

A Writing Life #1: My Introduction
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I am a writer.

It's hard to say that. Or type it. But it's true.

I may not make a living by my writing. I may not get my butt in the chair and write every day. I may not have managed to submit anything for printed publication.

But I am, nevertheless, a writer.

Dammit.

At least, that's what I keep telling myself.

In reality, I'm an out of work network security nerd. I got laid off in July 2003, per my own request, and meant to spend some time cleaning up my house and writing. Instead, I managed to wreck one of my hands, requiring surgical repair. I spent a sticky summer month in a removable half-cast and another month in physical therapy. It wasn't my writing hand, but the complexity of my life increased exponentially and killed all my urges for getting anything done. It was such a chore to brush my teeth and shower every day, not to mention feed myself or make it to the occasional doctor's appointment (since I couldn't drive), that I had no room left in my brain for other pursuits.

And when all of that was over, I found myself in a bit of a funk.

On the plus side, I'm more relaxed than I've been in years. I have enough savings to carry me through for a while. I've caught up on a lot of comics and books that have been piling up around the house. I'm more in touch with my friends.

But I'm still not seriously trying to get published.

We'll be talking about that more, I suspect.

I've been writing on my own since I was about thirteen years old. Since I'm now in my thirties, that's over twenty years of work. And I started editing and receiving editorial feedback at the age of fourteen, after joining my high school literary magazine as a freshman. I'm a pretty good poet, an OK essayist, and a lousy fiction writer.

Unlike many of my peers in the world of Internet nerds, I managed to graduate from college with a BA in English and Psychology. I am also a Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), which probably means nothing to you but it was a painful accomplishment for me. I've had a lot of training in stuff ranging from firewalls to cryptography to negotiation tactics.

I am the Features Editor at [ComixPedia](#). I've been writing for them since before they started publishing back in February 2003, having responded to Xavier Xerexes after he posted in the thread that Joey Manley started, calling for a webzine devoted to webcomics. I've written a huge pile of reviews and a handful of features, most of which were published before I became editor. In May of 2003 they asked me to take on the Features position and I agreed.

I love working with writers. I love pulling apart a piece and thinking about what works and what doesn't work. I love giving feedback on how well a writer put something together. I enjoy the challenge of finding where the piece could be better and suggesting ways to get there, rather than just re-writing it myself. And I adore writers who can put their egos aside and join me there, in making the work better. And when I run into writers who are better than I am, I just make sure they hit all their marks and let them run the show. I love writing and I love writers.

I am looking for projects that would allow me to write for a living. Right now, that means managing at least one newsletter for a client. More on that in the future.

Other things to know about me and credibility... credentials... whatever.

I started private art lessons when I was seven. My teacher retired as I was going into high school, but I was already on good terms with the art teacher there and took classes and extra-curricular instruction from him throughout my four years. I've tried most of the major media except oil painting. I fell away from creating art when I went to college in the late 1980's but I still love art and making the occasional sketch. When I knew my layoff was in the works, but while I was still getting paid, I splurged for a copy of Photoshop, but haven't done much with it yet.

I also love doing research and learning new things. The Internet is a gold mine for an information-addict like me. Some random things I've researched recently: the origin of the character of Don Juan, lessons on running science fiction conventions, and the language of the grifter and the con-game.

I teach and am told that I'm good at explaining things. High praise when you're helping your 78-year-old great auntie understand the Internet. Granted, she's very clever, was in the Navy, and still won't talk about a bunch of crypto stuff she did with her security clearance a long time ago. But still.

I have diverse tastes in food, music, art, television, movies, websites, books, comic books, and webcomics. I like some high-brow stuff, some low-brow stuff, some stuff from other cultures, some weird stuff, some normal stuff, some funny stuff, some independently produced stuff, some mass-produced stuff, some cute stuff, some ugly stuff, some kids' stuff, some technological stuff, some science fiction stuff, some fantastical stuff, some scientific stuff (especially some forensic stuff), but not ALL of any

sort of anything. The upside is I know a little about a lot. The downside is that I'm easily distracted by something different or new.

What I want to accomplish with this column is to push myself to write regularly and to explore what "a writing life" means, to me and to others. I will also probably ramble on and on about random elements of this vast array of things that I like as well as the research-topic-of-the-moment. And, I'll answer questions if they're appropriate or amusing. Finally, with any luck, each month I'll manage to tie all of this together in some masterful conclusion.

Or not.