolio. If you have several articles, collate them into a small booklet to give to prospective clients as a valuable gift. (If you use photocopies, make sure you get permission to do so from the relevant publication. If you just want to use the text, you should be fine to do so, unless you signed away your copyright to the article.)

Follow these simple steps

1. Identify a problem your clients or prospective clients face and create a solution.
2. Contact the relevant publications and find out what their submission guidelines are or research online publications such as ezines or newsletters.
3. Submit an article proposal.
4. Write the article and submit it.
5. Get permission to use copies of the article for your business.

As an added benefit, include a "resource box", a few lines of text about the writer typically with contact information like an email and web site address at the end of your article. The resource box is basically an advertisement for the writer. In exchange for the advertisement, the writer gives the publisher permission to publish the article for free.

Here are sites where you can submit your articles and promote your freelance business:

[Netpreneur Now](#)

[Idea Marketers](#)

[Go Articles](#)

[Article City](#)

[All FreeLance](#)

Many sites have guidelines concerning the layout of your article. If an article isn't properly formatted, it may be rejected. Some sites provide an HTML or Text Editor; simply copy and paste your article(s) directly into the Editor. When a Text Editor isn't provided, use this handy online tool to automatically reformat your text: [Format Text Tool](#)

Follow these tips and you've outwitted the Catch 22, the need to advertise to get clients vs. the need for clients to afford advertising. At minimum cost you're on your way to getting great exposure for your business!

About the Author Frauke Nonnenmacher is a copywriter who specializes in marketing materials designed to build customer relationships. Frauke is Freebird's Web Master and also writes the occasional article for *Freebird*. Her articles can also be found at Netpreneurnow.com, Zongoo.com, GoArticles.com and IdeaMarketers.com For more information, visit her website at www.creativecats.com

Get Clients by Mastering the Jedi Mind Tricks

by Chris Wondra

"Already know that which you need . . . Do or do not. There is no try." - Master Yoda

Have you ever thought about how superheroes get their powers? Some are born with a "gift" (or a curse depending on the perspective). Accident creates others—a radioactive spider bite or a scientific experiment gone wrong. Still others gain their powers by trial, voluntarily journeying through fierce mental, spiritual, and physical rites of passage. The quest to become successful copywriters is, for most of us, similar to the latter. Few are born with the gift, some may stumble into a copywriting career by accident, but most of us have to work very hard. Indeed, most of us, in order to create a successful business, grow and change into something more than we once were—just like a Jedi.

But you don't need to trek to the far reaches of the earth (or galaxy) to gain all of your super (copywriting) powers. All you have to do is read on. What follows are proven psychological techniques you, the "Jedi Copywriter," can use to mold the minds of your prospects, to gain trust, respect, and eventually, a solid list of steady clients.

Before You Begin Your Training

In the last issue of *Freebird* (issue #9) in, "How to Get Clients If You're a Cold Call Chicken" we discussed how to kill monsters using a magical technique called "Lead Generation" and a tool every Jedi Copywriter should have in his or her belt—email. We also listed six ways to burn an image of competence and confidence (must haves for any super hero) into your prospects' minds:

Know your niche

Make your first impression a good one

Sweat over your subject line

Personalize

Remember content is king

Offer value

It is important to note these are the basics we build upon here. If you haven't become familiar with them please go back to Issue 9 and review before reading on. As Master Yoda says, *"Ready are you? What know you of ready? Much to learn you still have."*

Understanding and Using RAS for Fun and Profit

Think of lead generation and email marketing as a process of moving people through a series of events. The key to the Jedi Mind Trick, as it applies to getting clients, is to understand and manipulate your prospect at every decision making point. In order to do this, a young Jedi must understand the power of the Reticular Activating System (RAS).

The RAS is the part of the human brain in charge of filtering stimuli and directing attention. I am going to manipulate your RAS right now by asking you to stop reading for a moment and notice everything around you that is square or rectangular in shape—anything with square corners. Now do the same for anything that is white or cream in color. Undoubtedly the things you noticed were not things that you noticed before I asked you. They were still there, just not *significant* to you. Think of the RAS as a spam filter for your brain. The RAS filters out 98% of all stimuli. If the RAS let everything in, all the time—every voice, every sound, every word, every movement, and every image—you'd go stark raving mad. The RAS is a necessary part of the human brain — especially in the 21st century. The RAS lets in only those things you deem *significant*.

The key to the Jedi Mind Trick in your email lead generation campaign is to trigger your prospect's RAS. In short—you want to become *significant*.

Thinking Outside the Inbox — Five Jedi Mind Tricks

You're ready to plan your message, but you want something different. You want to stimulate your prospect's RAS, to position yourself as a real pro—a celebrity expert who knows not only copywriting and marketing, but also your niche industry. What follows are five Jedi Mind Tricks you can use to separate yourself from the glut of meaningless spam and commercial solicitations in your prospect's inbox.

1. Ask for help. In the 1930's Robert Collier, one of the first master copywriters, perfected a technique still widely used in direct marketing today. One of his most successful techniques was to simply ask for help. People love giving opinions and helping. Notice the subtle psychology here. By asking, you make people feel important. For the best results, carefully consider your reader and what you are asking. This is where your niche expertise and research pay off. Invite them to participate in a poll (Check www.problemfree.co.uk) relevant to that industry.
2. Offer to share the results. Invite prospects to click through for valuable content on your web page. Offer them a free report, ebook or newsletter.
3. In your copy, ask prospects to write something down—i.e. if you could change three things about your job, what would it be? Make a list of all the things you value in good copy, all the projects your firm is planning in the next two months, things you need to do to prepare for your next ad campaign. Psychological tests have proven the act of writing something down subconsciously opens the RAS, and puts your prospects in a receptive frame of mind for more information.
4. Offer a small diversion that's interesting or entertaining. Provide a non-commercial activity that leads to a well-crafted marketing message inviting them to click through to your website or sales path. Again you're shooting for a basic lead generation concept — by getting them to agree to have a little fun, you get a yes. When prospects click through to your website, you get another yes—You're breaking up a commitment to work with you into several smaller steps to which they can easily say "yes".
5. Rewrite your latest promotion, so it's guaranteed to trigger your prospect's RAS. Rewrite a prospect's sales letter or ad. Send your revised sales letter to your prospect, include an explanation why your edit would be more effective, as well as a generic "report" explaining how good copy works. This is a great way to study and practice the art of copywriting and use your own "assignments" to market yourself.

Think like a Jedi in your quest in 2005. Training for copywriting success is no different from learning the ways of the Jedi. Follow the wisdom of Master Yoda, "Jedi must have the deepest commitment, the most serious mind." And you may be amazed how the power of the Force can change your life.

About the Author When Chris Wondra is not teaching Middle School Language Arts in St. Croix Falls, WI, he's using his Six Figure Copywriting skills to create and build businesses. His most recent endeavor weaves story telling, fantasy and revolutionary teaching techniques to create a unique brand of children's literature capturing the imagination like no other reading experience ever has. His articles have appeared on GoArticles.com, ArticleCity.com, Zongoo.com, IdeaMarketers.com and previous issues of *Freebird* ezine. Contact Chris at: sunshineworks@centurytel.net

Explore a New Writing Frontier – Ebooks

Part One - Choose a Subject and Let's Get Started!

by Wendy Wallace

Have you always dreamed of writing a book? In our electronic age, writing and publishing a book is easier than you might imagine.

Aspiring authors no longer have to endure the grueling task of finding a publisher. Today, self-publishing is a snap. With your copywriting skills and learning a bit about ebook design, you could have an ebook ready to market within a very short period of time. Joe Vitale claims, *"We'll teach you how to write and publish your own profitable ebook with less than a week's work."*

To begin you might attend a seminar to learn the basics or you can read (what else!) an ebook, like Joe Vitale's *How to Write and Publish an Ebook* or Shelley Lowery's, *Ebook Starter*.

Choose a Topic with Market Potential

The next step is to find a subject with market potential. Should you write about something you are interested in? Or is it better to do some research and find out what information consumers need and are willing to pay for?

"The best solution would be to find a subject that fits both (what the consumer needs and is willing to buy)," advises freelance writer, Bonnie Lowe. *"But I think it depends on your goals for writing the ebook. Are you interested in expressing opinions, teaching others how to do something, earning money from the sales or all of those? If your primary goal is to earn money, find a 'starving crowd', readers who are currently searching for information about a specific subject."*

April Morelock, copywriter and graphic designer, tried her hand at writing an ebook. Her background as a technical writer, who used MS Word in her work, inspired the idea for her ebook, *MS Word Help!* She discovered, *"It's was really easy to do and a lot of fun."*

"You can determine what needs written, how you want it to look," April said. *"Try out your own unique creative juices. And you don't have to worry if 'they'll like it'. If you like it and it gets the information to the reader, that's what is important."*

Ebook author John Cole suggests sticking to what you know.

"Write about what you know; everybody is an expert on something. It's just a matter of discovering what you're good at, a subject only you can write about. My two ebooks, one on SAT Prep and one on speed-reading, came from a love of reading and a teaching background."

Says Cole, *"If you enjoy doing something and are able to 'carry on a conversation' with your reader, that's what good ebook writing is really all about."*

When choosing a topic for your ebook, Bonnie Lowe recommends a methodical approach. First, make a list your interests and areas of expertise. Then, conduct research to determine, if any of the ideas on your list meet the following criteria:

1. Are people actively looking for information on the subject?
2. Are the people who are looking for information on the subject, likely to be willing and able to pay for the information?
3. Is the demand for the information unfulfilled (or exceeded) by the supply of competitor's ebooks on the market?

"If the topics on your list don't meet all three criteria, find a topic that does. It may not be as much fun to write about something you're not passionate about, but you'll get over it, when the money starts coming in," Bonnie said.

One universal rule stands out, when it comes to choosing a subject for an ebook: be specific.

John Cole emphasizes the importance of honing in on a subject. *"Specific focus is the key. People today don't want to waste time with extraneous information. They want to find out what's going to help them with their particular problem or answer their question as quickly as possible."*

Bonnie Lowe agrees. *"The more specific the topic, the easier it is to write about your readers' specific needs and then find and market effectively to them."* She added, *"This is especially true of ebooks because of the way they are marketed on the Internet. The target audience finds ebooks mainly through a Web search for specific keywords and phrases. For example, writers interested in becoming copywriters would be more likely to search for information on "how to become a copywriter" (very specific) versus "how to write" (too broad). Also, there's often less competition for very specific topics."*

If you are ready to continue your exploration of ebooks, begin with the basics. Download the free version of [Ebook Starter](#) or sign up for an ebook seminar. Assess your knowledge base and research topics with the best market potential. You'll be on your way.

"Few projects are more satisfying for me than creating my own 'product,'" says Bonnie Lowe. Soon you too can discover the rewards of producing your ebook.

This article is the first in a series taking you from start to finish with tips on writing ebooks. Next time we'll cover "Ebooks: Creating Quality Contents"

Resources

[Ebook Starter](#) Free! [Click](#) to download this do-it-yourself ebook design kit including ebook templates and a complete ebook tutorial.

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Bonnie Lowe www.best-interview-strategies.com

April Morelock www.foxhawke.com

Joe Vitale www.mrfire.com *How to Write and Publish your own eBook...in as little as 7 days*

Dear Junk Mail Hater

by Sandra Probst

Do you despise the mountains of credit card offers, unsolicited catalogs, association flyers, and yes...sales letters that pile up in your mailbox on a daily basis? Do you sort your mail over a wastebasket, sending anything with a bulk rate stamp fluttering to a quick death?

If you hate receiving junk mail, how will you muster up the necessary enthusiasm to write it? If the thought of writing a hard-sell sales letter sends a cold shiver of dread snaking down your spine, do you doubt whether you can achieve success as a freelance copywriter? In a September AWA Forum, Melissa started a thread entitled *Junk Mail Hater*. She said, *"I hate getting junk mail and sales letters. Until I started this program (Six Figure Copywriting course), I wouldn't even read them. ...How do I write these letters, when I hate getting them? I love to write...I've been seduced by the idea of becoming a copywriter, but I'm wondering now if I'll be convincing since I'm a hypocrite."*

Don't despair. Freelance copywriting is not just about writing sales letters and direct mail packages. In fact, a successful freelance copywriter doesn't have to write direct mail at all. There is an entire world of other documents that businesses—your clients—need written.

Businesses, both large and small, develop and produce a wide range of marketing and business communications and often don't have either the staff or the expertise to write them in-house. So they outsource to freelance copywriters to get the job done.

The Wide Realm of Copywriting

Obviously, any business needs to market its service or products in order to make sales and profits. And not all of these sales are made through direct mail marketing. Businesses need quality-marketing materials such as brochures, print ads, advertorials, flyers and catalogs to implement their marketing strategies and solicit sales. While these types of collateral differ in structure from direct mail, many of the techniques you have learned or are still learning through the AWAI copywriting course can be applied to these “soft-sell” documents. Take for example, the marketing brochure. In order to be an effective sales tool, a marketing brochure needs attention-getting headlines and persuasive factual body copy that will continue to sell the client on the product or service long after the salesman has gone home for the day. An effective brochure makes the salesman’s job easier, and earns you a happy client.

Companies also produce large amounts of business communications necessary to their operations. Annual reports, proposals, white papers, newsletters, employee handbooks, training manuals, multimedia scripts, press releases, case histories, form letters and web copy are vital to companies and are often a chore for department employees to write. Expanding your writing services into the realm of business communications can not only be profitable, but can also allow you to become a “one stop shop” for your clients and increase your value. By offering writing services in both marketing and business communications, you can increase the number of projects per client.

For the subtle writing style differences required between press releases, newsletters web copy and other copywriting mediums; the Internet offers a wealth of information to help you hone your skills. A simple Search on the topic will yield hundreds of hits, allowing you to read everything the Internet has to offer. You can expand your copywriting horizons in no time!

To get you started, here are some links you can check out for specific copywriting mediums.

[How to write a press release](#)

[How to Write Catalogue Copy that Sells – by Bob Bly](#)

[How to Write Killer Copy for the Web](#)

[When Bad Copy Attacks](#)

[How to Write Newsletters](#)

About the Author Sandy Probst is a commercial writer based in Marine-on-St. Croix, MN. With over 15 years in the insurance, financial and service industries, she specializes in writing informative business and marketing copy for clients that include State Farm Insurance, Detek LLC, Assistive Technology of Minnesota, and Portraits by Deb. Sandy is completing the 6-Figure Copywriting course to improve her persuasive writing skills. Contact: probstwriting@aol.com

Tool Box

A date-reminder program to keep you on track

If one of your New Year’s resolutions is “never forget an important date”, use [MiniMinder](#) to help you plan and organize. The nifty little application provides a convenient daily countdown for upcoming events. Track any date of importance from birthdays, anniversaries, meetings, appointments and holidays to bill payments. You can resize and relocate [MiniMinder](#) anywhere on your monitor or click the orange button to minimize its already small design in your system tray. The application’s features include scheduling yearly, monthly and one-time-events or events such as “2nd Monday”, “4th Friday” or events occurring in increments such as “every 7 days”. For those who don’t always complete tasks on schedule, choose a “til done” event. Each day, when you start your computer, the reminders are presented on your desktop. Download [MiniMinder](#) (free). Like a personal assistant, [MiniMinder](#) tracks your calendar and scheduling, while you concentrate on your business.

From the Travel Journal - Greetings from Parque Nizuc

by Melissa Conley

I slip into the warm silky sea ... spa-like and relaxing ... until my heart suddenly starts pounding and reminds me I'm absolutely *terrified* of the water! Moments later two bottlenose dolphins intent on a bit of play completely erase my fear. They swim in, out and around me, inviting pets and strokes of their slick and spongy skin that feels almost like a wetsuit. They have those dolphin smiles that seem to say, "There's no better recreation than romping around in the sea," and an intelligence in their eyes that makes their message believable. By the time one of the dolphins allows me to caress his tummy, I'm ready to frolic with them, too.

My aquatic romp is part of the *Interactive Dolphin Program* at Parque Nizuc, a Water Park in Cancun, Mexico. For nearly thirty minutes, a trainer has shared information about these playful creatures and their training, handed a life vest to each of us and, before inviting us into the dolphins' playground, has gone over the do's and don'ts for the swim. Then, it's into the water!

Shortly afterwards, it's time for a kiss – a dolphin kiss that is! As I swim in front of the trainer, two dolphins glide towards me, one on each side. Each softly slides its nose from my shoulder to my cheek, pausing there just long enough to fill me with the wonderment of ... well, a first kiss!

The program finale is the "foot push." I take a deep breath and swim awkwardly to the end of the dolphins' enclosure. As I lie flat, a pair of dolphins each gently places a nose on each of my feet and begin pushing me across the surface. In a nanosecond my body rises in an exhilarating, weightless flight over the water. Too soon, the dolphins back away and no longer capable of flight, I slide gently back into the turquoise Caribbean.

Swimming with the dolphins is an incomparable experience - one you'll treasure long after your vacation has ended.



Dolphin duo demonstrates "the kiss"

For more information or to book your dolphin swim online, visit:
www.parquenizuc.com

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World of Graphic Design: Chat with the Designer – Brenda Johnson

"Last year, I came across a gift my mother-in-law had received from one of her friends, a small booklet of poems written over several decades. As I read the poems I was enchanted and captivated. Who could tell from the dull gray exterior what beauty lay within! What a shame the outside was so unattractive and the inside was so plain – no illustrations. I wanted to redo the book with an eye-catching cover and illustrations to match the beauty of the words. The author, Frances B. Davis, was enthusiastic and excited, when I approached her with a proposal to redesign her poems. Now the project is finished and we are preparing publicity along with a Book Autographing Day at a Ft. Payne, Alabama bookstore to launch the sale of the book."

"At 83, Ms. Davis is a cancer survivor, a widow whose finances were depleted with the lingering illness of her late husband, yet she remains a woman who believes, you can respond to adversity by allowing it to strengthen you."

One of the poems in her forthcoming book, shown here accompanied by Brenda's illustration, is particularly fitting for the New Year.

To Begin Again

Frances B. Davis

I had some packing to do today.
I stored the past twelve months away,
Months that will never reappear.
Then I unwrapped a bright New Year.

It lies before me pure, unmarred.
The one just past was smudged and scarred
From unkind words and thoughtless deeds,
And unconcern for other's needs.

The year that is past will come no more.
But just ahead lies an open door.
I view with faith a path untrod
And venture forth – in step with God.

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