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### Writers' Craft Box

What this section is intended to do:  
Give writers suggested hints, resources, and advice.

How to use: Pick and choose what you feel is most helpful and derive inspiration from it- most importantly, **HAVE FUN!**

What a Writers' Craft Box is: Say you're doing an art project and you want to spice it up a bit. You reach into a seemingly bottomless box full of colorful art/craft supplies and choose only the things that speak to you. You take only what you need to feel that you've fully expressed yourself. Then, you go about doing your individual project adding just the right amount of everything you've chosen until you reach a product that suits you completely. So, this is on that concept. Reach in, find the things that inspire you, use the tools



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that get your writing going and see it as fulfilling your self-expression as opposed to following rules.

Writing is art and art is supposed to be fun, relaxing, healing and nurturing. It's all work and it's all play at the same time. A Writers' Craft Box is whatever your imagination needs it to be- a lifeboat, the spark of an idea, a strike of metaphorical lightning, a reminder, or simply the recommendation of a good book. Feel free to sit back and break out the crayons. Coloring outside the lines is heartily encouraged.

## *Essays*

**Craft Box Guest Contributor Bio:** Erica Bauermeister is the bestselling author of three novels: *The School of Essential Ingredients*, *Joy For Beginners* and the recently released *The Lost Art of Mixing*. She is also the co-author of two guides to books: *500 Great Books by Women: A Reader's Guide* and *Let's Hear It For the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14*. She received a PhD in literature from the University of Washington and has taught at both UW and Antioch. She lives in Port Townsend, Washington.

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Re-thinking Writer's Block

by Erica Bauermeister

I would like to propose that there is no such thing as writer's block.

"NO!" the writers scream. I can hear it all the way out here in the small town I live in on the coast of Washington. Because if there is no such thing as writers' block, what are those long stretches of time when the writing refuses to come? When the fingers are poised above the keyboard, or you are wandering about the house wishing, wishing, wishing for the words?

I call that writing.

I think all too often we see the movement of our fingers on the keys, the whisper of a pen sliding across a page as the necessary proof we are writing, because it is the only time we see a physical result. But this makes no more sense than all those people who come up to me and tell me they are writers, but not really, because they have never been published.

We make the mistake of confusing writing with product, with financial gain or whether anyone else has read what we have written. These are all aspects of writing, yes. But they are just logistics. The process is often quiet and hidden and very often has nothing to do with the tapping of keys.

We write when we are traveling and see an interaction between two people in the airport, an image we tuck away because it vibrates with an emotional resonance that lets us know there is a story waiting inside. We write when we are washing dishes or digging weeds and we suddenly know what a character wants, even though we weren't consciously thinking about the character at that moment. We write when we are reading about architecture or German food or the best way to pick locks, because a character is interested in those things, or simply because we feel some spark and we want to follow it, not knowing what book it might lead to. We write when we hold our children and learn the complicated dance of love and protection and frustration that is parenthood and will someday become a part of a character who looks nothing like us, may not even share our gender, but will have a moment of understanding all the richer because we stopped "writing" and held our child.

We write when we learn that sometimes we have to step away from the screen if we don't know where the story is going to go next. We learn that that is not quitting, and it is not writer's block. That is the writer's mind

recognizing that before the fingers can go tapping along again, the mind needs to wander and find the less obvious alleyways of meaning.

We are writing even when we think we have nothing to write, when there are no words in our heads other than the ones telling us we can't write. Because part of the process of writing is figuring out who we are as human beings, and part of that is learning how to get past those voices.

But sometimes we need a little help moving forward. We have a deadline, or we are stuck in a rut that is only getting deeper, or we have a whole lot of life cluttering our brains, leaving no room for creativity. So here is something I call "directed wandering."

First off, ask yourself – if you aren't putting words on the page, is that about the book or about you? Demand an honest answer.

1) If it's about you. There are lots of times when a writer's block is far more about the writer than the book – words silenced by those editorial comments we hear in our heads, our insecurities, etc. These are issues you have to deal with away from the page. It's a mistake to blame them on the book, because it both causes you to resent the book and it confuses the issue. Here are some suggestions:

**a.** Ask for help. Find yourself a supportive writer's group or therapist or friend. Talk through the issues without adding the pressure of a project.

**b.** Remember yourself. Think about a time when you felt most like a writer. Where were you? What were you wearing? What was the temperature? Was there food or coffee or a particular chair involved? Recreate that experience as best you can when you write. Let all those subliminal things – the taste of a certain tea, the feel of a blanket across your legs or the straight back of a chair – support you.

**c.** Read. Find writers whose style is similar to what you would like to write. Surround yourself with the rhythms of their sentences. This isn't about plagiarism; it's about providing yourself with an alternate soundtrack of words. Listen like a writer. Let the music pull you in.

**d.** Change the dynamic. Aimee Bender once said she writes for an hour every day. It doesn't have to be one project. You can write for five minutes about one thing, then get bored and switch. Aimee said sometimes she just writes potential opening lines or titles until she finds one that sticks. It's a bit like organized play, and sometimes we need to play a little

more and “work” a little less.

**e.** Find a focus outside yourself. A character you love. An idea you think will help others. Focus on communicating rather than self-expression. Make your characters’ and your readers’ needs more important than yours. Sometimes we will do things for others we would never do for ourselves.

2) If it’s about the book. Sometimes we are in the middle of an otherwise wonderful project and simply don’t know what to write next. In that case, here are some options.

**a.** Do some research. Often the spark you need lies in the underlying world of your book. Step out of the story for a moment and dig into an aspect of its environment – maybe that is learning how they made shoes in the 16th century, or how to bake a cake, or what women in the 1960s used to lighten their hair naturally. Often the process of learning something new will lead you back, reinvigorated.

**b.** Switch it up. If the place you are in your book feels flat, jump to another part. Don’t worry about chronology. Think about a scene that you WANT to write, an image that is lying in wait, shimmering. Write that. You’ll be glad you have it later.

**c.** Go back. Return to the previous chapter (or two) and edit or read your way forward. I find two things can happen when I do this. The first is that working with my own writing gets me back into the mood of the story and often propels me forward. The second is that sometimes I discover I had gone astray in the previous chapter, and the block is the intuitive part of my mind refusing to let me go forward until I have fixed the thing that is sending the book off in the wrong direction.

**d.** Take a walk. Go for a swim. Cook. Iron. Do dishes. Studies show that repetitive physical activity releases the more creative part of our brains.

But most important of all, no matter what your answer was to the question I posed, remember that being a writer is who you are, not what you do. I was listening to an author discuss his work recently. Someone asked him “when do you write?” And he said “every waking minute, every sleeping moment.” Writing is a gift of perception. Enjoy it, whenever possible.

***Craft Box Guest Contributor Bio-*** Charles Salzberg is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in *Esquire*, *GQ*, *New York Magazine* and *The New*

*York Times*. *The Portable MFA in Creative Writing* written with fellow members of the New York Writers Workshop (where he teaches and is a founding member), features his chapter on magazine writing. He is the author of *Swann's Last Song* (nominated for a Shamus Award for Best First PI Novel) and *Swann Dives In*. His latest novel, *Devil in the Hole*, will be published by Five-Star/Cengage this summer. He also teaches writing at the Writer's Voice.  
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### Mixing Fact and Fiction

by Charles Salzberg

I was fresh off completing a four-year degree in liberal arts and a one-year stretch in law school, just biding time till I was able to do what I really wanted to do with the rest of my life: write novels. Since the age of nine, when I started writing my first "novel," a roman a clef that took place in an unsurprisingly familiar summer camp in Maine, totaling a whopping 12 pages, that's all I wanted to do. Make stuff up. For a shy kid who spent most of his time reading, there was no better way to make a living, I thought.

By the time I finished with higher education and was released into the world of grownups, I realized I was prepared for very little else in terms of making a living. But it wasn't long before I realized that writing fiction was not going to pay the rent, or even put food on the table. I needed a job. A real job. That's when a friend came up with an idea.

"You were an English major. You know how to string sentences together. You know how to tell a story, why not get a job as a magazine editor?"

Sure. Why not? I was an avid reader of magazines: *Esquire*, *New York*, *GQ*, *The New Yorker* and *Rolling Stone*, so wouldn't it be great to work at one of them? Even better, it was the heyday of what was being referred to as "New Journalism," which meant that extremely talented writers like Tom Wolfe, Hunter Thompson, Norman Mailer, Pete Hamill and Gay Talese, weren't just telling the stories, they were becoming part of them. With a position in the mailroom of *New York* magazine obtained through a family friend and visions of moving up to the editorial fast track, in my young, admittedly

naïve mind I figured I'd be sorting mail for a few weeks, my genius would be discovered, and I'd be editing and hanging out with the likes of such writers. Certainly, this would be a stepping-stone to getting a novel published.

Of course, it didn't quite work out that way. When I saw what editors actually did, sit at their desks all day and rework other people's words, the appeal of that job was severely diminished. I switched my focus to becoming a journalist. This was, at first, heresy; I was a purist and I wanted to write serious, literary fiction. Journalism was not writing, it was reporting. To me there was nothing even remotely imaginative or creative about witnessing an event, then writing about what you saw or experienced.

But as it turned out, I did have a leg up, because I knew how to tell a story, which meant how to construct a piece of writing so that it had a beginning, middle and end. And because of this thing known as the New Journalism, I could even use fictional techniques, meaning I could recreate scenes and reconstruct dialogue, not unlike a novelist.

I had some ideas for the magazine and I wrote up a couple of query letters, which because I had no idea what a query letter was, was really nothing more than a page or so telling what I thought the story was. Amazingly, one of my ideas—violence in a city institution where I happened to work for a short time—appealed to one of the editors, the legendary Elizabeth Crowe, and although she didn't quite assign it to me (not that I would have known the difference), she said she would certainly read it and that I should work on it during my lunch hours and after work.

I did just that and although in the end she didn't think it was quite right for the magazine, she liked it enough to give me an actual assignment of one of my other ideas and suggested I send the first piece I had written to the *Daily News Sunday Magazine*. I did. They bought it. And soon after *New York* took the other piece I wrote on agoraphobics in New York City.

I was in shock, but I wasn't surprised. I had absolutely no training in journalism but I knew the reason I was successful was simply because I knew how to coherently string words together so that they told a story in an entertaining and informative way. My fiction writing (and reading) taught me how to do that. It also taught me how to create a scene, and realistic dialogue.

Writing to a word count, though, was completely new to me. In writing fiction, you go at your own pace and you take as many words as necessary, or at least as you think are necessary. It didn't take long for me to figure out that journalism was a whole different animal. In fact, I learned the hard way. I was assigned a piece for the *Daily News Sunday Magazine* that required I take part in half a dozen "singles" activities in a week—singles dances, singles tennis, singles parties. By the time I finished writing the piece, it was nearly 4,000 words, well over the 2,500 word limit. But I structured the piece as a number of anecdotes and so I figured I'd just let the editor cut out the anecdotes he didn't want, leaving the rest.

A few weeks later when I saw the finished product, I was appalled. Instead of excising individual anecdotes, the editor had simply cut each one of them in half, making them, at least to my eyes, senseless. From that point on when asked for 2,000 words, that's what I gave them.

At first, it was a chore. Writing to a word count forced me to consider every word very carefully. I would pore through paragraphs to take out unnecessary paragraphs, then sentences, then even slicing unnecessary words. The warning offered by Mark Twain echoed through my mind: "the difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug." As a result, my writing got clearer, cleaner, more precise, something I was eventually able to transfer to my fiction writing.

Writing for magazines had another unexpected dividend. In journalism, especially magazine journalism, ideas are the "coin of the realm". There are plenty of good writers out there, but not all of them come up with marketable ideas. Being a journalist forced me to think outside the box, to consider how I could make ordinary subjects somewhat extraordinary. It also provided me with the opportunity to meet interesting people who led interesting lives.

A few years after I started in journalism a story on the front page of *The New York Times* caught my attention. A New Jersey man murdered his entire family, his three kids, his wife, his mother and the family dog. There was nothing particularly noteworthy about that, except that the way he did it fascinated me. It was not a random, spur of the moment killing. Just the opposite. It was so well-planned that the killer, John List, gave



himself a three-week head start on the authorities by stopping the mail and informing the school that his kids would be away visiting relatives for a month. More than three weeks after the murders his car was found at the airport and the murders only after a concerned neighbor called the police because he hadn't seen the family in a long time and thought there was something odd going on in the house across the street.

I wasn't much interested in the how, but rather the why. I could comprehend how a man could suddenly lose it, go berserk and kill in a frenzy, but what could it take for a man to be driven to such a horrible crime, to the point where he must have meticulously planned it weeks in advance, maybe longer? This, I thought, was the perfect multi-layered story for a magazine article and perhaps ultimately a true-crime book.

I pitched it as both, but the problem was List had disappeared into the ether and without an ending no one was interested in either an article or a book.

But the case haunted me and as year after year passed with no resolution, the idea of a novel took hold. If only I could come up with a plausible reason why someone would commit such a horrendous crime I could, I thought, create an interesting work of fiction.

Over the years, while still working on other projects—by now I had graduated to non-fiction books and ghostwriting—it slowly dawned on me how I could write this novel and, interestingly enough, it meant drawing on my craft as a magazine journalist. I decided to get into the mind of the killer sideways, so to speak. I would use the conceit of having a journalist write a non-fiction book about the crime. I would have him (or her) “interview” various people involved in the crime—the neighbor who called the cops, the cops who break into the house and discover the murders, the state investigator. I would create not only a cold-blooded killer, very different from the one who actually committed the crime, but the people around him. A clergyman, a mistress, various people he meets along his escape route, even inventing family members and friends.

By the time I finished I had created a kind of offshoot of what Capote called “a nonfiction novel,” not the kind exemplified by *In Cold Blood*, and Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song*, but one that simply used the actual crime and made up everything else. In doing so, I was able to

combine my experience both as a journalist and as a novelist.

The result, which took almost ten years to write, was the forthcoming *Devil in the Hole*.

Simultaneously, I began work on another novel, *Swann's Last Song*, a quirky, literary anti-detective novel and once again I was able to draw on my experience as a journalist. Early in my career I was assigned to do a story on a world-weary, middle-aged skip tracer named Sidney Weinstein, who found people who'd skipped on their bills. Now, when I decided to write a detective novel and was casting around for a different kind of protagonist, this story popped into my head and I used that profession for Henry Swann. The novel featured a down-and-out skip tracer who gets pulled into solving a murder case, but soon finds that instead of tracking down the killer he winds up trying to reconstruct the past of the victim, a man who had many different identities. Again, my journalistic background informed not only the way I wrote but the way I conceived the character. I thought of Swann as a journalist, a man who asks questions, does research, and as a result finds answers. I also intertwined real information with fictional characters. Having the murder victim assume many faces allowed me to research various professions: rock singer, entrepreneur, the sale of stolen antiquities, as well as having the detective travel to places I'd never been at the time: Los Angeles, certain parts of Mexico and Berlin.

*Swann's Last Song* was planned as a one-off—I didn't think I had anything else to say in the detective fiction genre—but it didn't turn out that way. Surprisingly, the novel was nominated for a Shamus Award for Best First PI Novel. I lost, but that just pissed me off enough to start another Swann book. *Swann Dives In* takes place in a world I knew little about—the world of rare books—and so I read as much as I could on the subject and interviewed a rare book dealer, just so I could get the facts right. Again, skills I'd honed as a journalist helped inform my fiction.

I've recently completed a third in the Swann series, *Swann's Lake of Despair*, and in this one I reached back into the history of Long Beach to find an unsolved murder, and wove in another storyline that takes place in the world of photography in the 1950s and '60s.

I've pretty much forsaken journalism now, although I do the occasional magazine story if the subject appeals to me. The last one was a year ago

when I profiled four extremely interesting men who attended college together in the late 1940s—the literary agent Mort Janklow, *New York Times* columnist Bill Safire, former Warner Brothers Vice President, Ed Bleier and Goldman-Sachs partner, Bob Menschel—but I know that whenever I come across an interesting fact, or a story in the news that piques my interest, there’s a good chance it’ll wind up in my next novel, whatever that might be.

***Craft Box Contributor Bio-*** Author, editor, writing coach, and spiritual counselor, Noelle Sterne writes fiction and nonfiction and has published over 300 pieces in print and online venues, including *Writer’s Digest*, *The Writer*, *Women on Writing*, *Funds for Writers*, and *Transformation Magazine*. Her monthly column, “Bloom Where You’re Writing,” appears in *Coffeehouse for Writers*. With a PhD from Columbia University, for over 28 years Noelle has helped doctoral candidates complete their dissertations (finally) and is completing a psychological-spiritual handbook.

In her book *Trust Your Life: Forgive Yourself and Go After Your Dreams* (Unity Books; one of ten best 2011 ebooks), she draws examples from her practice and other aspects of life to help writers and others release regrets, relabel their past, and reach their lifelong yearnings. See Noelle’s website: [www.trustyourlifenow.com](http://www.trustyourlifenow.com).

With *Trust Your Life*, Noelle appears in the Unity Books 2013 “Summer of Self-Discovery” on Goodreads with two other authors of positive messages for discussions and free webcasts:  
<http://www.unity.org/publications/unity-books/summer-reading-series>  
<http://www.goodreads.com/group/show/100799-unity-books>

See also Noelle’s blog on *Author Magazine*’s “Authors’ Blog,” in which she explores writing, creativity, and spirituality:  
<http://authormagazineonline.wordpress.com/>

Writing Success

by Noelle Sterne

### **Dreaming of “Success”**

We all know what writing success is, don't we? A call from the big agent, a sale to the big publisher, a huge advance, great-promoted publication, fame, continuing royalties, movie rights, audio book rights, serialization, spinoffs, foreign translations, talk show appearances, industry awards, multiple weeks on the *Times* bestseller list, and even getting recognized at the supermarket. Such rewards fuel our dreams. We also assume that when we get that advance, contract, or recognition, our life will surely be complete.

We can enjoy, even luxuriate in, the symbols of success—the excitement of the publisher's acceptance, the glory of a substantial check, the wonder of holding the first copy of your book in your hand like a baby loved for months before birth. But then what? The acceptance needs follow-up contact, the check needs to pay the bills, the baby needs to be fed, in this case with social media playdates and daily publicity.

### **The Addictive Dream**

It may surprise you that there are some writers, and other famous people, who react less than positively when they attain success in these terms. As headlines and entertainment magazines attest, after the first thrilling flush, a number become depressed and may turn to alcohol, drugs, food, uncontrollable spending, mansion collecting, or relentless sexual conquests. A few even commit suicide.

Why? Creativity guru Julia Cameron offers an insightful explanation. “Fame is addictive, and it always leaves us hungry. Fame is a spiritual drug.”[1]

Fame and its sister perks don't satisfy because they tap into the part of us that craves incessant recognition: external validation. Cameron explains, “Instead of writing being about writing, it becomes about being recognized, not just published.”[2] Fame always requires more. Alone, it never satisfies or sustains because, like money to a miser, *it is never enough*.

### **My Surprising Reaction to Success**

To my shock, I learned the truth of this principle when the first edition of

my children's book of original riddles was published.[3] *Tyrannosaurus Wrecks: A Book of Dinosaur Riddles* came out one September, and during the entire fall I floated on an ecstatic cloud. The publisher sent announcements to everyone on my multi-page list, and I spent hours conferring with the publicity department about plans for more publicity. Congratulatory calls and letters streamed in, messengers delivered flowers to my door, and two newspapers wanted interviews.

In addition to all this, the publicity department arranged prominent displays for the book at two prestigious New York City book fairs. My editor sent me three packets of "Tyrannosaurus" multicolored balloons, with a note that they'd be "flying high" at both fairs, an apt description of my own state.

All this was delicious, heady, and immensely flattering. I felt special and important, as if I could not fail. I reveled in the attention and busyness of all the promotion. But after about a week, frustration began to seep in like sand, and I found myself eating too much, sleeping too long, and snapping at everyone within mouthshot.

My mind kept replaying the summer I'd spent writing the book—sitting out under a tree in the park, clipboard balanced on my knees, comforting cardboard cup of coffee beside me. I'd breathe in the air, stare at the trees, watch the squirrels, and giggle quietly to myself as the riddles popped into my head and I raced to scribble them down. Now, in the midst of all the fanfare, I craved only to go back to the park and my clipboard.

### **When Other Writers Reach Success**

This response, I've since learned, is common to most writers on reaching a longed-for goal. In a letter to a beginning writer, the novelist and short story writer B. J. Chute speaks of the "so-called rewards of success": "It is not that these are not to be enjoyed when they come . . . Curiously enough, when they do come, you may find that they are not as rewarding as you thought they would be. You may find yourself eager only to get on with the next ivory-tower job." [4]

Every time I read an interview with a writer who has won a coveted award or made blockbuster publishing history, they are asked the inevitable question, "What next?" A dramatic (and admittedly enviable) example is

the experience of mystery writer Jack Kerley, who, after a successful 20-year career in advertising, went from copywriter to millionaire in less than two weeks.

After years of rejections, he found an agent willing to represent his thriller *The Hundredth Man*. Eleven days later it sold, with film, audio, and foreign rights, for over a million dollars. Yes, he could probably have retired and devoted himself to another love, fishing. But what was he doing? Already working on his second book, which was, he said, “cooking along.”[5]

What does this mean? The externals of success are lovely indeed, and we should take time to savor and celebrate our accomplishments. Kerley celebrated by treating himself to a \$600 flyrod. Yet other writers’ experiences show us that the usual sought-after symbols of success do not nourish us.

### **Success That Nurtures**

What, then, is success? Not the sugar-high, eventual emptiness, and pitiable insatiability for more of the externals our society offers. Rather, success resides in sustained feelings of fulfillment and rightness.

As both writers and humans, we are more than our yearning for fame and acquiring its evidence. What nourishes us is our love for writing, our drive to write, and our *doing it*. The more we honor these—and some of us don’t realize or believe this—the more we’ll eventually acquire our society’s rewards.

At a time when I struggled with many writing conflicts, I heard a lecture by the time mastery and life planning consultant Patricia Durovy. She defined success in a way that profoundly affected me and helped me reconcile the disappointments of not “having made it” and the drive to keep writing. She said, *Success is the realization and actualization of your life purpose.*

This definition means that we never “reach” ultimate success. Why? Because our capacity to be more and express more is limitless. You may have found, as I have, that the deeper you immerse in a current writing project, the more you discover and must write about the characters, the subplots, settings and actions, feelings, philosophy, meanings. And in the process, you may feel compelled, as I do, to keep discovering more.

The nature of our writing gift is that we *must* continue to create. It's accurate to identify this gift as our "calling." As for any artist, our inner self constantly calls us to explore more, delve more, convey more, produce more.

Each success, whether monumental or modest, is of course wonderful. But, as Chute and Kerley and many others know, even a colossal success is not the end-all. Instead, we will be better and happier writers seeing each achievement as another turn upward on our constantly evolving spiral of creative development, discovery, and mastery.[6]

### **Writers' Definitions of Success**

After the royalty checks are endorsed and copies framed, after the publicity photos, black-tie dinners, telegrams, and apparently endless adulation of fans at book signings, many writers recognize the characteristics of true success. Chute is very clear, and the italics are hers: "What I mean by success is: *The freedom to write what I want to write in the way I want to write it.*"[7]

She also quotes Tennessee Williams, whose worldly successes are indisputable. Yet he declares, "The only honor that can be conferred on a writer is a good morning's work." [8] Cameron echoes this conviction: "We know—and have felt—success at the end of a good day's work. . . The point of the work is the work." [9]

The incomparable writer Anne Lamott makes a similar and wise observation about the difference between fame and success: "[P]ublication is not all it that it is cracked up to be. But writing is . . . the actual act of writing . . . turns out to be the best part." [10]

I found confirmation reading Srully Blotnick's twenty-year study of men who became millionaires—automobile magnates, industrialists, publishers, real estate developers, and creative artists.[11] Blotnick found that the single thing they all had in common was *not* an overriding desire to make money or gain international reputation, but the love of and determination to do what they loved doing. They practiced the principle embodied in the title of a near-classic for reaching one's dreams, Marsha Sinetar's *Do What You Love: The Money Will Follow*. [12] And, we may add, so will publication and other material rewards of writing.

Again bolstered by such directives, I've found, after the initial ping of pleasure at an acceptance, that the more credits I amass the more I realize that true success, as Cameron says, resides in the work. One of the first times I vanquished a severe writing block, I was able to write without anxiety or hesitation for a full hour. Very excited, I exclaimed to a close friend, "I've reached the height! I could happily die now."

Exaggerated as this declaration may seem, it demonstrates my unequalled joy in writing. That was many years ago, and in most of my writing sessions I still feel the same. The more we become aware of and accept our feelings of satisfaction, excitement, exhilaration, elation, fulfillment, and joy in our writing, the more we'll feel at peace about the rightness of following our calling. And the more we'll become "addicted" to these life-affirming feelings rather than the destructive drugs of fame and external successes.

We'll more often live in the Now, the Now of our work and creative expression. Spiritual author and teacher Eckhart Tolle points out that living in the Now doesn't rule out goals or enjoyment of the outer evidences of success. Living in the Now means not ruminating about the past or fearfully or excitedly anticipating the future. It means "you will not have illusory expectations that anything or anybody in the future will save you or make you happy." [13]

### **Living Success**

Recently, I bought a new computer, much faster and more efficient than the previous one. This purchase was highly symbolic—an investment in myself and my writing, and it made a remarkable difference in my work sessions. I named it Pegasus and was stirred to write an essay that is partly a hymn to the computer and mostly a paean to the writing process. Some of this essay, "Pegasus: Riding to Writing Joy," is reproduced here to share with you the success we are most worthy of as writers:

*I named my computer Pegasus, after the fabulous winged horse in Greek mythology who soared through the skies with a hero on his back. To win the prize of the fair princess or the kingdom, together they vanquished giants and monsters, performing marvelous deeds. With Pegasus, I too perform marvelous deeds. He carries me soaring into the skies of possibility and discovery. He shows me ever-expanding vistas—ideas,*



*pictures, insights, feelings, meticulous moments of observation—to capture, mold, and bring forth. Of course, problems crop up, the giants and monsters of writing: chronic blank-screen anxiety, endless choices of phrasing, unbridgeable holes in transition, the perpetual search for the perfect word. But now I know, as I didn't before, that we'll get through them. I even look forward to the challenges, confident that they, like the obstacles encountered by the Greek heroes on their way to the prize, will be conquered. My matchless prize is the completed manuscript, born of a lifelong, almost visceral longing that cannot be denied. With Pegasus, I am most myself and most at peace. Riding Pegasus, I often close my eyes. Trusting, I let him gallop free, mane flying in rhythm with my flying fingers as we rise into the winds of creativity swirling around us. This is a journey of the soul, heart, mind, senses—all entwined, inseparable, and finally harmonized in the exultant service of expression. It's a journey started decades ago, with the first cry for a book in the crib, now brought to fruition in these sacred, flawless times at my desk.*

\* \* \* \* \*

In your own writing times, I wish you too such soaring feelings. If you haven't reached them at all or often enough, just keep following your calling. The more you give yourself to what you love, the more you'll enrich the quality of your life, and the more satisfying it will be, daily and cumulatively. As the external successes show themselves, you'll enjoy them but will understand them for what they are. And you'll come to know with certainty that true writing success is your writing itself.

#### Endnotes

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1. Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* (New York, NY: Tarcher/Putnam, 1992), p. 171.
2. Cameron, p. 171.
3. Noelle Sterne, *Tyrannosaurus Wrecks: A Book of Dinosaur Riddles* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, hard cover, 1979; paperback, 1983).
4. B. J. Chute, "Outside the Ivory Tower: A Letter to a Young Writer," *The Writer* (January 1983), p. 12.
5. Kristen D. Godsey, "Making the Cut," *Writer's Digest* (February 2004), pp. 32-36.
6. For this perspective, I am indebted to Jean Rosenbaum and Veryl

- Rosenbaum, Chapter Ten, "The Special Problems of Success," *The Writer's Survival Guide* (Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 1982), pp. 205, 213.
7. Chute, p. 10.
  8. Chute, p. 12.
  9. Cameron, p. 171.
  10. Anne Lamott. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1995), p. xxvi.
  11. Srully Blotnick, *Ambitious Men: Their Drives, Dreams, and Delusions* (New York, NY: Viking, 1987).
  12. Marsha Sinetar, *Do What You Love: The Money Will Follow* (New York, NY: Dell, 1987). For additional courage, many other resources are available. For example, Barbara Sher, *Wishcraft: How to Get What You Really Want* (New York, NY: Ballantine, 2003) and her *Live the Life You Love in Ten Easy Step-by-Step Lessons* (New York, NY: Random House/Dell, 1997). Tama Kieves has wonderful, assertive, bold, and poetic materials to support your success (<http://www.tamakieves.com/>).
  13. Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2004), p. 69.

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For further writing world perspectives, see also the recent Inscribing Industry blog interview with Sam Barry, author, *BookPage* columnist, guest speaker, contributing editor for *Zyzzyyva* and Marketing Director for Book Passage. Sam Barry is the co-author of *Write That Book Already: The Tough Love You Need to Get Published Now* and writes the Author Enablers column for *BookPage*. He is the author of *How to Play the Harmonica: and Other Life Lessons*, a contributing editor to *Zyzzyyva* literary magazine, and Marketing Director at Book Passage. He formally worked for Arion Press and HarperCollins. Sam is a member of the Rock Bottom Remainers, an all-author rock band that includes Mitch Albom, Stephen King, Dave Barry, Amy Tan, Greg Iles, Ridley Pearson, Matt Groening, Roy Blount Jr., James McBride, and Scott Turow. The Remainers have written a book together called *Hard Listening; The Greatest Rock Band Ever (of Authors) Tells All*, which is being published by the next-generation digital publisher Coliloquy in May, 2013. Sam's range of expertise extends to writing, editing, marketing, teaching, publishing and guest speaking.

<http://inscribingindustry.blogspot.com/2013/03/interview-with-sam-barry-author.html>

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