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Geoff Aggeler: Editing With Panache, Skill and Experience



Geoff Aggeler is a professional editor and published author. He wrote a critically acclaimed biography of Anthony Burgess (*Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist*) and during the process had his prose reviewed by Mr. Burgess. The novel *Confessions of Johnny Ringo* was published in 1987. The Los Angeles Times reviewer wrote, "All successful novelists know how to take their readers into the minds and hearts of their characters. Geoff Aggeler is such a writer as he masterfully demonstrates in his fictional memoir 'Confessions of Johnny Ringo.'"

I had the opportunity to speak with him about a question of great importance to all writers, but particularly to first time novelists. When, not if, but when should the author hire an editor?

It's not a question of if, "We could all use an editor, I could use an editor. We can all benefit from some input," says Geoff whose editing credentials include teaching in the writing programs at the University of California, Davis and University of California, Santa Barbara. Geoff is also Professor Emeritus at the University of Utah where he taught in their creative writing program, working with PhD. Candidates. Geoff also teaches at the Santa Barbara Writers' Conference.

So the challenge for the author is to determine when his *magnum opus* is ripe for the refinement that only a professional can bring. You must finish the first draft at the very least before considering the expenditure of money and emotion that hiring a professional will cost. You need to be prepared to relinquish some control. Your book must be at the point where you alone can do no more.

"Hire an editor when you really have the book in the best form that it can be," says Mr. Aggeler.

"When you get to the point where you have run it by several people and you have revised and revised and you can't do anymore to improve it, then is time to hire a professional."

What if you come in too soon? "The work can be so flawed that the editor is virtually ghost writing it," says Geoff.

"Be careful when picking an editor, some are unscrupulous, will take you to the cleaners and do little work," says Mr. Aggeler. "Before I take on a client I will ask for a chapter to review and critique, at no cost, to see if we can work together."

Editorial qualifications? "Editors should also be published, as Pope says in his *Essay on Criticism*. "Let such teach others who themselves excel and venture freely who have written well." That sounds like good advice to me.—Jerry O'Brien

If you are ready, you can reach Geoff Aggeler at www.editingwithpanache.com
You can meet him in person at the Santa Barbara Writers' Conference this June where he will be teaching, Narrative Technique: Fiction and Creative Nonfiction

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