

# What's on the Shelf?

By Helen Marketti

## INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR, JOHN TIDYMAN

### "Gimme Rewrite, Sweetheart"

*Tales From the Last Glory Days of Cleveland Newspapers*

**Told by the Men and Women Who Reported the News**

Imagine the good ole days of newspaper city rooms where there are dozens of people madly typing on manual typewriters, yelling across the room to get someone's attention, phones ringing off the hook, surprise guests showing up at random moments, reporters zooming in and out of the building to land the next story in the midst of organized chaos. The reporters did their job well, stories went to print and people read what was going on in their city and surrounding areas.

Author, John Tidyman has managed to corral as many stories and memories as he could from reporters, editors and photographers from the Plain Dealer and its competitor, the Cleveland Press. Recollections are from the 50s, 60s and 70s. Sadly, the Cleveland Press closed its doors in June of 1982 but for a good many years, the two newspapers clamored for the stories that spoke to Cleveland. It is a book that once you start reading, you will find yourself wanting to keep turning those pages to find out what happens next. The stories are a mixture from the sad and serious to the fun and humorous. "Gimme Rewrite, Sweetheart" (Gray & Company, Publishers) will take readers (who remember) down memory lane of days gone by while informing newcomers what it was really like when newspapers were hot off the presses.

John's father, Ben Tidyman (cover photo) was the chief police beat reporter for the Plain Dealer. It was he who stressed to John to be sure to take a typing class while he was in school. This was during the 60s. "I wasn't particularly interested in pursuing a career in journalism at the time," said John. "I was more interested with getting out of the house. I volunteered my draft after I graduated from high school. Once I turned 18, I joined the Army. I stayed in the Army for a couple of years. I held various jobs when I came back home and then the Cleveland Magazine started so I began writing for them then went on to the Cleveland Press for a couple of years."

"I've written about a wide variety of subjects and I like them all. I really don't have a specialty," said John. "I have written some golf books. I have also written stories that

were shared to me by the Cleveland Police so if I had to guess I could say the stories that are up close and personal are the ones I like."

John discusses why he decided to write "Gimme Rewrite, Sweetheart". "I worried about that era not being documented. I wished I could have gone back further but many people had passed away. I thought this project was a worthwhile idea to get the oral history that is also part of Cleveland's history. I knew the people at the Cleveland Press because I worked there. I also knew many people at the Plain Dealer. I think the best thing about journalism in those early days is that it was a career marked by freedom, enterprise, initiative and nosiness. It's the satisfaction of having a by-line."

These stories tell the truth of how it was to be a reporter and trying to keep one-step ahead of the game from your competitor. One example is that of Jim Dudas (Cleveland Press) who once bribed a prisoner with a carton of Lucky Strikes cigarettes if he promised he would not talk with anyone from the Plain Dealer. Another story is that of Darrell Holland (Plain Dealer) who received a call from a man who claimed he died, came back to life and wanted to talk about his experience. Darrell told the man he was not interested. The next morning the same story was on the front page of the Cleveland Press.

The Cleveland Press had editor, Louis Seltzer while the Plain Dealer had Thomas Vail. There was a 180-degree difference between the two. Louis always instructed his staff at the Cleveland Press to answer their phones at all times whereas the Plain Dealer had certain times of the day they would accept calls. When asked if the leadership of either man determined how each newspaper fared, John said, "Reporters are naturally independent and there was great staff at both newspapers. Leadership comes from the city desk. I think Louis was a great influence and made himself accessible whereas Tom kept above the fray."

John is currently working on his latest book, which will be stories from Cleveland firefighters. He also has his own bi-monthly publication that has been in print for three years. "It's called the "DD 214 Chronicle". DD 214 is the name of the armed forces document that releases you; it's your discharge papers. My publication is in tabloid form and distributed to libraries, colleges, VFW's and city halls in a five-county area," said John.



John has written for several publications and has eight books in print. "Each story has a beginning, middle and an end. A good article is one that is fair, balanced and accurate."

"Gimme Rewrite, Sweetheart" is available at Northeast Ohio bookstores, Amazon.com and from the publisher's web site: [www.grayco.com](http://www.grayco.com)

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