

**from:** Wood Coin Magazine  
**to:** Patrick Dobson  
**date:** Oct 15, 2019, 11:42 AM  
**subject:** Your FB listing

Patrick, did you find a publisher for your FERMENT memoir? Looks like you did, according to your facebook page, which came up in a “Wood Coin Magazine” browser search. Was your listing on THE EDGE of any help?

James K Beach, editor

**from:** Patrick Dobson <patrickdobson@kc.rr.com>  
**to:** Wood Coin Magazine <woodcoinmagazine@gmail.com>  
**date:** Oct 16, 2019, 7:49 AM  
**subject:** RE: Your FB listing

Thanks for asking, James. It’s always good to hear from you.

I wish I could tell you that I received from word through *The Edge*. But after all my work, all the querying, submitting to presses, and working with sympathetic and supportive people like you, *Ferment*’s publication came down to knowing a guy.

I really wanted it to be different. I’d queried 220 agents and 15 presses. For over three years, I put my head down, did the work, and labored for the reward. That kind of hard-headedness is what’s gotten me through the last 30 some years. (I’m 56 now but didn’t actually “grow up” until I was in my late 20s.) Anything I have, I have from hard work and a little luck.

But I just happened to meet an editor from Skyhorse who just happens to work freelance from home—his parents’ house here in suburban Kansas City. Jon Arlan’s 32 and travels to sate wanderlust at least five months a year. He’s a great reader of travel memoirs and fan of mine. He loves both my books and thinks my last book, *Canoeing the Great Plains* (U of Nebraska, 2015), is a classic of the genre, or should be considered so. We met at a library presentation he made with my friends Max McCoy and George Frazier.

So, we all had something in common. Jon Arlan, the Skyhorse editor, wrote *Mountain Lines: A Journey through the French Alps*. I had peer-reviewed McCoy’s book, *Elevations: A Personal*

*Exploration of the Arkansas River*, for U Press of Kansas and really advocated for its publication. We've been friends ever since. Frazier, who's kind of a wild man, published *The Last Wild Places of Kansas* with U Press of Kansas. We have been pals since he sought me out after he read *Canoeing*.

Jon and I hit it off. We had coffee and he asked what I was working on. The deal snowballed from there. He read the MS and made suggestions for changes, which were good. I made many of those revisions and then gave it to him again. He submitted it to his publisher and then left town. I heard nothing and thought, well, I have to start on the query trail again.

Jon returned six months later and said that my book stuck with him during his travels, but that he had heard nothing from his publisher. Jon wanted to make another run at his boss. We wrote an elevator speech for the story and he ran it by his publisher. (I include it below). The publisher said, wow, that's great, let's publish that. The next thing you know, I have a contract and deadline.

I'm sorry for the long note, but again, as happy as I am that the book is on the way to publication in May 2020, I'd disappointed that I *had to know* someone to get it published. My friends have told me that this is the way the world works, and on some level, I know that. But it's a shitty set of circumstances that there are writers out there with great material that languishes due to the fact they don't know someone.

I wrote a piece about this process and the disappointment I felt, even while celebrating the publication. Take a look if you have the chance: <http://patrickdobson.com/it-came-down-to-knowing-a-guy>

Thanks again for thinking of me and reminding me of the hard work you've put in on *The Edge*. I will have a piece to submit to you for *Wood Coin* soon.

Patrick