

Good afternoon,

On behalf of Random House and the Mailer family, I welcome you to

The Time of His Time: A Celebration of the Life of Norman Mailer.

I am Gina Centrello, President and Publisher of Random House.

Random House was Norman's publisher for 24 years, and I was privileged to be his publisher for the last five.

What began as a somewhat surreal experience—Did I really have the author of THE NAKED AND THE DEAD sitting in my office?— developed into a relationship of fun, challenge and friendship. Norman was a consummate professional, simultaneously inspiring us with his passion and ideas and charming us with his wit and warmth.

I will never forget my thrill when he called me shortly after THE CASTLE IN THE FOREST, his last novel, hit the bestseller list, to thank Random House for helping to make it his bestselling fiction in years. He was as excited as if it were his first bestseller.

I had been told that Norman's legendary temper had mellowed years ago. But I did get glimpses of his mischievousness. He delivered THE CASTLE IN THE FOREST to us, a fictional account based on the life of young Adolf Hitler, on a Thursday and left word that he would appear in my office Tuesday to discuss publication plans.

Like all writers, Norman wanted immediate feedback, in this case immediate feedback on his 800+ page manuscript.

Of course, David Ebershoff, Norman's editor, and I read the manuscript over the weekend.

Of course, it was brilliant.

And of course, we had some editorial suggestions.

Those of you who have read CASTLE will remember that there is a long section in the middle where our narrator digresses, and tells of another evil, Nicholas II. David and I both agreed that this interrupted the narrative and should be cut. But how were we going to get Norman to consider this?

Tuesday morning we told him all the things we admired about the novel.

Norman then asked if we had any suggestions or changes to propose.

So I began, “There is one section that perhaps needs a little work...”

—A publisher’s euphemism for, “This section needs to be cut.”

I barely got the sentence out before Norman jumped in, “You don’t like the Nicholas II section, do you? I know the critics will hate it,” he said.

I nod sheepishly.

“If I delete it, the book will be more of a page-turner,” said Norman.

Feeling encouraged, I responded, “That’s right, Norman, *it would be* much more of a page-turner.”

Then, with a twinkle in his blue eyes, he announced,

“Gina,

I hate page-turners!”

Needless to say, the section remains in the novel.

Norman wrote with an infinite love of literature and of the written word until the day he died. It is Norman, the working writer, who we at Random House love and honor as we continue our mission to bring readers —new and longstanding— to his life's work. I cherish my 5 years of memories of Norman, and today you will hear from others who have decades of memories to share...