

THE AUTHORS SHOW – Authors of Fiction

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Just Another Journey

Since a child, I have carried empty pages to fill in the event that I see or hear something interesting. When ideas come to mind, I jot them down. I write about events attended or recent treks to somewhere. I log quotes; mull over them, and record lines and paragraphs that come to mind.

My first journal was hardbound and small enough to fit inside a purse. It was blue and green plaid with a latching lock and key. The inside cover was decorated with a flurry of swirls and in the middle of the page was a space to write my name and phone number. The specialized construction made clear that it was a thing of importance. The pen matched in motif, but it wasn't until I began to write on those small sheets of paper that its true magic was revealed to me. I continued My Thoughts collection all through high school, rushing to finish assignments, so that I could read another chapter or write one of my own.

When I turned eighteen, I submitted a poem to a “publisher” that solicited me for my work. They accepted my poem for publication. I was thrilled! A published poem, a published anything, was all I needed to earn credibility with readers. I was excited. I could skip Nursing school and write that novel. The day came when I would learn about the magazines and books where my writing had been published. I ripped open the envelope and unfolded the letter. My hands were shaking. It was request that I purchase the single anthology where my poem had been published. I was crushed.

I recovered from that letdown, and dreamt that my novels would catch the attention of Phil Donohue, or that lady and her new program, The Oprah Winfrey Show. I had a problem; however. Nobody was interested in what I had to say. Adventure seemed dead and teenage dreams held little value to the serious reader, but my genre held another view. I wrote about conquering obstacles, seeking from within, forgiveness of self and others, and earning a dream

come true. Subjects I knew well and thought a mature reader would be interested in, but publishers wanted to hear from women who had forged a new kind of freedom—divorce.

Titles and soon to be clichés, decorated even the worse of tabloids: Equal Rights for Women, Break the Glass Ceiling! How To Approach Your Ex-Husband with a New Guy on Your Arm, Lesbian Life, and What Did Gloria Steinem Say? attracted eager audiences. But that wasn't me. As a nineteen-year-old of newly divorced parents, I had real insight into that subject, but it was the last thing I wanted to put in writing.

My Children's stories are good. A few are even special, but my inexperience in that field hampered my way to success. For instance, I received handwritten Rejection Letters with ideas as to how I should proceed next. I took those suggestions to heart, corrected my ways, but then resubmitted my work to other publishers. Those publishers sent me nice handwritten notes as well, about "not accepting this kind of work at this time. By Rejection Letter number who-knows-how-many, I received a form letter saying (in few words), Thanks, but no. It was then that I understood the difference between a rejection letter and a note offering guidance toward a better work. Devastation could not describe my embarrassment when a fellow author pointed out my error. I knew, just knew that if I ever resubmitted my stories to those who originally helped me, they would remember my ignorance. To save them and me from myself, I vowed to never write again! But things do happen . . .

When perusing through old notes, I realized I had written a story about a young woman, who had grown beyond her years in wisdom by "being all alone with everyone." The notes were stuffed inside a journal that I had used while traveling on a bus in Mexico. By that time, I was a young divorced mom, (yes, it happened to me), and trying desperately to hang on to another failing relationship. My boyfriend (at the time), who I deemed in my novel as "Joe," had been his usual, unpleasant-self that day because I had engaged in conversations with other passengers . . . not him . . .

"Joe's" fit was seething by that evening and I was beginning to feel uncomfortable, but something happened: While I was writing, my peripheral vision honed in on Joe snarling at me because I was writing! It was in that moment, I let Joe's problem be his own. It was like an angel

sped her way from Heaven and thumped me on the head, real hard, three or six times. In reflection, it seemed that I had received guidance, and so, paying attention, the angel theme spots here and there throughout *Riding a Bus in Mexico* and represents moments of truth for Peri, my protagonist.

As the story took form, I needed other characters to shape feelings that Peri experienced, and thus, Patsy and Cecil sprang to mind. Patsy's character represents the guilt I felt while traipsing through a foreign country while leaving my four-year-old son with his grandparents and his sometimes-present dad. Tia Nancy, three other couples, Dr. Jake, his wife and Lupe, are based on "Joe's" real-life, amazing relatives and friends. All other characters are people that I met and interacted with during my travels. Each of these people, whom I had the pleasure of meeting for a minute in time, touched my heart and taught me something beautiful.

Some scenes reflect adventures that friends had while traveling in Mexico. I thank them for their generosity allowing me to use their experiences to tell my story. Of course, when writing stories based on true events, those stories become fiction, and thus, names were changed. Locations and events are left intact, but not necessarily by time line.

As an author, I write. I must write. And lucky for me, I discovered along the way that my real work in this world is to inspire others to realize their own, amazing potentials. I hope booklovers, who read *Riding a Bus in Mexico*, will see themselves, somewhere while traveling with Peri, and smile.