

# Becoming an Author

*by* Larry Strattner

He wasn't really sure why he started writing. It just happened, beginning with poetry; his verse was uniformly bad but occasionally rhymed. He found a place of early testosterone or estrogen development online, a website publishing any poem anyone submitted, any time.

The poetry website was divided by subject category such as nature, God, unrequited love, humor, and angst, as if the 14-year-olds who congregated there had any idea what angst was. There were prohibitions against penetration of any ilk and bad language, which seemed evaluated using inconsistent methods. To avoid problems he wrote poems about groundhogs, dogs, flowers and parodies about Internet advertising. He could bring something to the advertising discussion because it was his day job, writing purchase-provoking words about ice cream, toothpaste and sexual lubricants. All in all, his life begged for some improvement. It boiled down to gross hucksterism by day, sophomoric poems by night. Before long he stumbled across flash fiction.

Flash, a form comprised of 1000, 750, 500 or less words, lurked on the fringes of literature, all the way down to worthies who thought they could tell a story in less than 50. "Your mother wears army boots." The form had probably arisen in cities where this type of narrative was considered stylish and, incisive. If you were good at it you could get yourself killed while delivering your composition about someone's mother to a poorly chosen listener. He had grown up in New York and had a mental, perhaps even genetic, or possibly tribal predisposition for Flash. He threw himself into the form.

The flash marketplace tended to edge up a bit toward the real world. They had editors, style mavens or Content Queens and you could find your artistic efforts summarily rejected. Flash was a

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crossover between the love smitten teenage breast-beater and the novelist with two years of work behind him staring at 400 letters of rejection with another 400 yet to arrive.

He did okay with flash fiction but never quite reached the level of *cranking shit out*. In various forms of writing *cranking shit out* paves the road to success. You write a bunch of little sparklers, set up an Excel spreadsheet to keep track of everything and then broadcast your bullshit relentlessly. If your buyer is paying low dollars, or no dollars, for content, everything will find a home eventually. You will become a well-known Flasher.

One day, he wrote a flash piece he judged *not too bad*. It had a bit of humor, a touch of violence and a goofy original protagonist. He wrote another flash piece about the same guy in different circumstances and another after that. Before he knew it he had a bunch of linked stories about the same weird guy. Seeing this working out fairly well he gave his project the gas, then set his cruise control to *cranking shit out*. Before you could say Little Jack Horner, there was a book. It sucked, but then most books suck. Some even suck and are stupid and amateurish to boot. His book at least had an interesting premise and a dorky hero who would appeal to many people in the English-speaking world who could still read.

He sent the book around to various agents and publishers and surmised, after about 100 suspiciously worded rejections, no one was even looking at his book before claiming to be busy, backed up, or caught in the middle of transgender surgery; *but good luck, and be assured acceptance for representation or publication is based on different criteria at different agencies and we are sure you will yet find someone mentally deficient enough to give your book a shot*. Being more of a doer than a thinker he said to himself, *fuck it*, and wrote another book. This one went a little faster managing not to stumble into as many potholes and sewage trenches as the first. It

might still have been bad, but he had no reference point, and so put his works up on a digital reading site and sold a few copies.

Meanwhile, various thieves, charlatans and blackguards loose in the world managed to piss him off, momentarily distracting him into writing vituperative opinion columns in the newspaper which he then discovered was also used as a vehicle for obfuscation by various thieves, charlatans and blackguards, discouraging him. So he wrote another book.

In hardly the blink of an eye he had written three books and sold about an equal number. He had become an author. This is how it often happens. He pointed out his achievement to the local community college and was awarded an associate doctorate of pulp fiction at that year's graduation.

Two sleaze balls from LA called him up and wanted to use the protagonist of his first book for a graphic novel. They planned a fair amount of full-color sex and frontal nudity, which embarrassed him since he had modeled his protagonist after his own physical endowments. He refused to grant the rights but the sleaze balls went ahead anyway, rightfully figuring he didn't have enough money to retain a lawyer and had perchance forgotten to copyright his work.

He drew some cash out of his Roth IRA and rode a few Greyhound busses to LA. Upon arrival he hooked up with some people in Compton referred to him by an old friend in Harlem. The Compton crew sold him a Glock 17 and he took a bus over to Studio City and whacked the two sleaze balls on principle.

Tried and convicted of the crime in LA his sorry butt was packed up to Pelican Bay Super Max where he is at work on his next novel, *Uranus, A Journey Through Space*.

He will be eligible for parole in six years and is spending the rest of his free time learning how to write holographic novels narrated by the main characters and played out on any home dining room table.

*Vita brevis, ars longa*, he says, being an Author and all.

