

Growing

Literary Ventures Fund Adds Initiatives

Two years after its founding, Literary Ventures Fund continues to seek new ways to meet its mission: sharing the risk with publishers and authors on books it provides financial support for. In addition to putting authors on the road and paying for NPR spots well past the time when most publishers have moved on to books for the next season, LVF is starting to focus on online promotion. This fall, for example, it started the Book Explorers Club on BN.com.

"Part of what we bring to our publishers," said editorial director Ande Zellman, "is both conventional and unconventional marketing. With the Book Explorers Club, we're trying to build something between a talk show and a salon." So far, the club has featured authors of three LVF-sponsored titles: Alan Cheuse (*The Fires*, Santa Fe Writers Project), Lynn Stegner (*Because a Fire Was in My Head*, Univ. of Nebraska) and Peter Karoff (*The World We Want*, AltaMira). It also invites guests like LVF board member Anita Diamant, author of *The Red Tent*, to join the discussion.

"Because of their efforts to bring attention to books that are underserved, they're a good fit for us," said BN.com v-p of content Kevin Ryan. Although the club does not have as many posts as some of BN.com's other online book groups,

Ryan is not overly concerned. "When we went into this with the LVF," he said, "we agreed we would take it slow. We believe our audience wants to know about books over the long term."

To position its books better for the long haul, LVF is giving some frontlist titles a complete relaunch. Karoff's book on philanthropy, for example, which was published at the beginning of the year as a \$70 hardcover for the academic and library audience, has been rejacketed with a trade look and price, \$27.95. According to Zellman, LVF has also hired a publicist, as it does for most of its books, to promote the book heavily during the holiday season.

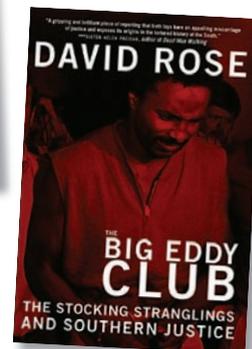
LVF also plans to start branding its books as LVF selections on the front covers. And it will soon begin relaunching backlist titles, said LVF chair Jim Bildner. He intends to mine publishers' backlists for hidden gems that could sell as many as 30,000 or 40,000 copies if given the right attention.

Although most of the publishers that LVF has worked with are relatively small, it intends to partner with large houses and is in negotiations for several titles.

Despite the money, resources and enthusiasm that LVF brings to the books it supports, its financial terms may be unacceptable to some publishers—LVF makes a cash investment in a book and receives payment when a title exceeds an agreed-upon sales level. Nor is every book or publisher a good fit. For those



To relaunch this New Press title, LVF is using a new jacket (below).



that are, however, LVF's model seems to be working. At SFWP, which has sold 2,000 copies

of *The Fires*, director Andrew Gifford said, "I don't think I would have seen these sales without their help." Cheuse is finishing a 12-state tour. Without LVF, Gifford said, he probably wouldn't have been able to afford to do much more than ask NPR to add a tagline mentioning the book when Cheuse's book reviews air on NPR.

Bellevue Literary Press's January title, *The Leper Compound*, by Paula Nangle, gets the LVP boost in January. Editorial director Erika Goldman said that the "money and marketing boost"—the press has access to an additional publicist—and the BN.com connection, have already increased visibility.

For Kris Holloway, whose *Monique and the Mango Rains: Two Years with a Midwife in Mali* was published in September 2006 by academic publisher Waveland Press, LVF successfully broke her into the trade, where the book has sold 11,000 copies to date, according to Nielsen BookScan. LVF is "my fairy godmother," said Holloway.

—Judith Rosen

Calendar
Nov. 18–24

11/18

Anna Quindlen remembers life lessons she learned from her black Labrador retriever, Beau, in *Good Dog, Stay* (Random House), a 96-page holiday impulse purchase.

11/20

Steve Martin looks back at his phenomenal success as a standup comic and his decision to stop in 1981 in *Born Standing Up: A Comic's Life* (Scribner).

11/21

Marlo Thomas turns 69 today. *PW* called her *The Right Words at the Right Time Volume 2: Your Turn!* (Atria) "genuine, home-cooked comfort food."

11/22

You can enjoy turkeys without eating them in **Mary Jane** and **Herm Auch's** new picture book *Beauty and the Beaks: A Turkey's Cautionary Tale* (Holiday House).

11/24

On this date in 1963: Jack Ruby shot alleged JFK assassin Lee Harvey Oswald on live TV. **Vincent Bugliosi** spent more than 20 years writing *Reclaiming History* (Norton).