

February 2009 Q&A

1. When did you start writing?

January 3, 2006. I know the date makes it look like I acted on a New Years' resolution, but the truth is far less prosaic. It's the day I took action to become an author, a goal of mine that seemed forever out of reach in my future. I was over forty, my children were growing, business was booming, illness thriving but, still, I was not writing. I decided that day to make writing my life's work. I wrote at four that Sunday morning and just kept going. I write seven days-per-week, four a.m. until going off to work, including weekends, holidays, sick days, birthdays, anniversaries, and every other kind of day.

2. Why 4:00 a.m.?

Four AM was the only free time in my schedule. At the time, I had three teenagers, all who played sports, my wife and I had busy social schedules, I worked full time as part owner and marketing direction of a thriving design-build engineering firm, I coached my daughter's basketball team, and I was so caught-up pursuing the American Dream that I had no other time to write. I saw 4:00 AM as the only time I could pursue my passion without impacting my business or my family.

3. So why do you write?

What I call a passion to write grew out of the pleasure of reading. I was a voracious reader in and after college. When I turned thirty-two, I achieved actuarial enrollment. It was a big deal to me, and my wife rewarded me with a leather-bound collection of the 100 greatest books ever written. I read most of them and just kept reading. I began wanting to write a book good enough to sit with the others on my shelf. This desire grew into a challenge. As soon as I finished my MBA and passed the benchmark age of forty, I faced the reality that if I did not start writing, I would someday lament what I had not done. Today I am in my fourth year of writing every day, and I write because I am. I could no sooner stop writing than I could stop breathing.

4. Where did you get the idea for your first novel, *Shooting an Albatross*?

I happened across a WWII pamphlet that had been provided to every soldier in the 170th Field Artillery Battalion. When I read that the battalion took over a golf course near Hollywood, CA, I interviewed the ninety-four year old man who gave me the pamphlet, and he explained the occupation. He remembered the men rutting the course with all of their equipment, and he described an Army general who showed up and yelled at everyone for damaging the course. I next discovered an albatross is a golf term and that the Army's occupation occurred during the only year in history that the PGA cancelled the season of professional golf. The story grew out of these facts of history.

5. Do you have a favorite writing quote?

Yes, but first let me say that there are so many good quotes about writing that I struggle to elevate one above all the others. How about two? Depending on the time of day, here are my favorites:

1. An author in his book must be like God in the universe, present everywhere and visible nowhere.

~Gustave Flaubert

2. What no wife of a writer can ever understand is that a writer is working when he's staring out of the window. ~Burton Rascoe

6. You recently completed your second novel. What's it about?

My second novel is a sequel to *Shooting an Albatross*. I moved the story up from 1943 to today, making the baby from the first story a grandfather in the sequel. The main character is a young man who, after obtaining his MBA from Stanford University, accepts a seven-figure salary to go to work at Legacy Management, Inc., the mysterious company from which his grandfather earned a fortune but, suddenly, is anxious to retire. The story is a fast-paced page turner with surprises at every turn. I plan to take *Legacy Management* through the agent/query effort this summer.

7. How has writing fiction changed you?

Writing has changed the way I see the world. I catch myself disengaging from conversations just so I can mentally record what I see and hear. Light, color, expression, sound, emotion, touch, and so much more have become suddenly important. I started using a camera. I watch how people use their hands and eyes and search to see character behind emotions. Writing has added color to my black-and-white life of numerical accuracy.

8. What are the best and worst parts about being a writer?

The best part about being a writer is the writing. Writing justifies me. It is what keeps my passion from becoming an addiction. I could no easier stop writing than I could stop breathing; it's become an unexpected condition of life.

The worst part about writing is easy: life gets in the way. There is never enough time to write and, to make time, I have to spend time away from my family or get up at four in the morning. Both are awful choices.

9. What Advice do you have for other writers?

I am unoriginal here. Write. It is only by doing so that you will discover your true motive and, conveniently, it is only by writing that you can become a writer. It's symbiotic. I advise writers to stay engaged in life. Avoid isolation. Be a friend. Talk to people and practice listening to what they have to say. Stay sane.

10. What's next?

That's easy. What's next? Write, write, and write. As soon as I hold a published copy of *Shooting an Albatross*, I will turn to the publication of its sequel, *Legacy Management*. Regardless of the amount of time I have to commit to these two books, I have another story I am so anxious to start writing that I may just start it tomorrow morning.