

Happy Birthday Mr. Watterson, Wherever You Are!

by Roz Warren

Bill Watterson isn't just the creator of the world's best comic strip. According to the book "Looking for Calvin and Hobbes," a biography of the elusive and reclusive cartoonist, Watterson is also a world-class introvert.

Watterson refuses to make public appearances, give interviews or talk to fans, although he sometimes responds to fan mail and occasionally corresponds or collaborates with fellow cartoonists. Family and friends have been instructed not to reveal where he lives. (For years, he had an unlisted number and lived under his wife's maiden name.) There's just one, early, photo of him available to the public. It shows a dorky looking dude seated at a drawing table.

Apparently, Watterson, like J.D. Salinger and Thomas Pynchon, is one of those very smart, very creative people who just want to be left alone. He doesn't want to be the life of the party. He doesn't even want to GO to the party. He wants to stay home and get on with his work.

Fame, for these folks, isn't a perk. It's an ordeal.

An introvert is "a person who is energized by being alone and whose energy is drained by being around other people." Introverts enjoy exploring their own thoughts and feelings. Being with people, even people they are comfortable with, interferes with their desire to be "quietly introspective."

Available online at «<http://fictionaut.com/stories/roz-warren/happy-birthday-mr-watterson-whenever-you-are>»

Copyright © 2014 Roz Warren. All rights reserved.

For instance?

Although Watterson won the Harvey Award for “Best Syndicated Comic Strip” seven years in a row, from 1990 - 1996, he never once showed up to claim his award and accept the acclaim of his peers. “From most reports and reported anecdotes,” says fellow cartoonist Berkeley Breathed, with affection, “he is most assuredly a serious whack job.”

Or just a serious introvert.

As he worked on the strip, he had no need (and even less desire) to leave the house seeking acclaim or inspiration. Everything he needed was inside his own head.

Watterson, famously, also refused to sell out.

He wouldn't agree to license or merchandise “Calvin and Hobbes.” When pressured to do so by the syndicate, he threatened to stop drawing the strip altogether. After several years of wrangling, the syndicate backed down and handed control of his creation back to the artist.

About the millions he passed up by refusing to merchandise the strip? “The so-called opportunities I faced,” he once said, “would have meant giving up my individual voice for that of a money-grubbing corporation. It would have meant my purpose in writing was to sell things, not say things.”

Watterson gave us, in all, a total of 3,160 “Calvin and Hobbes” strips. He also gave us an instructive example of one way to live, with integrity, a creative life.

“He doesn't get his kicks from being famous.” his mother once said in an interview. “He was just doing something he enjoyed doing. He definitely wants to disappear.”

Nearly twenty years after that last strip? Mission accomplished!
Today, nobody knows where the guy is or what he's up to.

Nicely done, Mr. Watterson, On behalf of fellow introverts everywhere, I salute you.

