

>> Broncs in Books

A WALK DOWN BOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD

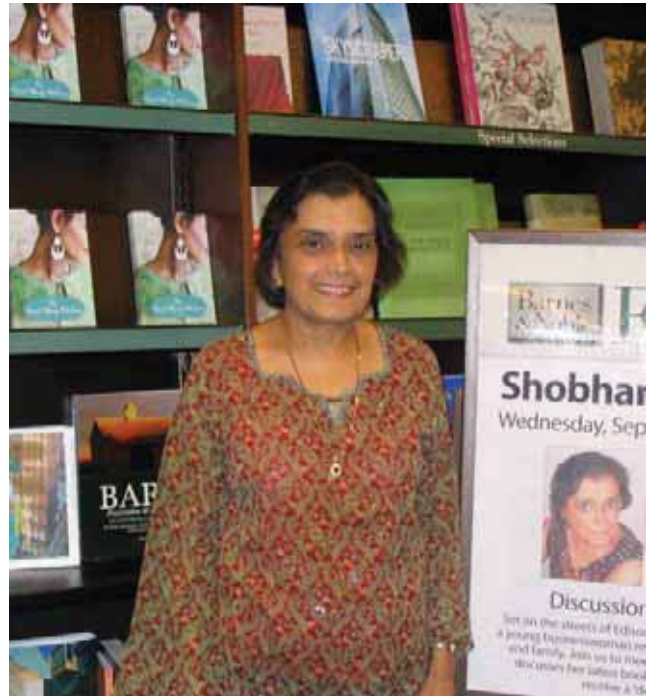
Shobhan Bantwal M.A.'82 never dreamed of writing fiction. Eight years ago, however, Bantwal decided to pursue a new hobby and enrolled in a writing course at Mercer County Community College. Her first novel, *The Dowry Bride* (Kensington, 2007), evolved from a class assignment and tells the story of a bride victimized by India's dowry system and arranged marriage.

"Bollywood in a book – that's my brand. I was pleasantly surprised that my agent liked what she read. Even now, I am a nonconformist in my writing," said Bantwal, a resident of Robbinsville, N.J. "Some Indian readers might take offense that I write about the darker side of Indian culture through romantic, commercial fiction, but I like commercial, mainstream fiction."

Bantwal's most recent novel, *The Sari Shop Widow*, gives readers a glimpse into family ties, the immigrant experience and love, as seen through the prism of Indian culture in the Little India section of Edison, N.J.

In her stories, which also include *The Forbidden Daughter* (Kensington, 2008), many of the cultural elements come from Bantwal's own experience growing up in India, but the plot lines are fictional.

Bantwal met and married her husband, Rakash, through an arranged marriage, and the two remain happily married, with a grown daughter. While she accepts traditional Indian customs, Bantwal seeks to raise awareness of the Indian culture and concerns such as the dowry system and domestic violence. She speaks about these issues to various women's clubs across the northeast.

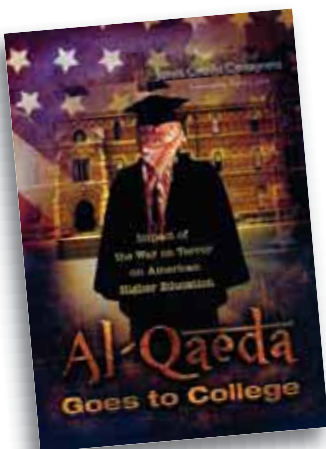


THE SARI SHOP WIDOW BY SHOBHAN BANTWAL
Kensington Publishing Corp., 2009 - Paperback, 352 pages, \$15

EVIL SPURS SCHOLARLY RESEARCH

A 2007 academic fellowship to Israel about terrorism started **James Ottavio Castagnera** thinking about the net effect recent terror incidents had on the campuses of American colleges and universities.

The result is *Al-Qaeda Goes to College*, the first book-length treatment of the subject. Castagnera, the associate provost and associate counsel for Academic Affairs at Rider, discovered that while terrorism is an obvious affront to humanity, our efforts to combat it have actually created new funding sources for higher education, strengthening the ability of scholars to explore the issue. "All of this helped reinvigorate debate on college campuses," Castagnera says. "We had been complaining for years about how disinterested and disaffected students had become, but now, we are seeing a surge in activism."



AL-QAEDA GOES TO COLLEGE BY JAMES OTTAVIO CASTAGNERA, PH.D.
Praeger Publishers, an imprint of Greenwood Press
Hardcover, 204 pages, \$49.95

BIG WHEEL KEEP ON TURNIN'

Now an assistant professor of English at Rider, **Mickey Hess** began his career as a young, struggling adjunct instructor in Indiana and Kentucky. *Big Wheel at the Cracker Factory* is his sardonic chronicle

of a year spent working side jobs as an ice cream man, stand-up comedian, haunted-house character and Billy Graham Crusader just to make ends meet. "Underground publishing advocate Mickey Hess uses deadpan humor and pungent observations to describe the price he pays for pursuing a passion – teaching college students how to write," said the *Chicago Reader*, which awarded *Big Wheel* its Critics Choice Award.



BIG WHEEL AT THE CRACKER FACTORY BY MICKEY HESS, PH.D.
Garrett County Press, LLC
Paperback, 230 pages, \$13.95