

# Area Author Masters Marketing

By **TINA FORDE**  
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LANCASTER - After Bonnie D. Stone finished her new guide to the Antelope Valley, "San Andreas Ain't No Fault Of Mine," came the hard part: selling it.

Major publishers said the book was "too regional."

Stone's husband, at first, also was skeptical as to the book's broader appeal.

"He didn't think it would go beyond friends and family," Stone said.

Her husband, a retired Army flight test program computer specialist, came around. After all, he had volunteered to help her investigate the day trips in the book, checking out the accuracy of directions and other conditions so people would not end up lost in the desert, stranded without a clue.

After being rejected by publishers, Stone considered the idea of self-marketing.

" 'What do you think?' I said to him," said Stone, 65. "My husband's response was, 'Let's go for it. That'll keep her off the street.' "

She decided to self-publish under her own company name, Fawltly Press.

"I did networking among my friends for the layout, page design and typesetting," Stone said.

Lisa Wysocky of Nashville designed the book and typeset, providing the page proofs in several weeks. Stone proofed Wysocky's PDF files.

"Files went back and forth by e-mail," Stone said.

The author said Cynthia Kincaid, who teaches multimedia design and production at Antelope Valley College, "did the glorious cover. Her design is nothing like what I had in mind."

With its photo of California poppies on a rolling hillside, hot air balloons and an iconic Joshua tree on a backdrop of blue sky and clouds, "the book stands out," Stone said.

The catchy title, she said, helps sell the book.

The original title was an uninspiring "Guidebook to the Antelope Valley," until one night at 2 a.m., Stone had an epiphany.

"I woke up and the name was there. This was so vivid. Then I thought, 'Oh, no, I'll have to do another rewrite to lighten up the book to match the title.' " Which she did.

She contracted with DeHART's Printing Corporation of Santa Clara to print 500 copies. The book, made in the paperback form called "trade," was 220 pages with a color cover of heavy paper stock. The printing cost a bit more than \$2,000. Twelve boxes of books hot off the press arrived at the Stones' Lancaster home on Oct. 26 ready to be sold.

From then on, it was one call at a time, one store at a time, one museum at a time. She took "baby steps," she said, learning "how to market and who to market to."

In the beginning, she said, "We had one outlet - Reagan's Hallmark in Lancaster."

The outlets expanded to Burns Pharmacy, Edwards Air Force Base Flight Test Museum and Marie Callender's and is featured by the Antelope Valley Chambers of Commerce. Some locations bought 10 books at a time; others 24 at a time.

She ordered a second printing in mid-December.

"I had to learn to do cold calls," Stone said. "I would say, 'I am ... I have this book ... Would you be interested?'"

She eventually engaged the help of a book marketing expert, then a distributor, Partners West from Renton, Wash., that supplies bookstores in the western states. Stone is ready for the fifth printing - a total of 2,500 books printed.

Outlets carrying the book include stores, gift shops, wineries and museums in the greater Antelope Valley area and beyond. The guidebook also is available at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, Waldenbooks, Borders, other bookstores and through Amazon.com.

"San Andreas Ain't No Fault of Mine" retails for \$14.95 plus tax, which is a 40% markup for the retailer. Stone wholesales the volume for \$8.97.

Stone said she had a lot to learn when she launched her sales program.

"First I had to learn to work with government agencies and corporations, how to bill them."

To master the mysteries of the program Excel, she said, "a dear friend mentored me."

Her Web site, [www.bonniedstone.com](http://www.bonniedstone.com), is a wealth of information and links to the museums and stores that sell her book. The site was created by Gina Cresse.

Stone does not sell the book from her Web site.

"We found the PayPal system to be too cumbersome," she said. "But the Web site is linked to Amazon.com, and they take credit cards."

When she began cold calling, she said, she did not bat a thousand, but "the ones that felt it was appropriate for them, it's been almost 100%."

"I seem to be fitting into the travel sections well. With the gas prices, people are doing day trips (as described in the book.)"

Stone has written other books - "Aloha Cowboy," "Campfollowing," "Uncle Sam's Brides" and "Civil War in Paradise" from the Alex Mack series - and founded the Antelope Valley Writers in 1986.

For details, visit [www.bonniedstone.com](http://www.bonniedstone.com).

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