

Book Journeys Author Interview - January 13, 2013

Dr. Angela Lauria with Bruce Farrell Rosen, author of *If You Ever Need Me, I Won't Be Far Away*

"When you write a book ... you don't wanna put it in your drawer. You wanna get it out there, so when people talk to you about it and discuss it, it keeps the book alive." ~Bruce Farrell Rosen

Angela:

Well, hello, everybody, and welcome to Book J -

Bruce:

Hello?

Angela:

Well, hello, everybody, and welcome to Book Journeys Radio. This is Angela Lauria, from the Author Incubator, and every week on Book Journeys Radio we interview another author about their experience writing a book. And today, we have with us Bruce Rosen, and Bruce's book is called *If You Ever Need Me, I Won't Be Far Away*. Bruce is an investment officer, but this is not really a financial book, is it, Bruce? Tell us a little bit about your book!

Bruce:

No, it's not a finan – well, there are plenty of moments of – i – it be the financial experience, the book was written at the beginning of two thousand and – basically, early in 2007, and I wrote it between 2007 and just after the election of President Obama is when it concluded ... and during that period you have the financial crisis, and I – from where I sit, as a – as a financial person, managing – managing funds, I – I do integrate into the book the experience of – of what that was like, and then try to describe that in the most basic and understandable terms for people and what that felt like as – some of the other things were going on in the world, and – politically and in my own life, and then how the financial crisis impacted me, but it's not a financial book, but it does have those moments in it.

Angela:

So, why don't you tell us about the book? What is it about, and I know it's a memoir –

Bruce:

Yeah. Yeah. Right.

Angela:

– so, give everybody the – kind of a sense of your book before we get into – meat of what we're gonna talk about today, which is how you wrote it, and kind of your transformation to becoming an author.

Bruce:

Right. Well, the – the title of the book, *If You Ever Need Me, I Won't Be Far Away*, are the words that my mother gave me, back in late nine – late 1999, maybe a few days – a week or so before she passed away. And so – my mom was a very huge inspiration in my life, she was a very gifted healer and – and a psychic, and people came from all over the world to see her, the rich and famous like Marlon Brando and the – and the poor and indigent that she would – she would read for free. The – the – the moment to write the book – it's a book that I knew I – I always knew that, within my ... - at a key or important time in my life, there would be the moment to – to write a very deep and personal story, and that moment came ...

Angela:

In fact – in fact, you say you knew, from the time you were eight, that you would write an important

Bruce:

Exactly. Right. And – I am – as I say, by day, I'm in the – in the financial world, and – and while I was in the financial world, I kept that – that – that alive, that – that passion and that – and that inspiration to write. I always felt that – the person that I am is – is – is at – at the very heart, very core, the very soul, of me is – is a writer as well as – I am good in my day job, but I – but one plays off of the other, and I don't think that I would be – I would be fulfilled if I – if I wasn't a writer. But I am a writer, and I – I did a number of things along the way before writing this book, I wrote a – I did about twelve or fourteen radio programs for the BBC, they – they – I had written a piece on Diana, the princess Diana, when she had died, I sent it to the BBC and they got back to me and wanted to know if they could read it out loud, and I said, "Absolutely," and that led to some brainstorming, and I wound up doing a – a series for the BBC, essays, sort of like slice of life pieces called "Diary of a Creative Banker," in which I would sort of integrate or incorporate the metaphors of my daily life, the – the – the – images and symbolism of the – of the – of the working financial world into the – into the – into the – the more personal stories of what it's like to be a human being, and then to – to seek balance and to try to experience the – the – the precious moment of being alive, so it was a – it was a piece called "Diary of a Creative Banker," and they – they had me do it for virtually a year at the BBC. So, yeah, there's been a fair amount of writing in my life, a lot of other things that I've written which we could describe later, if you like, but in terms of this –

Angela:

But this is, in fact, your first – this is your first book, right?

Bruce:

This is the first book – yeah, first book that I've published. And I have written another book that I haven't published.

Angela:

So, what, uh – got it. So, what, for you, do you wish that you knew before you wrote this book? What surprises have come up along the way, things that you wish you had stumbled on before you finished the book?

Bruce:

What do I wish I knew before I – I wrote the book? It's a good question, and it takes a second – to think that, think through that. I – I – I would say that – I would – to be absolutely direct about that, I can't say that there's anything, unless I really start and think deeply about that, but there – the – the writing of the book was a journey –

Angela:

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Bruce:

– and I don't think – I don't think there was anything that occurred in that book that I – should have tried to clarify before I wrote it, or that I should have ... in my head before I wrote it. I – I – I had a passion to write it –

Angela:

A lot of people – a lot of people have surprises when it comes to publishing or promoting or marketing their book, things like that, I wondered if there were any surprises for you in those areas.

Bruce:

It – no.

Angela:

'Kay.

Bruce:

I have to say – I don't say that there – I – I don't think there was anything that happened in particular that came about as a surprise. I do think this, though, lemme say this: that – that the – y – yes, the answer to that question is y – no and yes, because the publishing of the book came about in a rather opportune, or sort of a serendipitous way, and that is – I wrote the book knowing, knowing that this is a story that I had to tell, I wrote the book knowing that I would give it my very, very best, and my very best writing and – and – and my best thinking, and my best – I just felt the passion to do it. I did not want that book to sit in the drawer, and I – so, I went into the story, knowing that, if nothing happens with – if I can't find a publisher for this book, if I can't get it out there, then ... darn it, I'm gonna publish this book myself, because it's extremely important.

Angela:
Mmm.

Bruce:

Extremely important. So, what happened was – what happened was that my son had – my older son had come home from – from – they live in New York, they came back to San Francisco, here where I live, for the holidays, and wha – my – my older son had read the book and was very, very taken with it, and – and – beyond the fact that he – he was part of it, he thought it was very – very unique and special story that really overtook him. And – and so, one of his friends, he was telling the story – he was telling this – “My dad had written this book, and I –” – how much he – how much it affected him, and he was telling this to one of his friend – friends that he grew up with. And the friend said – a – a girl friend, not a girlfriend, but a female friend –

Angela:
Mm-hmm.

Bruce:

– said to him – said to him, “You know, my dad is a – a publisher, and he’s published many, many people and he’s published major people, and he – your dad should show it to my – to my dad.” And – and so, Michael – Michael, my son, brought that back to me, and I – and I – I did. I contacted him, and he wanted a – an outline of the book, and various – segments – and what kind of audience was I trying to reach with this book, and who was I trying to touch, and – and – and – and why did I write it, and – and – and – and what are my hopes for it, and – and – and then, we – he started reading it, and he – he came back to me and said, “You know, this is really something I would like to work on with you. I would lo –” – so, he – he’s semi-retired, but this book was – was – was profound for him, and he ca – what we wound up doing w – is – he has a couple of p – he has a publishing company, and he has a number of things that he does, but we wound up creating a – a publishing company together –

Angela:
Mmmm!

Bruce:

– to publish this book, and so, he – he sort of led the way, Don Ellis is his name, and he had many contacts and people, and led me along the path of getting this book published. There was another small publisher here, in San Francisco, that wanted to – to publish the book, and – but it was gonna take a long ti – it was probably – from start to finish, a year and a half or so, and so I went along with Don who had published Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Alan Ginsburg and William Saroyan and various poet – poets in the poet laureate ... Californian, many people and – and he’s done – tremendous work, and we wound up publishing this book together, so I would say that came about as a – as a real surprise, because – I thought I was gonna go take a more traditional path of – of writing this book, looking for a publisher, getting an agent, and through

this sort of serendipitous way, we wound up making this book happen a lot faster, and – and I – basically, I – I have more control over it.

Angela:

But would you – a lot of people worry, they feel compelled, just like you did, to write a book, but they worry about the publishing process or writing, even though, in many cases, they don't have a publishing contract, and they're thinking, well, I'll figure out self-publishing or something, would you – is there any advice that you have – I know it was serendipity, but are there things you might advise people to increase their chances of kinda getting lucky in the way you did?

Bruce:

Yes. Well, y – these days, given the Internet, and given – given the – given online presses, and – and – and systems set up to – to – to – to publish books without going into the – the big company – the big publishing companies are – are being – if not phased out, they – they're certainly competing against many other alternatives roots for publishing books, and one of them is – is – you have – you have a – on demand sort of publishing system, versus Ingram, which is a – a book distributor, will publish a book – they have to – I – I suppose you have to get it into the system, and that can be an effort in terms of making the contacts and getting the paper signed, reaching the right person, but they have a system whereby they will – they will – you have to pay, bu – as an individual trying to publish it – but they will publish that book and print books on demand. So, rather than – rather than printing a thousand books and going through the whole printing cost, once you're in their system, they will – they will print the books – you can go out and do the marketing, and perhaps try to sell it, and get the reviews and put it on Amazon, or whatever – and try to get reviews on – online, and – and perhaps create your own website for your book, which is probably something you – you definitely should do, if you're – if you're gonna publish a book, you're definitely wanna have a website that people can visit, where you can list the various reviews, and the Amazon reviews and the like. But once you have established that and – and – you don't – you wanna get the book out there, there are these – there are these publishing – or these distributors, these – these presses that will do it on demand, and it's a very, very low cost, because they're only printing books as is demand for them.

Angela:

Right. So, let's talk more about your experience. Tell me about when you decided, this was the book you were gonna write, and then how long did it take to actually finish the writing and be submitting it to be published?

Bruce:

As I say – in its – it's the book I always thought I had in me, and when I – when I became separated from my wife, early in '07, I felt this was the time, and, really, I was trying to find balance, basically. And in the bal – I was trying to fi – I was trying to come to terms with – a – understanding what's happened, why I was in this particular – why we were in a situation, and – and it was a moment where I can – it was a moment to weave together all the threads of my life.

And so, I felt – the book started in '07, it – it – it – it incorporated a relationship with a father that was very difficult, it – it incorporated this incredible relationship with my mom, coming to terms with a – a very long marriage, where we felt we were soul mates, and – and still continue to be deeply friends, but – but – un – going through the mental processes of understanding the decisions we make, the effects of those decisions, how much choice we have, how much – what limitations we ha – there is to our choice – there's passion, there – sports and music and – and – and – and many other things that's – travel and experiences that I – I had, I've had, sort of as a tour guide, I – I – I – I like to say, because I took this journey, and I – the book is written sort of as a tour guide for other people that are going through similar things that – that – that – so, if I become deeply honest about my experiences, others will look at theirs. And I ask a lot of very important questions and – and talk a – about many issues that confront us all – universal – universal themes. And so, all of this unfolded, and I would write maybe two times a week, and I'd write late in the evening, perhaps, three hours at a time. And sometimes, I – I – I'd have so much left over I'd write the next day, but – basically, a couple of times a week, felt like I was emptying – I was emptying it all out, and then – then you kinda have to wait for that – for that to kinda fill up again. It does fill up. And every week it would fill up, and I – I didn't necessarily write every week, but I wrote most weeks. The book starts in '07 and concludes late in '08, so it basically covers a period of almost two years, but it took me about three and a half years to – to write it.

Angela:

Mm-hmm.

Bruce:

And – and then, once I finished it –

Angela:

And then, once that you had finished it, how long did it take to have it published, and in your hands?

Bruce:

I – once I finished it, I – I went back and re-read it – re-read it, and did some editing of my – on my own. I went out and – and – and made a copy that – of the book, in – in book format, I would send that to people, and the title was quite different. ... the title that I started with was *The Journey to Tibet*, which – we wound up chang –

Angela:

Oh, wow! Did you go to Tibet?

Bruce:

Yeah. We wound up changing it. There's a section at the very end of the book called "The Journey to Tibet," but – but it wasn't – we realized it wasn't – we – shouldn't be the title of the book. And, anyway – so, went through that process, and then – so, I – that was probably

September of two thousand – probably very late in – in 2011, and – probably September, October 2011, and then my sons came home for the holidays, and that’s when I made the connection with Don Ellis, late in 2011, and then, shortly thereafter, we published the book.

Angela:

And so – and how long was that whole process, from when you finished the manuscript until it was completed?

Bruce:

Well, I started writing it in '07, I finished the book probably –

Angela:

I’m sorry, from wh – I’m sorry, from when you finished writing it, it took you how long to get it published, and this was pretty much self-publishing, right?

Bruce:

Well, it was published – we – we started a publishing company, and – and –

Angela:

Right.

Bruce:

– and that – he had – if I were doing it alone, it would have been rather difficult, but I did have this experience, so – sort of seven – finished the boo – actually, I finished the book in early '11, and – sort of mid-2011, I guess, and so, it was by the end of 2011 that we made the contacts to publish it. It probably took about four or five months from – from when we to – before the book got published.

Angela:

Okay. Okay, great. I think it’s great to contrast that with – and, obviously, you had kind of a unique situation – but I think there are a lot of unique situations out there, if authors are looking for them. Going with the traditional publisher, you could be looking at one to two years, ... eighteen months is pretty common.

Bruce:

Right.

Angela:

And so, being able to turn that around in – in six months a – a lot of people think “Oh, my manuscript’s done, I should have my book tomorrow,” and I think it’s good to have that perspective, that, even working with somebody with a ton of industry experience, who’s worked on a lot of books, and you weren’t in a big queue behind a whole – department, jockeying for

resources, as you would be with a big publishing company, and still – may – maybe six months – fo – four to six months to get it out.

Bruce:

I think – yeah. Yeah.

Angela:

I think it's good to have that perspective in terms of planning and whatever. And then, when the book – a

Bruce:

I think from the time – go.

Angela:

But when the book was released, did you – did you – did you do any sort of initial marketing push? How did you get the word out about the book?

Bruce:

We hired a – a – a publicist, Isabella Machand, I'll – I'll mention her name – was absolutely excellent, here in the Bay area, and worked with a lot of authors like various people, she'd been in television, and – we went out looking for a – a publicist. And ... talked to a few of them, I spoke to some people that focused on – on social media, that – and so, settled upon Isabella, and then Isabella started to send the book out for – for – we – before we – the final version of the book came out, we had the we – we had the – that first – that first copy –

Angela:

Mm-hmm. The galley.

Bruce:

– that you begin with – the galley, the – the unedited galley, and then we sent out – we sent that out to literally, probably, a few hundred places, inviting reviews, inviting comments, a number of her personal contacts as well, as – many of the – the major companies that - that – Foreword Reviews, Clarion Reviews, MyShelf, there were just a – a whole bunch of them out there. And we wound up getting a number of – of positive reviews, I'd say ninety-eight percent of them were – I mean, there were a couple that we didn't ... (laughs), but I'd say ninety-eight percent – I think anybody that – that – it's gonna be hard to get a hundred percent, but – and I think – it's also important that – that you don't live or die with your reviews, as well, I mean, you don't want to be discouraged by – by – by – by a negative review that comes back, where you feel that somebody doesn't appreciate, or doesn't get it, or – or whatever, but – but – it's hard not to be influenced by – by – by the reviews. You certainly want the good ones (laughs) ... the good ones as you can. So – so – but as a – as an author, you definitely have to feel grounded within, you definitely have to believe in yourself and what you've done, and, perhaps, the public will love it, and, perhaps, the public won't, but – I – I think number one, you gotta fulfill your passion.

If you really wanna publish your book, go publish it, ... find a way to do it individually, find a way to do it through a publishing company. Work on it, you believe in it, polish it, and if it can't get done, then – then you just have to recognize that it may not happen, but, certainly, don't let the reviews discourage you from continuing forward. It turns out that we wound up getting a number of good reviews, and wound up doing that – what – doing the final version with some guys' reviews on the book, so – so that was the whole process.

Angela:

...! That's very cool. So, okay, so you do your book, you get a bunch of reviews, you have a publicist, presumably you've done a bit of media interviewing, things like that to kinda help spread the word about your book, at this point I know that people have – have read it, and you have – I guess it's been a year – you have had about a year of – since the book has been out that people have been ... reacted.

Bruce:

Exactly.

Angela:

What's the best thing, over the last year since your book has been out, to come out of having your own book?

Bruce:

The opportunity to talk about it, and – and the fact that a – a number of people have been touched by – by the stories, and have told me, actually, through e-mails, or people that I know that have read it, that they've been touched by it and – and various aspects of it had been very touching for them. I think the fact that – when you write a book, as I say, you don't wanna put it in your drawer. You wanna get it out there, so when people talk to you about it and discuss it, it keeps the book alive. The ideas are alive, and the boo – the ideas will always be alive, that's the great thing about (laughs) creating a book.

Angela:

It is.

Bruce:

All those ideas and feelings and thoughts and – and – and – and the music and the passion and the feelings and the memories, all of that's in there, and it will always be in there. It'll be in there for your kids and your grandchildren and whomever else, but – so, I think, number one, the recognition that it's out there –

Angela:

Mm-hmm.

Bruce:

– the recognition that it’s alive, the recognition that – that people talk about it, the – the feelings and thoughts I get from people that are touched by it, that have come to me and say, “Wow, I mean – it just made me think about my life,” and then – these – the interview with you at this moment, and – there’ve been many requests for interviews for radio and television, as well as some speaking engagements that have occurred. I guess – the Today Show, the – wanted us to do – I wound up doing a – an interview on the Today Show because they –

Angela:

...? Wow!

Bruce:

– they loved the idea of – yeah, they loved the idea about – of how a man and a woman, after their – the marriage contract is over, can – can – can stay such close friends, and – and how they can remain – remain a family. And so, we did a segment of that on the Today Show, and – and so – that’s the answer, that these issues and feelings are – get a chance to keep being expressed, and – and if it can – if it can improve somebody’s life, or help them understand it, or – or people are con – contemplating marriage or contemplating divorce, or whatever, there’s – there’s – there are feelings and thoughts and – and – and inspiration and – and ways to look at – at your life that are in this book, and that – that’s – that’s the most gratifying part, people are touched by it.

Angela:

Wow. That – that’s great, I mean, we all – we all wanna make a difference in this world and leave a legacy, make an impact, and I think there’s something special about writing a book since – I think we all touch peoples’ lives, but when you’ve written a book it gives people a forum to share with you how you’ve influenced them, and I think that can be a – a powerful kind of touchstone for how you live your life.

Bruce:

Exactly.

Angela:

So, what – what in the process was – what – what was different than you expected? Was there any – were there any surprises, or things that were – or things that didn’t quite meet your expectations?

Bruce:

Let me see –

Angela:

Or maybe they exceeded them. Maybe you thought something would – would go a certain way and it was better than you expected?

Bruce:

I would say, the – the – the way the book flowed – I – I – I – I really think (laughs) – not to get too deep and personal and – and – and cosmic here, but I really do think there were deep forces at work here, in helping – my – my writing this book.

Angela:

Right.

Bruce:

That – that there were – there were – I do think that – what – whatever one might wanna think about the afterlife, I really do feel that – that – that there were moments which were – which was really kind of a surprise to me – I felt my mom was taking my – my – my pen. (laughs)

Angela:

Wow.

Bruce:

And it's like ...

Angela:

You know, I will say it's a great way to end this interview, because, when I work with – when I work with authors in transformation, I find that, for everybody, there is a part of themselves, whether you want to look at it as somebody else, or some spirit, or whatever, you can tap into a part of yourself or a part of – however you wanna look at the tapestry of the universe that can drive your book forward, and when you're – when you're meant to write a book, and you can tap into that energy, it's a totally different writing experience.

Bruce:

Exactly. Exactly, and that's –

Angela:

Almost as if the book writes itself. So, I think that's – I think that's powerful, I think it's a powerful story, and I absolutely believe your mom was with you on the writing journey and continues to be today, so I would definitely encourage people to check out your book, can you tell everyone your website?

Bruce:

Yeah. You can get the book at almarose, a-l-m-a-rosepublishing.com, and on that website you can purchase it, there are a lot of different radio interviews and some television interviews on there as well as a the – the BBC interviews that I did. It's on Amazon – you can certainly buy it from Amazon – and it's in a number of bookstores in the Bay area, but it's not, nationally.

Angela:

Excellent. Well, the book is Bruce Rosen's *If You Ever Need Me, I Won't Be Far Away*, we're glad that you weren't far away today, thank you, Bruce, for being part of Book Journeys Radio.

Bruce:

Thank you very much for having me, Angela.

Angela:

Bye-bye.

Bruce:

Bye.