

RIGHTS

BY PAUL NATHAN

Riveting Early in this century Ben Hamper's great-grandfather went to work in the auto industry. So too, in their turn, did his grandfather and father. Ben followed in their footsteps at General Motors in Flint, Mich.

In 1986 Ben suffered the first in a series of panic attacks, which ultimately made it impossible for him to continue in his job as a riveter. He'd always been interested in popular music and liked to write, and during a period of layoff relieved the boredom by sending a couple of record reviews to the *Flint Voice*, an alternative bi-weekly newspaper. *Voice* editor Michael Moore asked for more and after a while had him contributing a column about his work experiences, "Revenge of the Rivethead." When Moore became editor of *Mother Jones*, Hamper had an article in the first issue and his picture on the cover.

Moore left the magazine and started making the movie *Roger and Me*, about his attempts to confront GM chairman Roger Smith regarding the closing of the Flint factory at a cost of 40,000 jobs. Hamper, who was then doing Rivethead pieces for the *Detroit Free Press* Sunday magazine, had a part in the film.

Now a book by Hamper, *Rivethead: Tales from the Assembly Line*, is coming from Warner Books and has been taken by Book-of-the-Month Club as an alternate. Further, the publisher's Hollywood affiliate, Warner Bros., has optioned theatrical feature rights for producers Paula Weinstein and Marc Rosenberg. Terms are \$100,000 against \$500,000. Lucy Stille of Shorr, Stille Associates on the Coast negotiated with the studio on behalf of Hamper's New York agent David Black.

Hamper retains a tie with GM, having won a disability pension from his ex-employer after undergoing psychotherapy. "I'm all right," he assured this reporter, "but I'm still on medication."

Conspiracy Warner Books and Bros. are teaming up on a second project, the publishing house having acquired mass market rights to *On the Trail of the Assassins* by Jim Garrison as a tie-in with Oliver Stone's forthcoming movie for Warners, *JFK*. Kevin Costner is starring as Garrison, former New Orleans DA and independent Kennedy assassination investigator. *On the Trail*, which carries the subtitle *My Investigation and Prosecution of the Murder of President Kennedy*, was originally a Sheridan Square Press hardcover.

The reprint auction was conducted for the Press by Manhattan agent Lynne Rabinoff, who obtained \$137,500. The paperback will be retitled *JFK* and will hit the stands when the picture is released late this year or early next.

Garrison recently was elected to his second 10-year term as a judge on the Louisiana Court of Appeal of New Orleans. It is his contention that the FBI, CIA and state and local officials all played a part in a conspiracy to kill the president.

With interest in the book renewed, Rabinoff has just sold Japanese rights to Hayakawa Shobo.

Ideas Travel In London Abner Stein represents the clients of New York agent Jay Garon. One of these is Elizabeth Gage, author of *A Glimpse of Stocking* and *Pandora's Box*. Stein had sold the former to the English Bantam Press (hardcover) and Corgi (soft). When the same publishers bought the second novel, he introduced a new wrinkle into the contract: if *Glimpse* earned back its advance, £25,000 would be added to the price being paid for *Pandora*. This has just occurred.

Last year Garon placed a first novel, *The Firm* by John Grisham, with Doubleday/Dell. Recently published, it's become a quick bestseller. It has also had movie, book club and foreign sales, including a first fiction sale for Garon to mainland China. Now, concluding negotiations with Doubleday/Dell for Grisham's next, *The Pelican Papers*, he has taken a leaf from Stein: it is agreed that once *The Firm* recoups its advance, Doubleday will pay a \$50,000 bonus for *The Pelican Papers*.

In addition, should *The Firm* move to one of the first five positions on the *New York Times* best-seller list, another \$50,000 will be due under the contract for that title.

Through Bernard Kurman of Rights Unlimited, who handles Garon's foreign-language deals, the German house of Heyne has closed for both *The Firm* and *The Pelican Papers*—the latter sight unseen—for \$50,000. *The Pelican Papers* will be a thriller set against a background of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Bravery It's a brave editor who lets it be known that she welcomes unsolicited material. Such is Barbara Anderson, St. Martin's senior editor, who says she has signed up "some four dozen unagented books, the majority of which have gone on to be staple backlist titles."

When a letter of inquiry from Grant Walker came across Anderson's desk, she wrote asking to see his *Working on the Edge*, an insider's account of what may be the world's most dangerous profession: king crab fishing in the Bering Sea. Anderson decided to buy the book. In the meantime Walker had acquired an agent, Mike Hamilburg in L.A., who negotiated the contract. Publication is set for June, and St. Martin's Tammy Palazzo has sold second serial rights, worldwide, to *Reader's Digest*.

Grimes's Start Recollections differ regarding Martha Grimes's start as a published novelist. She holds that *The Man with a Load of Mischief*, her first novel, had been submitted "maybe seven times," not 25, as we were informed, before a junior staffer at Little, Brown, Kit Ward, is said to have rescued it from a slush pile. Ward, incidentally, is now a full-fledged editor in the company, working with other authors. □