

Six Things I Learned from Reading an Inflight Magazine

By Carolyn Howard-Johnson

It seems Jay Heinrichs, editorial director of SouthWest Airlines' inflight magazine, *Spirit*, is especially interested in writing--more than one might expect from his position with the magazine. The recent issue was replete with articles on writing so presumably he believes that will interest his flying public. Even his editorial is aimed at writing--books in particular. He says that it is a long-held belief in the publishing world that if a book is about Lincoln, doctors or dogs, it will fly off book shelves. He came up with a tongue in cheek title of his own, *Lincoln's Dog-Training Secrets* that sports a big "Doctor Approved" shout insignia on the cover. Kind of a cute cover, too, which as we all know helps books fly off of bookstore shelves.

So what did I learn from this issue of *Spirit*?

#1 If you have a good article on any of Heinrichs's three preferred subjects, send him a proposal. He is--obviously--already presold on the idea! With his interest in writing, he may also be interested in articles on writing that would appeal to his audience.

#2 Heinrichs recently self-published his own book, *Sniff It First and 15 Other Things I learned From my Cat* (also a pretty darn good title, even lacking doctors, Lincoln and dogs!). This tells me that Heinrichs has the experience and savvy not to judge a book by the press it is printed on. He says self-publishing "gives a voice to brilliant people who otherwise couldn't publish, while allowing a guy like me, unfortunately, to do a cat book." So, he might not easily dismiss your feature story idea or your title as a gift suggestion.

#3 The value of humor. You know I believe in it or I wouldn't use Anne Louise's Humor Hint in most issues of my Sharing with Writers newsletter. It is apparent from the title (though I haven't read Heinrichs's book yet!) that he used humor. He, obviously is using self-effacing humor to promote it as well.

#4 That cat books may sell darn nearly as well as dog or doctor or Lincoln books.

#5 That having a platform from which to dive will surely help sell your book. (Heinrichs's is his visibility as an editor of *Spirit*!) And that when you have an excellent platform, that may be the time not to give all the book's profits to a big publisher anyway. (Your platform could be your former writing, your Rolodex full of clients or whatever.)

#6 That reading when you fly can be beneficial to your writing career. That goes for this newsletter, too--or mine. Print them out. Don't skim. Read. (-:

To research departments and content of *Spirit* go to <http://www.spiritmag.com/contact.php>

Carolyn Howard-Johnson's first novel, is an instructor for UCLA Extension's world-renown Writers' Program, her book *The Frugal Book Promoter: How to Do What Your Publisher Won't* is recommended reading for her classes, and was named USA Book News' "Best Professional Book 2004." It is also an Irwin Award winner. Her second book in the How To Do It Frugally series is *The Frugal Editor: Put Your Best Book Forward to Avoid Humiliation and Ensure Success* is also a USA Book News award-winner as well as the winner of the Reader View's Literary Award in the publishing category. She is the recipient of both the California Legislature's Woman of the Year in Arts and Entertainment Award and the Glendale American Business Women's Association's Woman of the Year award. She is a popular speaker and actor. Her website is www.HowToDoItFrugally.com.