

Boye Lafayette DeMente - Founder

Article by Mali Berger
Secretary of the Arizona Authors Association

The founding of the Arizona Authors Association in 1978 by Boye DeMente was a direct result of his having established a small press (Phoenix Books/Publishers) 10 years earlier to publish his own books as well as books written by other Arizona authors. From the beginning, he published from three to four titles a year, exhibiting the books at the annual American Booksellers Association (ABA), and at local and regional book fairs.

This activity resulted in him getting an increasing number of phone calls from Arizona writers with such questions as: How do you copyright a manuscript? How do you copyright a book? How long does a copyright last?

The number of callers eventually reached the point that it was a serious imposition on his time, and it became obvious that some other approach was needed to help aspiring authors throughout the state.

DeMente was aware that Diamond's Department Store in Park Central Shopping Mall in Phoenix sponsored an annual early spring Author's Day for Arizona writers who had books in print. He contacted the lady who was in charge of the event, and told her that he wanted to form an organization that would provide professional support for Arizona writers. She gladly provided him with the mailing list of authors that she had accumulated over the years.

He sent a mailing to all of the authors on the list and said, "Hey guys, let's form an author's association, and announced that a meeting would be held in a west-side hotel the following month. Approximately 75 people showed up for the meeting, with virtually all of them signing up to become members of the Arizona Author's Association.

DeMente was chosen as the first president of the AAA by unanimous vote. In addition to inaugurating a monthly newsletter, he also took the lead in sponsoring spring and fall seminars whose speakers included famous authors, agents, editors, publishers and book distributors from around the country. By the end of its first year the AAA had over 400 members. The following year DeMente initiated an annual Arizona Literary Contest and the Arizona Literary Magazine.

For the next seven years DeMente not only headed up the AAA, he continued to function as a small press publisher, becoming an approved vendor for the leading American bookstore chains as well shipping books to Australia, Japan, Europe and South Africa.

Claiming to have been old since the age of fifteen, DeMente's extraordinary life emerges direction-oriented and so energetic that it appears he has lived several lives simultaneously, at least when contrasted to most people. Even his childhood bursts forth as unusual. Born on November 12, 1928, to Elza Lafayette and Ruby (Bounds), in Mayberry, Missouri (a tiny isolated valley in the Ozark Hills of southeast Missouri with a population of some 27 people), DeMente recalls the horse and buggy days. His family never owned an automobile. His grandfather farmed and made molasses the old-fashioned way, with a mule pulling a grinder to crush cane stalks and then boiling the juice in large flat-bed vats. His father worked for logging operations as a cutter and sawyer.

Boye was going on seven years old when he started school, and the following summer he began working with his father, helping him fell trees and cut logs for ties and stave bolts (the latter to make barrels). His job was to keep the long crosscut saw from flapping, as his father did all of the pulling and pushing of the saw. By the time he was ten he was working in the sawdust pits of saw mills, underneath the carriage, hauling away the sawdust. He earned fifty cents a week.

One time while on a log float down the Current River with his father, a log he stepped on rolled, causing him to fall into the river. A nail that someone had hammered into the log punctured his leg. He still has the scar.

When living in Redford (a tiny town of some 75 people a few miles from his birthplace in Mayberry), he and his brothers were fishing in a creek that ran through the town when he stepped on a water moccasin snake. It curled up around his foot and bit him. He spent the next ten minutes chasing the snake, trying to gig it. Then went home and told his mother. There were no doctors in the area, so she put kerosene on the punctures. He survived the poisonous, two-fang bite because it was under water and much of the poison was washed away. But his foot swelled up so large he couldn't wear shoes for several weeks, and the skin peeled off twice.

When the family moved to St. Louis, Boye's first job was selling excess military supplies on a sidewalk in downtown. Then he worked in an ice cream parlor. He could eat anything he wanted free once a day, but restricted himself to only one scoop of peppermint ice cream per week. At age thirteen, he was practicing restraint.

Because of his performance record in elementary school, he was allowed to go from the fifth grade to the seventh grade, making up for his late start. He was 14 when he graduated from Peabody Elementary and entered McKinley High School. That same summer, before high school started, he went to work for the Lenox Hotel as a busboy, working the afternoon and evening shift after school, and the early morning shift on weekends.

DeMente would go to McKinley High School at seven o'clock in the morning and do his homework in the gym before classes started. During his entire high school life he never took a book or homework home even once. He went directly from school to work.

But because he took extra courses and went to summer school every year, he had enough credits to graduate in the spring of 1946 - after an elapsed time of just two years and eight months. And, that's only the beginning of young Boye DeMente's extraordinary life.

Immediately after graduation at age 17, De Mente joined the U.S. Navy (1946-1948) first serving on the USS Fillmore, and then going to a Cryptographer School in Washington DC. Apparently, because of his family name, it was believed he was Hispanic, and he ended up in the Spanish Language Department of the Naval Communication Supplementary Activities (NCSA), the Navy's intelligence arm.

Immediately following his discharge from the Navy, De Mente enlisted directly into the Army Security Agency (ASA), where he was promised faster promotions because of his cryptology background in the Navy. He was again assigned to Washington, DC, where he was trained to operate IBM machines (the computers of the day!) creating indexes for breaking codes.

Expecting to be sent to Latin America because of his Spanish experience, DeMente was shipped to Japan instead, where he became part of a team of seven other IBM operators in a special code-breaking section of the ASA headquarters in Tokyo. The primary interest of the ASA in Japan at that time was Russia and North Korea.

When the Korean War broke out in 1950 President Harry Truman added a year to eighteen months to every enlistment, resulting in De Mente staying an additional year and a half in Tokyo. During this period, he took advantage of his off-duty time to found a newspaper called the ASA Star. Eventually, the very popular weekly propelled him into a full time editorship, and he has been writing full time ever since.

During these ASA years, De Mente also published his first book, Japanese Simplified. For the book, he created a phonetic system for pronouncing Japanese in English, making it possible to use the language without having to go through a long learning process.

While still in the ASA in Tokyo DeMente took mail-order classes that got him two years credit at Tokyo's Jochi University, before he was discharged in Colorado Springs in 1952. He hitchhiked to Phoenix and enrolled at Thunderbird which at that time was the American Institute for Foreign Trade (AIFT).

Back in 1946 when he was still serving on the USS Fillmore, his sister Jessie had sent him a clipping about the first class of this Institute with a note, "A nut like you might want to go to this kind of school some day." He received that letter on Christmas Day while sitting on an overturned bucket chipping paint on the fantail of the USS Fillmore. "It took me six years to get to the school but I did, much to my sister's delight," he said.

Graduating from AIFT in the spring of 1953, De Mente returned to Tokyo, attended night classes at Jochi University and got a degree in the Japanese language and in economics, while working for the Japan Travel Bureau during the day.

Between the years 1954 and 1962, Boye DeMente's career as an editor enters the picture, moving fast forward through six Japanese magazines and newspapers. He acknowledges important friends who aided his dramatic transformations within the Asian world. His first full-time commercial job in journalism was with Preview magazine.

This very successful English language magazine was published in Tokyo by a former member of the American Occupational forces, Bob Booth, and in its heyday was the second-largest English language in Japan (after Reader's Digest). A former ASA colleague, Bob Black, was instrumental in getting DeMente appointed editor of the magazine, but within six months after he joined Preview it ceased publication because over 75 percent of all of foreigners in Japan left in the spring of 1952, when the Occupation formally ended.

When Preview magazine failed at the end of the U.S. Occupation of Japan, DeMente and the former advertising sales manager, George Pokrovsky, a White Russian born and raised in Japan, founded the Far East Traveler, another monthly magazine, with De Mente serving as the editor. But he also left this new magazine after only six months because it wasn't able to pay him a salary. (The now very successful



successor to this magazine is still in publication, and over the decades De Mente has served as a contributing editor and currently has a monthly column in the magazine. It is still headed up by his old friend George Pokrovsky.)

After leaving the Far East Traveler, DeMente and a former Jochi University classmate, Lou Segaloff, got a subsidy from the American Embassy to publish a weekly newspaper called Kembun (meaning "See and Hear") as a propaganda sheet aimed at increasingly revolutionary Japanese university students. The subsidy dried up in six months.

This time De Mente joined with Marvin Meyer, an expatriate American from Philadelphia, to found the cultural magazine Today's Japan. While still with Today's Japan, DeMente took a second job, on the swing-shift, with The Japan Times, the largest English language newspaper in the country.

On the editorial staff, DeMente worked as a copy editor and headline writer. In 1957, while working at the Japan Times, an Australian adventurer named Ben Carlin showed up in Tokyo on an amphibious jeep called "Half-Safe" (named after the deodorant "Don't be Half-Safe!") on which he was circling the globe, and invited Boye to accompany him on the last major leg of the journey, crossing the North Pacific Ocean from Japan to Alaska.

Boye agreed to go with him, and explained why: "I was holding down two jobs and still not making decent money, and I had two very jealous girl friends who had just met and were on the warpath so I decided that getting out of town was the smartest thing I could do!"

That foolish and very dangerous trip was later memorialized by DeMente in his appropriately named book, *Once a Fool: From Tokyo to Alaska by Amphibious Jeep*. The 4-month crossing of the North Pacific and Bering Sea made Life Magazine, Saturday Evening Post, and the Guinness Book of World Records.

During his recuperation from the trip in Phoenix, Arizona, DeMente's old Far Eastern Area Studies professor at AIFT, Emily Brown, called him and asked him if he wanted to go back to Tokyo and become the editor of a new trade magazine called Oriental America that had just been founded by a recent AIFT graduate, Ray Woodside.

DeMente naturally said yes, and took over editorship of the magazine in the spring of 1958. Soon thereafter, the decision was made to change the name of the publication to The IMPORTER, and as the saying goes, the rest is history. Within a year the new subscription-only publication was the most successful trade journal in Japan, playing a leading role in hundreds of Japanese manufacturers and exporters making their first post-World War II contacts with importers in the U.S. and Europe.

One of these companies was a small firm called Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo Kabushiki Kaisha. After advertising in The Importer for three months (with a one-sixth of a page ad; the smallest size available), this small company got lined up with General Distributors in Canada and Delmonico in New York as importers of its new product: a tiny transistor radio. Five years later the company changed its name to Sony (which was the brand name of its little radio).

In short order, The IMPORTER opened offices in Korea, Taiwan and, Hong Kong, and appointed agents in Bangkok, Singapore and Manila. As the editor, DeMente covered these areas, making regular trips out of Tokyo and later out of Hong Kong to interview makers and exporters and seek out new products to feature editorially in the magazine.

Because he could communicate with both Japanese makers and exporters and foreign buyers who flocked to Japan during these years, DeMente became a sort of middleman between them. In early 1959, he did a series of articles for the magazine on the Japanese way of doing business, how the Japanese think, and why they did certain things. In December of 1959 the articles were published in book-form as, *Japanese Etiquette & Ethics in Business*; the first writing ever on the Japanese way of doing business. The book was an instant success, selling out three printings the first year (and is still in print today at McGraw-Hill). This was to be the beginning of DeMente's life-long career as a professional author.

The year before, on September 29, 1958, at the age of 29, Boye married Margaret Warren, a girl he had met in Phoenix while recuperating from the jeep trip across the Pacific. He "imported" her, and they were married in Tokyo. He says she has been a wonderful wife who allowed him to do his thing and helped rather than hindered him in everything he has done since they first met. They were to have two daughters, Dawn Ruby, born in Tokyo, and Demetra born in Phoenix.

Following the success of *Japanese Etiquette & Ethics in Business*, DeMente quickly wrote *Bachelor's Japan* to explain the entertainment business in Japan, including nightclubs, cabarets, whore houses and geisha houses: all of which played significant roles in both business and politics in Japan.

He followed this very successful book with *How to Do Business with the Japanese*, a nitty-gritty type of manual on how the Japanese system works, from manufacturing and wholesaling to the retail trade, along with the advertising industry and public relations in all of their various business aspects.

DeMente retired from salaried employment in 1962 and took up writing books on a full time basis, producing two titles a year in Japan before he and his wife returned to Phoenix when his daughters reached school age. Schools were very bad in Japan, at that time, unfortunately, and they wanted the girls to be educated in the U.S.

Several years later, DeMente was instrumental in getting a new graduate of Thunderbird a job with The IMPORTER as an advertising salesman in the Hong Kong office. Some ten years later De Mente acted as a go-between when this young man bought out The IMPORTER, and went on to become the largest English language trade publisher in Asia, and a multi-million dollar donor to Thunderbird, their alma mater. This young man was Merle Hinrichs, whose name now graces one of the main buildings on the Thunderbird campus.

Of special interest during the sixties and early seventies are his books on face reading, Hawaii, Mexico and always his texts on Japan.

Face Reading for Fun & Profit (recently reissued as *Asian Face-Reading* by the Peripus-Tuttle-Berkeley group of companies) details how face reading originated with physicians in China. They were the first to catalogue relationships between facial features and illness/behavior of people. Face reading was also used by the Japanese Air Force in 1939 and 1940 to decide which recruits would be pilots or mechanics. (This title has since been published in several foreign language editions, including Italian, Portuguese and Russian.)

When DeMente founded the Arizona Authors Association in 1978 he was eminently qualified by his past experiences in every aspect of writing and publishing as well as being an intelligent, up-beat/fun personality and above all having the ability to "live several lives at once", DeMente's famous direction-oriented energies came to light as president of Arizona Authors while he simultaneously ran Phoenix Books-Publishers.

Eight years later, he got the urge to go back into writing full time, stepped down from the presidency of the AAA and sold off his main titles to National Textbook Company (NTC) in Chicago.

He started traveling again to Japan, Korea and China and wrote a whole series of culture books that included *Korean Etiquette & Ethics in Business* and *Chinese Etiquette & Ethics in Business*, plus a series of language books on China, Japan and Korea that included an English language phonetic pronunciation system, along with and a series of "Cultural Code Word" books on Japan, Korean and China that have made him internationally famous. (If you put his full name into Google, some 30,000 websites will come up with various references to his books.)

How does De Mente define etiquette and ethics? "I'm talking about the physical as well as the ethical side of behavior. The ethics of whatever you are doing as well as how you do it?"

He explains his Japanese in Plain English title (and his Chinese and Korean language titles) by saying, "If you read the phonetics in English, it comes out Japanese or Korean or Chinese." And what about his "Code Words" books?

"Key words in languages are both the reservoir and vehicles of culture, and function as æcultural codes," He says. "In other words, there are significant key words in the Japanese, Korean and Chinese languages that explain the attitudes, values and behavior of the people down to the most subtle nuance. I used these words as windows or gateways to explain the cultures of these countries."

Today DeMente's books are especially prized in business and university communities, and continue to enrich world-wide understanding between Asian and Western countries.

Boye's knowledge of publishing companies, distributors and the whole publishing business, which he claims is the most inefficient industry in the country, is invaluable to authors who in most cases don't know what is going on in the industry. For example, up to 75 or even 85 percent of most paperback books that are printed go into the shredder, and the publishing companies don't realize a profit on most of what they publish every year. They survive on the small number of books that make their back-list and continue to sell well over the years.

Some three years after De ente sold his titles to the NTC in Chicago, the company sold itself to the Chicago Tribune publishing group, which embarked on changing the distributorships around the world. This was a serious setback for De Mente because during the three years it took the Tribune group to get its act together his books were in virtual limbo. Even his main books on Japan were not sold in Japan. Finally the Tribune sold its book division to McGraw-Hill. That's how DeMente's primary titles ended up with McGraw-Hill.

"And that is ironic," he said with a broad smile, "because when I sent my first book, *Japanese Etiquette & Ethics in Business* to Mc-Graw-Hill in the fall of 1959 they turned it down, saying there was not enough market for such a book."

Another publishing business story reflects a similar oddity. The Japan distributor of DeMente's first three books: *Japanese Etiquette and Ethics in Business*, *Bachelor's Japan* and *How to Do Business with the Japanese*, was the Charles E. Tuttle Publishing Company in Tokyo. Charles was the scion of an old Vermont family that had established a publishing company in Boston in the early 18th century. After serving as an Army captain in the American Occupation forces in Japan, Charles founded a branch of the company in Tokyo in 1948.

The Charles E. Tuttle Publishing Company quickly became the largest publisher of English language books in Japan, and the distributor for East Asia Publishing Company, which had published DeMente's first books.

Tuttle later became the publisher of fourteen or fifteen of his other titles. When the founder Charles Tuttle died in the 1980s, Eric Oey, a cousin of Tuttle's wife who owned the Beripus-Berkeley Publishing group based in Singapore and Hong Kong, bought the Tuttle Company.

In the last five years, DeMente has done 11 new titles for the Beripus/Tuttle group. In fact, as of this writing three of his books are in different stages of reproduction right now. One is SEX AND THE JAPANESE - The Sensual Side of Japan. Three of his most recent publications, also brought out by Tuttle, are The Japanese Samurai Code, Samurai Strategies, and JAPAN UNMASKED - The Character and Personality of the Japanese.

A third publishing tale relates to a contract that DeMente signed in 2005 with a company called Lightning Source Inc. Lightning Source is a subsidiary of the Ingram Book Company, the largest distributor of books in the U.S. today, and is affiliated with Baker and Taylor, the largest library wholesaler in the U.S., with Amazon.com, and all of the major retail book chains.

What excites DeMente is that Lightning Source is a fully automated, electronic book manufacturing system that can produce one book or a thousand in one day and ship them the following day. DeMente now has 10 e-books in this system as well as 10 Pod (Print-on-Demand) books. Two of his books in the Ingram system are Eros Revenge: Brave New World of American Sex, and Saburo: A Saga of a Teenage Samurai in 17th Century Japan.

In addition to this multitude of writing and publishing, Boye DeMente's ability to "live several lives at once," turns up, not only in his professional author/consultant work on the business cultures of China, Japan, Korea and Mexico, but also in his lecturing at Thunderbird, his old alma mater, AT ASU West, and AT other universities around the this country.

And if that is not enough, in January of 2006 DeMente wrote a presentation to some people in Tokyo suggesting that they put together a team to create and launch an iPod Internet Web site featuring books and authors and interviews with authors patterned after C-SPAN's Books/TV in this country. By March, he was back in Japan successfully negotiating a relationship with the broadcasting system that picked up on the idea.

Boye DeMente has a fascinating right brain/left brain balance in his life. He quotes Japan's leading brain authority, Dr. Tadanobu Tsunoda, whose research has focused on the presence of vowels in the languages of "right brain" countries. Dr. Tsunoda says that since the languages of the Japanese and Polynesians are vowel heavy, the people tend toward right brain cultures, with emotional, imaginative, holistic and artistic behaviors. (DeMente served as one of Dr. Tsunoda's subjects in his experiments on the functioning of the two sides of the brain.)

In contrast, says Dr. Tsunoda, the languages of the Germans, British, Americans and Chinese create more activity on the left side with linear, logical, analytical thinking. In the middle, the Romance languages of the Mexicans, Spanish, Portuguese and Italians generate partially right brain orientation in that they are also vowel heavy.

"But," DeMente adds, "their attitudes and behavior are filled with contradictions, due in part to the programming of Catholicism, which is fundamentally irrational, and undermines some of the benefits of being dual-brained."

When DeMente describes the most beautiful places he has seen, he appears all right brain.

"I have seen sights at sea, the ocean and the sun and the moon, also the stars shining at night, that are indescribable as far as beauty is concerned. The Japanese islands are incredibly beautiful, due in large part to their volcanic origin. Still today there are more live volcanoes in Japan than any other country in the world. It has an extraordinarily long coastline because of the nature of the islands, with bays, inlets and coves that just go on forever, and are beyond beauty. They are sublime."

Other times a left brain concern comes through his words as he describes how parents worldwide are not doing a good job in raising their children.

"My latest is a small book with a very long title, Japanese Principles & Practices that will Help Pre-teens & Teens in School, Sports, Social Activities and Choosing Careers, that is aimed at parents and teachers because the very first thing they must do with children is provide discipline. Very kind discipline, but discipline nevertheless. And then in a progressive way, they must introduce them to specific areas of understanding and skills so that when they grow up they will have the attributes they need to live a life that is physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually satisfying."

DeMente sees many of those attributes in the raising of Samurai children: personal behavior, etiquette, grooming, and studies of history, philosophy and aesthetics. He claims that American society is failing because culture in this country is too divided, too short-sighted, too irrational, resulting in a serious lack of discipline and coherence in the upbringing of children. He says America need a culture based on a universal philosophy that recognizes the true nature of human beings and provides the necessary incentives and guidelines for us to fashion a society that is rational and constructive in every way.

His books also range from the linear, logical analyses of language, business and universal wisdom to the exotic, sexual, sensual side inherent in Asian countries as well as Hawaii, Mexico and America. A search through his own Biographical Information at the conclusion of this biography will reflect the author's interest in the balance between right and left brain topics. His books become characters in stories reflecting a universal culture and how and why people behave as they do.

"Our biggest shortcomings, our biggest enemies, are religious beliefs that are irrational, anti-human," DeMente says. "Christianity, Catholicism and Islam in particular have been and still are in many respects terrible religions. The truly humane and rational side of these religions is admirable, but religious leaders have traditionally distorted their purpose and role to shackle and control people by brain-washing them with beliefs that are not only irrational but also anti-human, even insane.

"All of the old organized religions are cults by their very nature, and until they can rid themselves of this basic failing and become universal philosophies based on the facts of life, on reality, the world will continue to be roiled by violence and drenched in the blood of the guilty and innocents alike."

DeMente says there are millions of people who understand this and are working toward it in their own way, but that the desires and needs of human beings continue to be distorted and abused by leaders who have no respect for the feelings or the lives of others.

"Human needs are simple," he says. "Personal freedom within the bounds of a democratic society should be the most fundamental of all human rights. Japan, Taiwan and South Korea are prime examples of what can happen in a country when people are given freedom. As the result of the American implementation of democracy in Japan following World War II the people of that tiny nation turned it into the world's second largest economy in just thirty years - one of the most remarkable feats in the annals of humanity!

"The same thing happened when Taiwan and South Korea were freed from the shackles of political tyrants. They became successful and rich in one generation. When people are allowed to help themselves, and have a history of education and strong discipline, they are all capable of accomplishing extraordinary things."

What this country needs is more people like DeMente who have been "old" since age fifteen, with advanced, direction-oriented energies to live several lives in one; people who recall their own history and work alongside their parents in childhood capacities; people so dedicated to education that nothing stops their drive to learn, even when a sister says, "A nut like you might want to go to this kind of school (Thunderbird) some day."

The world could definitely use more people who learn the discipline and gain the experience that will propel them into constructive life-long career choices; people like DeMente who beeline through magazine and newspaper editor jobs to become independent, highly successful authors; people who marry the right spouses and give to the world exceptional children; people so self-directed that they continue to found important organizations like the terrific Arizona Authors Association.

And yes, people who learn how to deal with the publishing business, the most inefficient industry in the country, and write valuable books that help, not hinder, understanding between people and countries; people who practice, face-reading, right/left brain balance, follow Samurai values, and call for cultural revolutions around the world. People like Boye Lafayette DeMente.

This biography was compiled from information obtained during an interview with Boye Lafayette De Mente in his Paradise Valley, Arizona home on March 1, 2006, by Mali Berger, Secretary of the Arizona Authors Association