

“What I Wished I’d Known Before Being Published”

I’m not a person that was born with the driving need to write. In fact, I came to writing rather late in life. I had no real idea what was involved in putting a book on paper. What I did know was that I had a story to tell. I’ve made a number of missteps on my way to publication but I’ve also learned numerous valuable lessons.

I discovered at the beginning of my writing career that writers are a wonderful and generous group of people that for the most part genuinely want to help a fellow writer succeed. They are open and willing to share their knowledge of the writing process. That dovetails into the next thing I realized. Becoming a member of a critique group was invaluable in the process of helping me learn to write well. A critique group is where I found support and understanding. Through discussions and reviews of other writers’ work as well as my own I grew as a writer.

Early on, I learned that if I intended to be published I would have to work hard, constantly and unrelentingly. I had to put my butt in the chair and words on the page. I had to write when I didn’t really want to. Some days the words flew freely, other days, they came out like molasses, either way I had to push forward.

A difficult lesson learned on my way to publication was about rejection. The only sure thing about sharing my work with the world was that someone would not appreciate it. I had to accept rejection as part of the process and move past it in order to be a published author.

I soon realized that if I planned to get rich off writing I would be disappointed. Every writer thinks she is writing the next great book. Yes, a number of authors do exceptionally well but most writers are just making a living and many published authors still keep their day jobs. Writing has to be something I do because of my

passion for the written word, for the love of reading, or because I have a story to tell. Money will come if I write for one of these reasons.

I found that though book signings sounded glamorous I shouldn't expect to be flooded by people or have bookstores clamoring to have me in their store. I soon realized that signings in my local area worked best. People I know would at least come out to say hi. The best book signing I ever had was my book release party. I invited my friends and family, it was great to see everyone have an all around fun day. And, I sold a lot of books.

It didn't take long for me to find out that having a book published is contagious. Once I had a book on the shelf I wanted to put another one there. Few authors are satisfied with just one book. My first, Nick's New Heart, about my son who had a heart transplant, will always be the most special to me but I've written eight more books that I hope to sell.

Another thing I learned is that everyone is writing a book, or thinking of writing one but few are actually in the chair producing work, or attending a critique group or actively sending material out. The author that stands out in the crowd is the one who finishes a book. A published author has to type the two greatest words "The End" and send their baby out to an agent or editor. Too many people talk about writing and too few are serious about it.

The last, and I believe the best, thing I've discovered about being a writer is that people are impressed by the fact they know an author. That is everyone but my immediate family. To them I'm still the cook, maid, taxi driver, and garbage man. Having people impressed by my abilities makes up for the opinion of the group I live with.

Some of these things would have been helpful to know before I became serious about writing. Others were fun to discover as I moved forward in my career. Either way, becoming a published author has been a learning, growing and exhilarating experience that I wouldn't have missed for the world.